
"The Great Illusion": A Reply to Rear-Admiral A. T. Mahan

Author(s): Norman Angell

Source: *The North American Review*, Jun., 1912, Vol. 195, No. 679 (Jun., 1912), pp. 754-772

Published by: University of Northern Iowa

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25119773>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The North American Review*

JSTOR

“THE GREAT ILLUSION”

A REPLY TO REAR-ADMIRAL A. T. MAHAN

BY NORMAN ANGELL

IN the March number of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, Rear-Admiral Mahan has stated the reasons which prompt him to regard the thesis I have elaborated and the conclusions drawn therefrom in *The Great Illusion* as erroneous. These conclusions are, briefly, that as between civilized nations it is impossible for one to achieve anything of material or moral worth by the exercise of physical force upon the other; that war as between such nations is futile in that the victor, even when completely successful, cannot by virtue of his victory advance his moral or material well-being; that we have passed out of that stage of development in which it is possible to settle the conflicts of civilized men—whether those conflicts are of an economic or moral origin—by means of military force.

Admiral Mahan dissents for two reasons—one major and the other minor. His major reason is that *The Great Illusion* “regards the world as governed by material self-interest.”

“The purpose of armaments in the minds of those maintaining them is not primarily economical advantage, in the sense of depriving a neighboring State of its own, or fear of such consequence to itself through the deliberate aggression of a rival having that particular end in view. . . . The fundamental proposition of the book is a mistake. Nations are under no illusion as to the unprofitableness of war in itself. . . . The entire conception of the work is itself an illusion based upon a profound misreading of human action. To regard the world as governed by self-interest only is to live in a non-existent world, an ideal world, a world possessed by an idea much less worthy than those which mankind, to do it bare justice, persistently entertains.”

It is somewhat astonishing that a work as irrelevant as all this to the practical problems of international politics should have received from Admiral Mahan the very con-

siderable attention he has devoted to it. But is the economic motive as a factor of international struggle quite as unimportant and secondary as the foregoing passage would imply? How does Admiral Mahan reconcile the emphatic dogmatism of the foregoing passage as to the inoperative nature of self-interest in the struggle between nations with his own statement of the case which I take from one of his books hardly yet four years old—*The Interest of America in International Conditions*? He writes:

“It is as true now as when Washington penned the words, and will always be true, that it is vain to expect nations to act consistently from any motive other than that of interest. This under the name of Realism is the frankly avowed motive of German statecraft. It follows from this directly that the study of interests, international interests, is the one basis of sound, and provident, policy for statesmen. . . .

“The old predatory instinct, that he should take who has the power, survives, . . . and moral force is not sufficient to determine issues unless supported by physical. Governments are corporations, and corporations have not souls, . . . must put first the lawful interests, of their own wards, their own people. Such preeminence forces a nation to seek markets, and where possible to control them to its own advantage by preponderant force, the ultimate expression of which is possession, . . . an inevitable link in a chain of logical sequences: Industry, markets, control, navy, bases.”

Admiral Mahan has, it is true, anticipated the presentation of this parallel by pleading the complex nature of human nature (which no one denies). “Bronze is copper and bronze is tin,” he says. But he entirely overlooks the fact that if one withholds copper or one withholds tin it is no longer bronze. The author of *The Great Illusion* has never taken the ground that all international action can be explained in the terms of one narrow motive. He does take the ground that if you can profoundly modify the bearing of a constituent so important as that to which Admiral Mahan himself in his own work attributed great importance, you will profoundly modify the whole texture and character of international relations.

Even were it true, therefore, that the thesis in *The Great Illusion* is as narrowly economical as the criticism I have quoted would imply, it would nevertheless have on Admiral Mahan’s own showing a very profound bearing on the problems of international statecraft.

But as a matter of simple fact the thesis in question does not postulate any such narrow conception of human motive.

Although the public seem to have centered their attention on that section of the book which deals with the financial and economical aspect, that aspect, even in sheer bulk, does not represent more than a third of it. It is not, as its critics would have us believe, a money-lender's gospel; it does not discredit moral effort, and, ineffective as it may be in execution, the intention was to show the bearing of warfare, not upon the interest of stock-brokers and money-lenders, but upon the interests of mankind. A general truth or principle may be stated in various terms, but you cannot separate a problem of interest from a problem of right or morality in the absolute fashion that Admiral Mahan would imply, because right and morality postulate the protection and promotion of the general interest.

