

# Chesterton Explains Why England Can't Use German Methods

By G. K. Chesterton

The Distinguished English Publicist.  
I was Grand Inquisitor, I would try to burn out of the world not so much certain beliefs as certain phrases. I would argue with people about creeds; but I would kill them for catchwords. Short of this, much might be done by voluntary asceticism and self-denial. Journalists might take a vow not to say "a strong man" for eight months, after which time they might begin to have some faint admiration of what, if anything, they meant by it. They should fast from the word "slacker." They should only allow themselves to say "doing his bit" upon great feast days. But other phrases should be extirpated utterly because they are part of a whole view of life which has been proved to be aphish and impertinent.

As things stand, they choke the channels of human thinking everywhere. The clear heroes like Fatalism or Antinomianism are bad for conduct; in them action is spoiled by thought. But in these things thought is spoiled by language. Especially by the same language used again and again. I have seen a hundred times, if I have seen it once, the phrase about the present war: "We want not people who talk, but people who do things." There are I know not how many confusions in those few words.

To begin with, it is within the humble capacities of human nature to talk sense. Probably the best thing that an enforced civilian can at present do for his country is to talk sense. It is also possible to do nonsense, as the Germans do when they "go bang, bang" (as the children say) over English water-gates, or as some Englishmen do when they try to suppress German music. Then, of course, the phrase involves the division of men into two different kinds—those who can speak and those who can act. This is an idiot simplicity, like dividing men into those who hear and those who smell.

## Would English Admirals

Eat Their Cannibal Captives?  
There is not, and never has been, the smallest grain of evidence that the two capacities are incompatible; and all the largest historical evidence proves that they generally go together. Danton, "who stamped his foot and armies came out of the earth"; Chatham, who sent the English flag round the world, were both of them primarily and supremely men of words. They could talk well and act well, and their chief obstacles were powerful dummies who could do neither. But, in contradiction to the plainest fact, this absurd tag still trails its length along; and a man is often supposed to be able to do everything merely because he cannot tell anybody what he is doing.

Another endless rut into which many of our writers have slid is a phrase about fighting the Germans with their own weapons. Now, first of all, a sensible person does not fight anything with its own weapons. He does not bite a shark, or scratch a tiger. The wise man will not place his principal hopes in the possibility of tossing a bull. He will not be found, in his scientific rambles, endeavoring patiently to sting a hornet. It is sufficiently obvious, one would think, that victory over an opponent can best be obtained not by using the methods with which he is familiar, but the methods with which he is not familiar.

But when we come to moral and intellectual differences this self-evident truism seems to fade from the minds of men. If we were at war with the King of the Cannibal Islands, these people would say that our admirals ought to eat their prisoners. At least, they show no perception of any intellectual principle that could save them from such a conclusion. It does not seem to dawn on them that we do not eat savages for the same reason that we do conquer them: because we are not savage. We do not swallow human gore for the same reason that we do not swallow slavery and humiliation: because they make us sick. I am sorry to see that even so candid and humane a writer as Mr. Blatchford, to whom we all owe so much, slips into the same rut. He says sarcastically that we are not allowed to use certain forms of retaliation because our Government is so kind to the Germans. Now certain special retaliations may be right or wrong; but it is mere slipshod sentimentalism to suggest that those who think them wrong have any particular Teutonic sympathies.

Would Mr. Blatchford, for instance, say that we should poison wells because the Germans poisoned them? And, if not, why not? The real reason, of course, would be the same for him as for me; and we should not refrain out of respect for Germans, but out of respect for ourselves.

This plain principle must be the test in all talk about the morality of methods. For it is the whole challenge that is rendering the world. We are fighting for human self-respect; we cannot possibly lose what we are fighting for, even in order to fight better. The Prussian sticks at nothing in pursuit of triumph because he understands nothing except triumph. Losing the battle is to him what losing his soul is to a devotee—a thing he normally hopes to avoid, a thing he hopes if may not be too hard to avoid, but a thing which, first and last, he must avoid, and the avoidance of which will dwarf everything else that is endured. But we do not and cannot make our salvation consist solely in our success.

