

THE BIOLOGY OF WAR

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THE BIOLOGY OF WAR

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TRANSLATED BY
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TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

The Biology of War was written in German, by a German, for Germans—written since the outbreak of the war, in the German fortress of Graudenz, in which the author was imprisoned. If the German government could have had its way, the book would never have seen the light, at any rate never so long as the war lasted; but by a happy chance the manuscript was conveyed to Switzerland, where it was brought out by the leading German-Swiss publishing firm, Orell Füssli of Zürich.

When the book appeared, it was promptly forbidden entrance to Germany, for reasons which will soon be obvious to any one who reads it; and the author was condemned to five months' imprisonment in a common gaol. After that, he was interned in Germany and carefully watched. Some time later he escaped from Germany on a German aeroplane, to Denmark. The aeroplane was the "Albatros 3415," and of a somewhat old-fashioned type. Dr. Nicolai's companion on board was Dr. Silberhorn, a German subaltern. A second aeroplane, the "F 16," accompanied the "Albatros 3415." On board were a lance-corporal and a pilot, both Germans. As neither Professor Nicolai nor his companions were armed, they were not interned by the Danish authorities.

Dr. G. F. Nicolai was born in Berlin in 1872. Before the outbreak of war he was known throughout Germany as the leading heart specialist, in which capacity he had attended the German Empress, whom he is said to have saved from a troublesome malady. He also held the chair of physiology at Berlin University. He married a daughter of Admiraltätsrat Buslay, and has one child, a daughter.

Even before the war Dr. Nicolai was opposed to Prussian militarism, and when war broke out and Germany violated Belgian neutrality, he openly protested. For this he was

degraded from his professorship, and his property confiscated; and finally he was sent to Graudenz fortress, occupying during part of the time the room famous as the Fritz Reuter room. Fritz Reuter, born 1810, died 1874, was condemned to death in 1833 because he belonged to a German Students' Society—a sentence commuted into one of thirty years' imprisonment. In 1840, however, on the accession of Frederick William IV. of Prussia, he was liberated. His tales and poems, mostly in Low German, are still much read and appreciated, and some have been translated into English.

Professor Nicolai's property having been confiscated, his wife and child were left penniless. His wife's father, who belongs to a Prussian Junker family, offered her a home with every comfort if she would renounce her husband. She replied that she would prefer to become a charwoman or a street-cleaner and earn her bread and that of her child in this way rather than forsake her husband.

Anxious to save him from having his health ruined by long confinement, Professor Nicolai's friends brought up his case in the Reichstag, but to no purpose. Those who have seen him recently declare that his imprisonment and suffering have greatly aged him, and that he now looks quite a broken man. By nature, however, he is a very vigorous man, whose health was nowise impaired by severe study nor by his wide travels before the war, sometimes in unhealthy climates. For instance, he has visited such diverse countries as Malacca, the United States of America, Russia, Lapland and China.

The experience of Dr. Nicolai's Swiss publisher is that a surprisingly large edition of *The Biology of War* has been called for in Switzerland, and that it has been read there not so much by scientific specialists or biologists as by persons of wide general education.

The present English translation has been simplified as much as possible without doing violence to the author's ideas; nevertheless the fact remains that this book is not for the intellectually indolent. It has not been possible to make certain passages very simple, owing to the ideas themselves being profound, while the reasoning is throughout very close; yet any one with a sound ordinary education should be able to read it. The whole book is written from the standpoint of a biologist, while

the medical man not infrequently appears in it as well ; while the breadth of the author's knowledge and the variety of his quotations, classical, literary and historical, cannot fail to astonish every reader.

The book has no affinity whatsoever with an ordinary pacifist publication, nor is Dr. Nicolai one of those who are the friends of every country but their own. One of his main contentions is that the dusk of the War Gods has come. An animal, he says, just before it becomes extinct, usually grows monstrously unwieldy and clumsy. War has done likewise : it has grown beyond all bounds. Again, he contends that there is now no biological justification for war, and in particular none whatever for the favourite German argument that without war nations become degenerate and effeminate. Finally, he asserts that war is never to be regarded as a necessary and inevitable part of Nature, something which, like an earthquake, is wholly beyond human control, and something to which we *must* submit. On the contrary, war is in the category of something which can be prevented and to which we need not submit. War ought to be regarded as we regard smallpox or the plague, as something which we can and ought to eradicate by taking proper preventive measures.

The book, of course, always refers specially to Germany, and the effects of war are largely illustrated by showing their action in Germany. The writer demonstrates, for instance, the influence of Bernhardi, Treitschke, Moltke and others on the German mind. But no one must imagine that Dr. Nicolai condemns all war of every description : revolutionary and defensive wars he would put in a category by themselves as justifiable. In order that wars may be prevented, he urges that a society of nations should be constructed ; and that the brotherhood of Man and the strengthening of all human bonds, whether between the members of the family of nations or between members of a human family, must become realities, not ideals. It may be that he does not regard the question from precisely the same angle as President Wilson, but his main lines of thought are the same.

The book, as we have hinted, is reasoned out like Euclid, wherefore it is useless, interesting as it may be, to dip into it and read a chapter here and another there. No real idea of the

author's meaning can be gained by this method, and the adoption of such a plan would be an injustice to what we think most readers will agree is the most remarkable book which this war has yet produced, a volume likely to live in history even when the scientific ideas which it contains have been superseded by the wider knowledge of generations yet to come.

CONSTANCE A. GRANDE.
JULIAN GRANDE.

BERNE,
SWITZERLAND.

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