A nation, a people, we are given to understand, have higher motives than money or "self-interest." What do we mean when we speak of the money of a nation or the self-interest of a community? We mean—and in such a discussion as this mean nothing else—better conditions for the great mass of the people; the fullest possible lives; the abolition or attenuation of poverty and destitution; not merely that the millions shall be better housed and clothed and fed, capable of provision for sickness and old age, with lives prolonged and cheered; not merely this, but also that they shall be better educated, with character disciplined by steady labor and a better use of leisure, a general social atmosphere which shall make possible family affection, individual dignity and courtesy and the graces of life, not alone among the few, but among the many.

Now, do these things constitute a worthy national policy, an inspiring aim of statesmanship, or not? Yet they are, speaking in terms of communities, pure self-interest—all bound up with economic problems, with money. Does Admiral Mahan mean us to take him at his word when he would attach to such efforts the same discredit that one implies in talking of a mercenary individual? Would he have us believe that the typical great movements of our times—Socialism, Trade Unionism, Syndicalism, Insurance Bills, Land Laws, Old-age Pensions, Charity Organization, Improved Education—bound up as they all are with economic problems, are not the sort of objects which more and more are absorbing the best activities of Christendom?

What are the activities which lie outside the range of

those things? Are they ever likely to constitute a cause of struggle between nations? Religion? Religion, it is true, was a motive drenching Europe with blood during some hundreds of years, but the last real war of religion in Europe ended with the Peace of Westphalia. A question of honor, the avenging of some “ insult ”? Yes, that may yet drive a nation into war because the code of morals which rules the relations of nations lags behind the code which dominates the relations of individuals, and for that reason the morality of the duel, long since abandoned as between individuals in the best type of human society, still obtains as between nations. Englishmen of the eighteenth century would have scorned the idea that a personal insult could ever have any other solution than the field of honor; to urge the contrary was to show oneself either craven or ignorant of human nature. Yet the duel has disappeared. “ Honor,” even that which cannot be taken to the courts, is just as well protected without it; and Anglo-Saxon civilization is not craven; it is not worse for the disappearance of the duel; it is better. International conduct will show a like development.

I have attempted in my book roughly to indicate the process at work in these developments, to show that in the changing character of men’s ideals there is a distinct narrowing of the gulf which is supposed to separate ideal aims and those of self-interest. Early ideals, whether in the field of politics or religion, are generally disassociated from any aim of general well-being. In early politics ideals are concerned simply with personal allegiance to some dynastic chief, a feudal lord or a monarch. The well-being of a community does not enter into the matter at all. Later the chief must embody in his person that well-being or he does not achieve the allegiance of a community of any enlightenment; later the well-being of the community becomes the end in itself without being embodied in the person of any hereditary chief; the community realize that their efforts, instead of being directed to the protection of the individual interests of some chief, are, as a matter of fact, directed to the protection of their own interests, and their altruism has become self-interest, since self-sacrifice of a community for the sake of the community is a contradiction in terms. In the religious sphere a like development has been shown. Primitive religious ideals have no relation to the material

betterment of mankind. The early Christian thought it meritorious to live a sterile life at the top of a pillar eaten by vermin, as the Hindoo saint to-day thinks it meritorious to live an equally sterile life upon a bed of spikes. But as the early Christian ideal progressed, sacrifices having no purpose connected with the betterment of mankind lost their appeal. Our admiration now goes, not to the recluse who does nothing for mankind, but rather to the priest who would give his life to bring a ray of comfort to a leper settlement. The Christian saint who would allow the nails of his fingers to grow through the palms of his clasped hands would excite, not our admiration, but our revolt. More and more is religious effort being subjected to this test: Does it make for the improvement of society? If not it stands condemned. Political ideals will inevitably be more and more subjected to a like test. I am aware that very often at present they are not so subjected. Dominated, as our political thought is, by Roman and feudal imagery—hypnotized by symbols and analogues which the necessary development of organized society has rendered obsolete—the ideals even of democracies are still often pure abstractions, divorced from any purpose calculated to advance the moral or material betterment of mankind. The craze for sheer size of territory, simple extent of administrative area, is still deemed a thing deserving immense, incalculable sacrifices. Because a Roman province was in a true sense a “possession” of the central Roman state, because a population was in some real sense “owned” by a feudal chief, we still talk as though one self-governing community could “own” another self-governing community and that annexation in some unexplained way is an addition to the wealth of the annexing state—as though the wealth of a people depended upon the size of the administrative area which they happened to inhabit, as though the population of London were necessarily better off than the population of Philadelphia, because London is a bigger city; or as though Londoners would increase their wealth by “annexing” the County of Kent. And yet even these ideals, firmly set as they are in our language and tradition, are rapidly yielding to the necessary force of events. A generation ago it would have been inconceivable that a people or a monarch should calmly see part of its country secede and establish itself as a separate political entity without attempting to prevent it

