DEDICATION

TO LIEUTENANT R. O. HOBHOUSE, R.A.F

My Dear Oliver,

If you can carry your memory across the abyss which separates us all from July 1914, you will remember some hours which we spent reading Kant together in a cool Highgate garden in those summer days of peace. I think by way of relaxation we sometimes laid aside Kant, took up Herodotus, and felt ourselves for a moment in the morning of the world. But it is of Kant that I remind you, because three years later I was reading his great successor in the same garden in the same summer weather, but not with you. One morning as I sat there annotating Hegel's theory of freedom, jarring sounds broke in upon the summer stillness. We were well accustomed to the noises of our strange new world that summer. Daily if the air was still we heard, as some one said, the thud of guns across the northern sea, and murmur of innumerable 'planes. But this morning it was soon clear that something more was on foot. Gunfire, at first distant, grew rapidly nearer, and soon broke out from the northern heights hard by. The familiar drone of the British aeroplanes was pierced by the whining of the Gothas. High above, machine guns barked in sharp staccato and distant thuds announced the fall of bombs.
Presently three white specks could be seen dimly through the light haze overhead, and we watched their course from the field. The raid was soon over. The three specks drifted away towards the east, the gunfire died down, the whining faded away, and below the hill the great city picked up its dead. The familiar sounds resumed their sway, the small birds chirruped from the shrubs, and the distant murmur of the traffic told of a world going steadily on its accustomed course.

As I went back to my Hegel my first mood was one of self-satire. Was this a time for theorizing or destroying theories, when the world was tumbling about our ears? My second thoughts ran otherwise. To each man the tools and weapons that he can best use. In the bombing of London I had just witnessed the visible and tangible outcome of a false and wicked doctrine, the foundations of which lay, as I believe, in the book before me. To combat this doctrine effectively is to take such part in the fight as the physical disabilities of middle age allow. Hegel himself carried the proof-sheets of his first work to the printer through streets crowded with fugitives from the field of Jena. With that work began the most penetrating and subtle of all the intellectual influences which have sapped the rational humanitarianism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in the Hegelian theory of the god-state all that I had witnessed lay implicit. You may meet his Goths in mid air, and may the full power of a just cause be with you. I must be content with more pedestrian methods. But "to make the world a safe place for democracy," the weapons of the spirit are as necessary as those of the flesh. You have described to me times when your lofty world is peaceable enough—above the Canal in the dawn, when all the desert lies gray and still before the first sunbeam sets the air moving, or alone in the blueness, cut off by a bank of
cloud from earth. When at such times the mind works freely and you think over the meaning of the great contest, I should like to think that you carried with you some ideas from this volume to your heights. At any rate you will bear with you the sense that we are together as of old, in that in our different ways we are both fighters in one great cause.

Your affectionate father,

L. T. HOBHOUSE.
NOTE

The substance of this volume was given in a course of lectures at the London School of Economics in the autumn of 1917.

I have to thank my colleague Dr. A. Wolf for reading the MS. and making several useful emendations of detail.