The German mentality seems to be complex on the verge of insanity. We have now not only to reconcile minds in the outrages of the

past with disavowal or outrages of the present, we have to reconcile them both with the renewal of outrages in the present. Some seem to think that nothing need be said about any of them except that Germany is bad in everything she does and false in everything she says, I am more anti-German even than most of my countrymen, for I think the peaceful arts and sciences of Prussia, full of pedantry and perversion and the cult of panic, were even worse than the warlike arts and sciences of Germany, full of poisons and instruments of torture, transferred for the first time to the battlefield.

But I think this dismissal of the matter is both easy and insufficient. There are three possible forms for the hostile interpretation of Prussia: that Prussia is as ravenous as a wolf; that Prussia is as frightened as a sheep, and that Prussia is a wolf in sheep's clothing. But none of these fully explains the sinking of the Arabic just before the overture to America, and the sinking of the Hesperian just after it. Even a wolf when attired in wool (like a hygienic idealist) does not try to join in the meadow gambols of one lamb in the very act of taking large bites out of another. He does not run round the field kissing a sheep and eating a sheep alternately.

If the pirate intended to go on, he would not appear to give way; if he had set the course and intended to sail by it, he certainly would not relish striking his flag, even for a moment. On the other hand, if he wanted to deceive, he would try to deceive. If he wanted to get an advantage by a promise afterwards to be broken, he would get the advantage first and then break the promise. Whatever advantage it was that the Prussian Government hoped to get by apologizing to the United States, from the dream of securing a sort of half-pardon from the Pope to the rapture of calling a momentary smile to the acute countenance of Mr. Wilson, it is quite impossible that the Prussian Government can have got it yet.

As far as one can see, these abrupt changes cannot be parts of one perfectly coherent plan. And the explanation is, I am inclined to think, that they do not really come from one perfectly coherent will. Something, perhaps, must be allowed for practical failures in information or transmission, though I really think the Prussians would rather plead anything than plead frankly a fault in their organization. Something may be allowed for that, but not much. The German Empire really is materially well organized.

But I am more and more inclined to doubt that the German Empire is morally well organized. In other words, I think that the bodies of Germans are pretty thoroughly disciplined; but I gravely doubt whether the souls of Germans are really disciplined at all. That the Germans are patriotic is past all question; it is the most creditable thing about them—one is inclined to add (in the condition at which they have now arrived) the only admirable thing about them. But their national feeling is a feeling. It is not a doctrine—or rather, it is five or six totally different doctrines. When five men commit a murder from five different motives, the time comes when they discover the difference.

Physical Germany is built upon mental Germany; and mental Germany is an anarchy. All its schools of thought have, indeed, lived hitherto in a very drastic subordination to a small class and to the officers of the State. But that unity is simply a bodily unity, and is largely produced by mere bodily fear. The ultimate Prussian doctrine is that the fear of the sword and not the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; but it has the logical consequence that the drawing of the sword is the beginning of a thousand follies.

We do not and cannot think of defeat as the worst thing possible, any more than we can think of war as the worst thing possible. To us a defeated Kosciuszko, or a defeated Robert Emmet, are not disgraced by defeat; but a defeated Bismarck would be simply a detected rascal. I am not pronouncing here upon any particular instance, which would require a military and scientific knowledge which I do not possess; but I am pronouncing upon what the test must be, and especially upon what it must not be. It must not be merely the question of whether the enemy is or is not doing some particular thing. They said in the Middle Ages, I think, that the Devil was the ape of God. It must not be said in any ages that we were the apes of the Devil.

When I say "we," I mean, first, my own countrymen; further, the totally different nations called Ireland and Scotland; and, finally, all the countries which have kept the chivalry and charity of Christendom for much more than a thousand years. They are now, thank God, practically all embattled in defense of that chivalry and charity, and are doing justice upon the proved enemies of both without a particle of doubt or fear.