by force of arms. Yet this is what happened but a year or two since in the Scandinavian peninsula. For forty years Germany has added to the difficulties of the European situation and to her own for the purpose of including Alsace and Lorraine in its federation, but even there, obeying the tendency which is world-wide, an attempt has been made at the creation of a constitutional and autonomous government. The history of the British Empire for fifty years has been a process of undoing the work of conquest. England, which for centuries has made such sacrifices to retain Ireland, is now making great sacrifices in order to make her secession workable. To all political arrangements, to all political ideals, this final test will be applied: Does it or does it not make for the widest interests of the mass of the people involved?

And it is to that test that I have subjected warfare as between nations. In applying it I have used terms that I thought would be most familiar to a busy and occupied world, largely those of the market-place, because those would make the essence of these problems understandable to the workaday mass to whom a problem set in purely moral terms might not appeal; not from any moral recalcitrance, but because the hard pressure of their working lives would make economic terms easier of comprehension.

It is possible that Admiral Mahan might rejoin with another distinction. He might urge that, though these questions all had more or less their origin in or were bound up with economic problems, the economic question becomes itself a moral question, a question of right: it was not the few pence of the ship tax that Hampden fought about, but the question of right which its payment involved. So with nations; war, ineffective to achieve an economic end, unprofitable in the sense that the cost involved in the defense of a given economic point exceeds its monetary value, will still be fought because a point trifling in the economic sense is all-important from the view of right.

That objection would be perfectly valid if the moral divisions of men, even those arising out of economic conflict, coincided with their political divisions; but they do not. The physical division of labor between nations due to the developed means of communication has set up not merely an economic interdependence, so cut athwart political frontiers as to render the great industrial nations, like Eng-

land and Germany, no longer economic units (Lancashire being economically far more a part of Louisiana, a section of a foreign State, than it is of Dorsetshire, a section of the same State), but out of that condition has grown an intellectual interdependence; nations are no longer moral and intellectual units. The moral divisions of men no longer coincide with the political and national divisions; so that national armies can no longer embody the moral rivalries. Religious wars came to an end because as religious differences came to intersect political frontiers there was produced a condition in which no state could be regarded as purely Catholic or purely Protestant, and we had a Catholic France allied with a Protestant Sweden. The struggle in the form of military rivalry between States was ridiculous and came to an end.

If there is any ideal motive prompting English hostility to Germany, that motive is in some way connected with English ideals of personal freedom and parliamentary government; but it would be impossible to advance those ideals by warfare, for the simple reason that the real fight for them must necessarily be carried on inside the German frontiers by Germans and can be advanced in no other way. For a foreign nation to challenge Germany on behalf of such ideals would compel Germans now fighting for such to abandon that fight and to fight as patriots against those in sympathy with them. The net result of such a war, however it might go, would be to set back the struggle now going on in Germany.

So much for Admiral Mahan's major objection. His minor objection appears to be roughly embodied in the following passage:

"Even on the ground of self-interest only, the argument appears overstrained. . . . I had occasion several years ago to look somewhat extensively into the economical and financial conditions of Great Britain toward the end of the Napoleonic wars. They were dismal; but it is true none the less that those of the Continent were so much worse that Great Britain owed the long start which she held and kept to this cause largely, of course not solely, for a single reason rarely accounts for all the phenomena of a social order.

"Great Britain owed her superiority then to the armed control of the sea, which had sheltered her commercial and industrial fabric from molestation by the enemy; while by the same means she crushed the prosperity of France, disabling her from utilizing her rich resources in the processes of commercial exchange. . . . As the result of the war between France and Germany in 1870, Germany acquired territory and

a huge indemnity. These were direct results. She received also the final impulse to national unity, consummated in the formal institution of the German Empire. . . . On the other hand, German national unity has assured, throughout the countries thus confederated into one empire, the development of an economical and industrial system which, among other effects, has resulted in reducing emigration from some 200,000, in 1879, to 25,000 yearly now; although, coincident with this diminution, the population is increasing by 800,000 annually.”

Now I have attempted to show that the respective weight of the factors in international development have changed radically, not merely since the Napoleonic era, but since the days of the Franco-German War. Presumably Admiral Mahan rejects this part of my thesis, since he reverts to the facts of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Not only does the foregoing passage imply that military power must play roughly the same rôle in commercial and industrial development now as then (otherwise it would be irrelevant to cite these historical facts), but that a nation is advantaged by damage to its neighbors or that a nation will be prepared to fight merely for the sake of seeing a neighbor suffer a worse loss than itself.

