



H.G. WELLS

THE NEW WORLD ORDER



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THE END OF AN AGE

IN this small book I want to set down as compactly, clearly and usefully as possible the gist of what I have learnt about war and peace in the course of my life. I am not going to write peace propaganda here. I am going to strip down certain general ideas and realities of primary importance to their framework, and so prepare a nucleus of useful knowledge for those who have to go on with this business of making a world peace. I am not going to persuade people to say "Yes, yes" for a world peace; already we have had far too much abolition of war by making declarations and signing resolutions; everybody wants peace or pretends

to want peace, and there is no need to add even a sentence more to the vast volume of such ineffective stuff. I am simply attempting to state the things we must do and the price we must pay for world peace if we really intend to achieve it.

Until the Great War, the First World War, I did not bother very much about war and peace. Since then I have almost specialised upon this problem. It is not very easy to recall former states of mind out of which, day by day and year by year, one has grown, but I think that in the decades before 1914 not only I but most of my generation--in the British Empire, America, France and indeed throughout most of the civilised world--thought that war was dying out.

So it seemed to us. It was an agreeable and therefore a readily acceptable idea. We imagined the Franco-German War of 1870-71 and the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 were the final conflicts between Great Powers, that now there was a Balance of Power sufficiently stable to make further major warfare impracticable. A Triple Alliance faced a Dual Alliance and neither had much reason for attacking the other. We believed war was shrinking to mere expeditionary affairs on the outskirts of our civilisation, a sort of frontier police business. Habits of tolerant intercourse, it seemed, were being strengthened every year that the peace of the Powers remained unbroken.

There was in deed a mild armament race going on; mild by our present standards of equipment; the armament industry was a growing and enterprising on; but we did not see the full implication of that; we preferred to believe that the increasing general good sense would be strong enough to prevent these multiplying guns from actually going off and hitting anything. And we smiled indulgently at uniforms and parades and army manoeuvres. They were the time-honoured toys and regalia of kings and emperors. They were part of the display side of life and would never get to actual destruction and killing. I do not think that exaggerates the easy complacency of, let us say, 1895, forty-five years ago. It was a complacency