The only limit they will recognize will be the strictly rational one which I have stated. They cannot strike those who would destroy their chivalry by destroying it themselves. For the fighting spirit as we value it is the flower of a great many other things, and cannot be separated from them. A kind of courage can exist in a merciless and unmagnanimous soldier, as it can exist in a merciless and unmagnanimous wild pig; but it does not happen to be the kind of courage that our brethren have died to keep alive.

They have died for a certain spirit not at all easy to define, and not at all necessary to define as long as we have got it. That spirit cannot exist without other virtues besides the virtue of fortitude; it has always in it something that looks before and after, the memory and the promise of peace. The old light Cavalier lyric clings to-day with a deeper and more dreadful resonance; in many darkened English homes is heard the dead voice which says: "I could not love thee, dear, so much Loved I not Honor more."

But it is equally true that such healthy and military pride cannot stand alone or grow out of nothing; it must have something to defend, and something that is worth defending. It is equally true that the spirit of Christendom is saying also— "I could not love thee, Honor, so much Loved I not Goodness more."

Nor have I any doubt that our war will be the stronger for a vivid sense of what we are fighting for; while an abandonment of its essence would mean the slow drying-up of all the fountains of our courage. For we are not fighting for something before us, but for something behind us; not for Empire, but for hom-

## SPEAKER BALKS AT SIGNING HIS CONTRACT

Tris Insists Boston Club Pay Him \$5,000 of Purchase Price From Cleveland.

CLEVELAND, Ohio, April 12.—Tris Speaker, star outfielder of the Boston American team, recently purchased by the Cleveland American league club, arrived here Tuesday to make the final arrangements for his transfer, but refused to sign a contract. Negotiations will be continued Wednesday morning when James C. Dunn, owner of the Cleveland club, expects to find a way out of the difficulty. While Speaker and Dunn Tuesday night had no difficulty in agreeing upon a salary figure, Speaker insisted that J. J. Lannin, president of the Boston club, pay him \$5,000 of the purchase price received from Cleveland.

## DEBATE ON FARM BILL

WASHINGTON, April 12.—General debate on the agricultural appropriation bill began late Tuesday in the house. The measure carries appropriations of \$24,500,000, an increase of \$1,529,311 over last year, and \$97,996 below the department estimates. It probably will be passed early next week.

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Leave	Arrive
Chicago	South Bend
8:15 a. m.	11:24 a. m.
10:55 a. m.	1:28 p. m.
3:00 p. m.	7:54 p. m.
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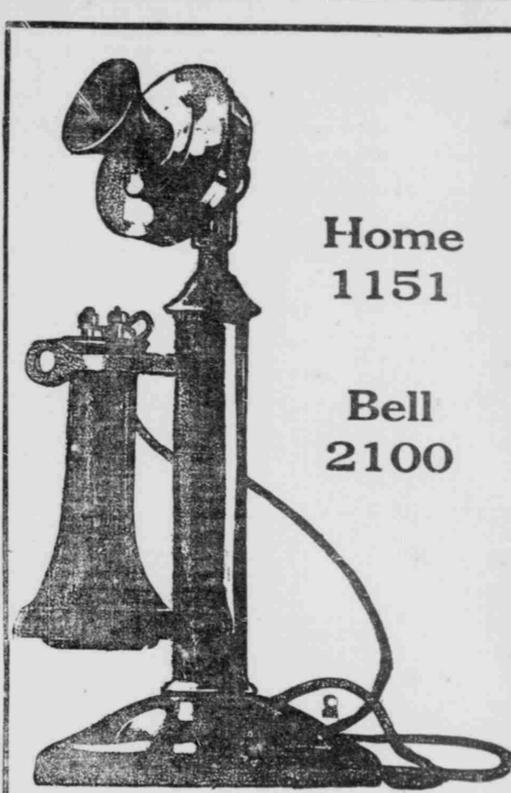
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