In attempting to sketch the progression away from the methods of physical force I indicated certain facts of historical development. The earliest form of overseas enterprise— of “ sea-power ”—was simple piracy, like that of the Northmen, whose only notion of deriving profit from that power was to ravage an enemy’s coast and to squeeze the population for danegeld. The struggle for colonial expansion after the discovery of the New World took a somewhat less crude form, but was still bound up with the exercise of sheer political and military force. And now industrial and commercial expansion has got beyond even that stage: that expansion is no longer dependent upon the political power of the particular people who may be seeking it. I have stated the case thus:

“ What was the problem confronting the merchant adventurer of the sixteenth century? Here were newly discovered lands containing, as he believed, precious metals and stones and spices, inhabited by savages or semi-savages. If other traders got those stones or precious metals, it was quite evident that he could not. His colonial policy therefore had to be directed to two ends: firstly, to such effective political occupation of the country as to keep the savage or semi-savage population in check; and, secondly, to prevent other nations from searching for this wealth and precious metals, since if they obtained it he could not. That is the story of the French and Dutch in India, of the Spanish in South America.

But as soon as there grew up in those countries an organized community living in the country itself the whole problem changed. The colonies then have a value to the mother-country mainly as a market and a source of food and raw material, and if their value in those respects is to be developed to the full, they inevitably become self-governing communities in a greater or lesser degree, and the mother-country exploits them just as she exploits any other community with which she may be in relation. Germany might acquire Canada, but it could no longer ever be a question of her taking Canada's wealth in precious metals or in any other form to the exclusion of other nations. If Germany 'owned' Canada, she would have to own it in the same way that the English do. The Germans would have to pay for every sack of wheat and for every pound of beef they might buy just as if Canada belonged to England or to anybody else. Germany could not have even the meager satisfaction of Germanizing those great communities, for every one knows that they are too firmly 'set.' Their language, law, morals, would have to remain; so that after conquest Germany would find that German Canada was pretty much the same Canada as it is now; a country where Germans are free to go and do go, which is now a field for Germany's expanding population and for Germany's overseas trade. As a matter of fact, Germany feeds her expanding population from territories like Canada and the United States without going there. The era of emigration for Germany has stopped because the compound steam-engine has rendered emigration largely unnecessary."

Admiral Mahan does not deal with the historical development I have indicated here except to imply that such development does not affect the field of practical politics because the events of 1911—the Franco-German conflict over Morocco, the accentuation of the Anglo-German conflict, the invasion of Tripoli by Italy—show that the old factors of international conflict are still operative.

These events show nothing at all except that political opinion in Europe is still dominated by the old conceptions; that the public opinion which gives the motive force to the action of governments is still carried along on the momentum of old ideas—which it was the object of my book to show. At the bottom of the whole struggle of 1911—not merely the diplomatic struggle in which France, England, and Germany were engaged, but the actual military conflict which has been precipitated as between Italy and Turkey—was the European contest for African territory. That contest has not only provoked one war, but brought war for three other great nations within measurable distance. Whatever be the outcome, one thing is certain: immense burdens will be added to the already heavy one carried by the five or six nations concerned; for two or three hundred millions of people in Europe live with all its problems of high prices,

labor wars, unsolved social difficulties will be made harder still. One would assume, therefore, that this struggle for African territory was bound up with the “ primordial needs ” of the three or four hundred millions concerned. Well, the simple truth is that it misses those needs altogether, as the history of the last twenty or thirty years most plainly shows.

The national future and welfare of France would not have suffered one whit had Morocco passed under the administration of Germany; Germany’s real expansion, the activities by which her people gain their livelihood, have not in the past and will not in the future depend upon the acquisition of tropical colonies. The prosperity of Italy, if the experience of France, the most successful African colonizer in Europe, is any guide, will not be advanced by the conquest of Tripoli; it is likely to be diminished.

Dogmatic as these assertions may sound, they are borne out by facts from which there is no escape. Both Italy and Germany are trying to follow in the African footsteps of France. Let us see exactly what that sort of national development means, as illustrated to us in the case of Tunis, one of the most successful instances of the sort of development about which the whole conflict of 1911 raged. I have summarized that history elsewhere as follows:

“ In thirty years, at a cost of many million sterling (it is part of successful colonial administration in France never to let it be known what the colonies really cost), France has founded in Tunis a colony, in which to-day there are, excluding soldiers and officials, about 25,000 genuine French colonists: just the number by which the French population in France—the real France—is diminishing every six months! And the value of Tunis as a market does not even amount to the sum which France spends directly on its occupation and administration, to say nothing of the indirect extension of military burden which its conquest involved; and, of course, the market which it represents would still exist in some form, though England—or even Germany—administered the country.

