

# Who is the Enemy?

Mr. Stephen Graham, one of the most brilliant of English writers, has the following letter in The London Times: I suppose most people who have read last night's debate in the House of Commons must feel a certain anxiety. It is an alarming symptom of the bad state of our Government's health. If all were going well, the Government should be too much occupied with the business of beating Germany to be able to spare time to make even a merited attack on a newspaper. I should like to suggest to the Government that they devote their energies to the enemy. The function of the press is to tell the truth. The function of the Government at present is to lead England in England's war. When the temptation comes to attack Englishmen or English institutions let us ask ourselves seriously, Who is the enemy? It is the enemy we must attack, the Germans and the pro-Germans. But The Times is neither German nor pro-German. We shall see later on just where our papers stand, who is faint-hearted, who wants to give in and make peace. We shall see where German influence is truly making itself felt in our Press.

Now as regards the help which The Times is supposed to have given Germany, may I say a word? I

came through the Balkans last June and July and read the Bulgarian papers steadily during that time. It is true that The Times was much quoted by the pro-German Press, but the things that were quoted were the optimistic opinions of The Times, and chiefly the optimistic references to Russia, and the ability of the Russian army to withstand the Austro-German onrush. There were mirthful comments at the expense of the optimism of the English people generally. On the whole the Bulgarian people knew better how things were going than we did at home.

As far as heartening the enemy is concerned, nothing has heartened the Germans more than the success of their arms and of their diplomacy. And they know the facts of their success. We look at these things in a silly way. Now, as regards heartening, it is part of the deliberate plan of German press propoganda to hearten us. The more Germans can hearten us the slacker we shall be. Last year they let us think that they were starving, that they had not sufficient copper, that they were short of shells, and this greatly heartened us. And with what results? When the other day Mr. Asquith referred to "professional whippersnappers" and the "diet of falsehood" he ought to have remembered his Newcastle speech wherein he told the nation that we had sufficient munitions. It was heartening, but it was untrue. This winter we are to be heartened by the idea that Germany is ready for peace. Almost all the heartening canards of the last few weeks come from pro-German sources. We were heartened about Bulgaria, about Greece, about Rumania.

The best thing for us is the truth. Sir John Simon would do well at his Press Bureau to suppress lies and German press propoganda and let even sad truth appear. A miserable truth is more helpful than a happy lie. The function of the press is not to fight the Germans; it is to tell us where we stand. And in that The Times has a fair record and is doing splendid work.

I speak as one who is not on the staff of any paper. I write what I wish to write. I think that Ministers and public men make a great mistake in attacking the paper. If they think it poor or wrong in tone, they should try and improve it, correct its tone in a good-mannered way as Englishmen should, write to it, encourage the best in it, help it. But by slatternly personal attacks and ill-concealed malice they insult the writers on the newspaper, upset every one's nerves, and tend to discourage and discredit the press generally.