“ In other words, France loses twice every year in her home population a colony equivalent to Tunis—if we measure colonies in terms of communities made up of the race which has sprung from the mother-country. And yet, if once in a generation her rulers and diplomats can point out to 25,000 Frenchmen living artificially and exotically under conditions which must in the long run be inimical to their race, it is pointed to as ‘ expansion ’ and as evidence that France is maintaining her position as a Great Power. A few years, as history goes, unless there is some complete change of tendencies which at present seem as strong as ever, the French race as we now know it will have ceased to exist,

swamped without the firing, maybe, of a single shot, by the Germans, Belgians, English, Italians, and Jews. There are to-day in France more Germans than there are Frenchmen in all the colonies that France has acquired in the last half-century, and German trade with France outweighs enormously the trade of France with all French colonies. France is to-day a better colony for the Germans than they could make of any exotic colony which France owns.

" 'They tell me,' said a French deputy recently (in a not quite original *mot*), 'that the Germans are at Agadir. I know they are in the Champs-Élysées.' Which, of course, is in reality a much more serious matter.

" And on the other side we are to assume that Germany has during the period of France's expansion—since the war—not expanded at all. That she has been throttled and cramped—that she has not had her place in the sun; and that is why she must fight for it and endanger the security of her neighbors.

" Well, I put it to you that all this in reality is false: that Germany has not been cramped or throttled; that, on the contrary, as we recognize when we get away from the mirage of the map, her expansion has been the wonder of the world. She has added 20,000,000 to her population—one-half the present population of France—during a period in which the French population has actually diminished. Of all the nations in Europe, she has cut the biggest swath in the development of world trade, industry, and influence. Despite the fact that she has not 'expanded' in the sense of mere political dominion, a proportion of her population, equivalent to the white population of the whole colonial British Empire, make their living, or the best part of it, from the development and exploitation of territory outside her borders. These facts are not new; they have been made the text of thousands of political sermons preached in England itself during the last few years; but one side of their significance seems to have been missed.

" We get, then, this: On the one side a nation extending enormously its political dominion and yet diminishing in national force, if by national force we mean the growth of a sturdy, enterprising, vigorous people. (I am not denying that France is both wealthy and comfortable, to a greater degree it may be than her rival; but she has not her colonies to thank for it—quite the contrary.) On the other side, we get immense expansion expressed in terms of those things—a growing and vigorous population and the possibility of feeding them—and yet the political dominion, speaking practically, has hardly been extended at all.

" Such a condition of things, if the common jargon of high politics means anything, is preposterous. It takes nearly all meaning out of most that we hear about 'primordial needs' and the rest of it.

" As a matter of fact, we touch here one of the vital confusions, which is at the bottom of most of the present political trouble between nations, and shows the power of the old ideas and the old phraseology.

" In the days of the sailing-ship and the lumbering wagon dragging slowly over all but impassable roads, for one country to derive any considerable profit from another, it had practically to administer it politically. But the compound steam-engine, the railway, the telegraph, have profoundly modified the elements of the whole problem. In the modern world political dominion is playing a more and more effaced rôle as a

factor in commerce; the non-political factors have in practice made it all but inoperative. It is the case with every modern nation actually that the outside territories which it exploits most successfully are precisely those of which it does not ‘own’ a foot. Even with the most characteristically colonial of all—Great Britain—the greater part of her oversea trade is done with countries which she makes no attempt to ‘own,’ control, coerce, or dominate—and incidentally she has ceased to do any of those things with her colonies.

“Millions of Germans in Prussia and Westphalia derive profit or make their living out of countries to which their political dominion in no way extends. The modern German exploits South America by remaining at home. Where, forsaking this principle, he attempts to work through political power, he approaches futility. German colonies are colonies ‘*pour rire*.’ The Government has to bribe Germans to go to them; her trade with them is microscopic; and if the twenty millions who have been added to Germany’s population since the war had had to depend on their country’s political conquest, they would have had to starve. What feeds them are countries which Germany has never ‘owned’ and never hopes to ‘own’: Brazil, Argentina, the United States, India, Australia, Canada, Russia, France, and England. (Germany, which never spent a mark on its political conquest, to-day draws more tribute from South America than does Spain, which has poured out mountains of treasure and oceans of blood in its conquest.) These are Germany’s real colonies. Yet the immense interests which they represent, of really primordial concern to Germany, without which so many of her people would be actually without food, are for the diplomats and the soldiers quite secondary ones; the immense trade which they represent owes nothing to the diplomat, to Agadir incidents, to Dreadnoughts; it is the unaided work of the merchant and the manufacturer. All this diplomatic and military conflict and rivalry, the waste of wealth, the unspeakable foulness which Tripoli is revealing, are reserved for things which both sides to the quarrel could sacrifice, not merely without loss, but with profit.”

As a matter of fact, it is a very superficial reading of the events of 1911 which would prompt the conclusion that the facts of the world are not bringing home to peoples and governments the changing character of the relations of nations.

It is perfectly true that the Napoleonic policy was directed at crushing England, England’s at crushing France, just as France in 1870, fearing the development of Germany, tried to prevent it and was successfully challenged. After the war German policy was directed at crippling France, not merely as a political, but as an economic factor in international struggle. But the law of progression in these matters is illustrated by this fact: Bismarck was nearer to being able to apply the methods of Attila, nearly 1,500 years removed from him, than was Bismarck’s successor, Herr von

Kiderlen Waechter, to being able to apply the methods of Bismarck from whom only forty years separated him. Where Bismarck could have bled France white with a certain satisfaction without any immediate danger being involved to his own country, Herr von Kiderlen Waechter learned that to bleed white this relatively feeble France of 1911 would be to plunge this great and powerful Germany into dire economic distress. What American cotton had been to Lancashire in 1865, French money, and all that it directly and indirectly represents, was to German industry in 1911. He learned that of the twenty million souls added to the German population since 1870 nearly all of them were dependent upon foreign food, and gained their livelihood from industries dependent to a large extent upon foreign capital, most of it French and English capital; and that if by some magic the ultimate Bismarckian dream of wiping France economically from the map of Europe could be realized, he would have been prevented and, indeed, was prevented from so doing, not by any consideration for French welfare, but by the very pressing necessities of German industry and by the direct influence of German financiers and German business men. Not only has the work of the German people unintentionally brought to naught the carefully laid plans of the statesman, but modern Germany would have been impossible unless those plans had miscarried. It was Bismarck's declared policy from first to last to check, by every possible means, the economic development of France. She was to be blotted out as an economic factor in Europe. Well, if she had been, the wonderful development of German commerce in the last twenty years would have been impossible.

That commerce is largely with such countries as South America, the Near East, Russia, and the recent development of those countries which makes the large German trade possible is due mainly to French and English capital. If German statesmen had really been able to wipe out Germany's rivals, this development of German trade would have been impossible.

And all the efforts of French statesmen to control these currents have on their side been just as futile. French policy was aimed at fortifying Russia to counterbalance Germany, and with that purpose an alliance with Russia was formed, an integral part of the understanding being that

a portion of the immense free capital of France should be available for Russia. The capital was given with the result that German trade in Russia, thanks to development due in no small measure to this French capital, has gone up from about fifteen to forty-five per cent., and Germany may be said to-day commercially to dominate Russia. It is one of the great outlets for German industrial and commercial activity—thanks to the very policy which was aimed against Germany.

And note this: that with the freedom of communication in every sense that now exists in the world, it has become a material impossibility to prevent French money aiding German trade in one form or another. So long as France, with a stationary population and large amounts of free capital, desires interest on her money, so long as the French father desires to give to his daughter a *dot*, so long, in other words, as France achieves in some measure those aims for which mainly the state exists at all, her money will go to the help of German trade.

The true inwardness of Admiral Mahan's criticism of *The Great Illusion* is to be found, not so much perhaps in the article which he devotes directly to the book, as in the preceding articles in this REVIEW, in which he deals with “ The Place of Force in International Relations,” and his discussion of this subject is marked by exactly the sort of limitation which generally marks it in the case of militarist writers. A problem involving necessarily two parties and two groups of factors—defense and attack—is made in terms of one party and one group of factors, that of the defense. Thus in the passage which I have quoted Admiral Mahan argues that Great Britain's superiority of armaments sheltered her commercial and industrial fabric from molestation by the enemy, giving her security of development. Therefore, he argues, military force is economically advantageous. The argument is, of course, fallacious: it is not military force which gave her the advantage, but the fact that she was able to prevent the employment of military force against her.

If there had been no military force at all in the case, if Europe had not believed in force as a means of achieving the ends of men, England would have been more secure still and all her neighbors would have enjoyed a like security. In attempting to test the practical value of any principle of

this kind we must note its total result when applied by all the parties involved, and if that simple test is applied all Admiral Mahan's elaborate arguments in favor of force fall to the ground.

The problem before us, the question out of which *The Great Illusion* and this whole discussion has grown, is this: "What ought the nations of Europe to do in the matter of the employment of force the one against the other?" And if the question is put in that form, the only form in which it can be put when we are talking as we are with reference to principles applicable generally to European civilization, it is evident that the plea in favor of force even in the Napoleonic era cannot be maintained. If the general tradition of Europe had been against the employment of force, and such tradition had dominated its policy, not only would the security of England and her freedom in industrial and commercial development have been greater even than it was, and the like security of her neighbors greater, but the whole European race, instead of being weakened by the destruction of some three million of its best selected lives, leaving the stock to be perpetuated by its worst elements, would have been infinitely better than it is, with a greater capacity for improvement; and the incalculable amount of life and wealth and energy that has gone into mutual destruction would have gone into making good that improvement. The world would have been a better place, inhabited by a racially better people.

Without force, argues Admiral Mahan, the purpose of the Holy Alliance could not have been defeated; Napoleon III. could not have been expelled from Mexico, Spain from Cuba, nor the encroachment of Russia resisted in the Far East. Again, of course, the real argument should be: If Spain had not believed in just those doctrines against which *The Great Illusion* is a protest—believed, that is, that the use of force against distant communities for the purposes of spoliation was better than the free co-operation of independent communities—the Spanish colonies would have approximated more to the English type and there would have been no need either of the Monroe doctrine or of the Spanish-American War. Russia would be devoting her energies to internal development instead of sterile territorial expansion, and the patriotism of the Japanese, not called into existence by the need of defense, would have been diverted more to internal development and less to a military pride which menaces bet-

ter civilizations. And the only way to prevent that is this: for the nations of Europe to realize that they are a community, and that a community can only exist by virtue of the units composing it surrendering the use of force the one as against the other. And the necessary precedent of such realization is the mutual conception of the superiority of co-operation to conflict, the existence of that “ communal sense ” which is the necessary precedent of civilization in any sphere, national or international.

You cannot get communal sense enough even in the pirate crew unless they surrender the use of force as between themselves, act by agreement, and co-operate against their victim, their prey. The prey of civilization is Nature, the Planet, and unless the units which make up, or ought to make up, the community of Europe give up preying the one upon the other, and co-operate in the attack upon their prey, that attack will by so much suffer.

Inside the political frontiers this general recognition that the exercise of force as between the individuals composing the community must, in the individual's own interest, be surrendered, is now fairly achieved. The next step of human progress is to render the application of that principle complete.

Admiral Mahan retorts that the individuals within the frontier have surrendered the use of force by compulsion of the police; but he skips an essential step—indeed, he skips several essential steps—in the creation of the police. The police exist by virtue of the fact that the individuals of the community have so far surrendered force as to agree upon the creation of a police and upon the fashion in which and the purpose for which, it should be employed; and until you get this suspension of individual conflict in favor of common action the police is an impossibility. If each individual had said: “ I do not want the judgment of the community: it may be wrong; I will depend upon my personal strength to vindicate my right; I know more of my affairs than does the community; I will not co-operate with the community to form the police,” there would never have been a police—indeed, there would have been no organized society.

And Admiral Mahan, if not directly, at least by implication, encourages the individual—the individual nation, that is—so to stand out and so take that attitude because, he says, the interests and ideals of the individual are in conflict.

Not merely does Admiral Mahan ignore the fact that the very difficulties which he mentions as being only solvable by force have arisen by the blind faith of men in force, but he writes as though the force provoked in reply to force had succeeded where reason had failed. But force answers no questions and solves no problems. Its outcome is an accident. It is irrelevant to the question of right, and there is no guarantee that might shall always or generally be on the side of right. It takes the cynicism of Napoleon to declare that "Providence is always on the side of the strong battalions." Force is even more accidental than that—fortuitous circumstance might place it on the side of the weak battalions. Thus: I am in conflict with some one, we lose our tempers and have a duel, and because my eyesight is better than that of my opponent I kill him with a pistol-shot. Who was right in the original dispute? What has the result proved except that my eyesight is better? The most magnificent and marvelous exhibition of force in history, that of Napoleon, broke down; and in its failure I believe the biographer of Nelson rejoices. If this wonderful instance of the exercise of force teaches anything at all, it is that force is necessarily futile; and that one lesson it teaches badly, because the psychological result of the employment of force is generally to swamp reason in favor of temper in those against whom it is employed and to distort the character of its rôle in human relationship. Europe did not draw the lesson from that episode that Napoleonic aims and methods were fundamentally wrong, that the unification of Europe—if that was Napoleon's aim—can only come by the free co-operation of the units composing it. On the contrary, the outcome is an attempt to repeat the Napoleonic display of force in a slightly different form. Napoleon's aggression started Germany on the road to militarism, the full fruits of which Europe is now beginning to gather. Prussianism now threatens Europe somewhat in the same way that Napoleonism threatened it in the past.* Germany is to take "the leadership of Europe" by military predominance, as France was to have done a hundred years

* This general tendency has received suggestive expression in General von Bernhardi's book—*Deutschland und der nächste Krieg*. One of his chapters is headed "The Duty to Make War." He describes the peace movement in Germany as "poisonous," and proclaims the doctrine that the duties and tasks of the German people cannot be accomplished save by the sword. "The duty of self-assertion is by no means ex-

ago; and Europe will presumably reply by force; and then some other nation will aspire to the “ leadership of Europe,” and the old obsession will dominate the mind and absorb the energies between civilization and savagery. The fact of organized society is standing proof that individuals do not sacrifice their interests when they surrender their right to the use of force the one against the other in favor of common action to be determined by reason and agreement between them. Men’s interests are not sacrificed by co-operation; they are advanced by it, and if this principle is true in the case of individual men, it gains in force a hundredfold in the case of nations. And if Admiral Mahan retorts that it is not a question of conflicting interests between nations, but of conflicting ideals, I would reply that ideals which survive by the accident of force are not likely to be superior to those which survive through the process of reason and discussion.

Admiral Mahan says :

“ The great objection to law, however, is not merely that it is inadequate, but that in most of the cases it inequitably perpetuates injustice by sanctioning outworn conditions or inapplicable principles.”

But exactly the same objection could be applied to the municipal, the internal law of nations. Such have often in the past been monstrous, and they were improved by discussion, agitation, education, the recognition of the general advantage—a recognition arrived at through the free play of the thousand and one factors which make for the real progress of men, not by a resort to force, by having the

hausted in the mere repelling of hostile attacks. It includes the needs of securing to the whole people which the state embraces the possibility of existence and development.” It is desirable, declares the author, that conquest shall be effected by war, and not by peaceful means; Silesia would not have had the same value for Prussia if Frederick the Great had obtained it from an Arbitration Court. The attempt to abolish war is, declares the author, not only immoral and unworthy of a community, “ it is an attempt to deprive man of his highest possession—the right to stake physical life for ideal ends. The German people must learn to see that the maintenance of peace cannot and must never be the goal of policy.”

The armament party in England is urging that the only possible reply to this sort of thing is the increase of armaments. That exactly suits the Bernhardt school. That increase of armaments will be used by them to justify their theories and to discredit all opponents to it. The real reply is to find means of creating an enlightened opinion in Europe which shall see the sophistry and danger of this philosophy of force.

individuals who suffer by a bad law fight out their differences by physical combat—that is a step from civilization to anarchy, and in the case of the community within the frontier universally recognized as such.

Admiral Mahan may say it is not a question of what might be best, but of what exists, and I would reply: What exists depends on us—upon the action of each individual. What exists in this matter is not something fixed outside our acts and our volition, it is the reflection of those acts, and without those individual acts there can be no salvation.

What prompts those individual acts, of course, is a realization, however imperfect, on the part of the individual of the advantages which he gains by co-operation with his fellows; of the superiority of such a method to conflict, the creation, in other words, of a “communal sense” by a growing understanding of the real nature of human relationship. And until you have this in however feeble a degree you cannot get communal action: you could not even get two cannibals to agree to co-operate against a third instead of fighting each other until they see the advantages of so doing, which is a process of reason and discussion. And reason and understanding must precede international co-operation: international politics must embody more and more the general realization of certain principles, or corporate progress is not possible. Those principles I have tried to enunciate. But Admiral Mahan, if he does not deprecate, at least does not encourage, that attitude which would make the individual—the individual nation, that is—part of a community. He urges that the community of nations will in some wonderful way reverse the process which has produced the communities of men; that the isolation of units employing force the one against the other is a safer road of progress than that of a completer co-operation which looks to the abandoning of force in favor of agreement and a common end determined by reason and discussion. And this, with whatever sophistry or eloquence it may be urged, is the doctrine of savagery.

NORMAN ANGELL.