

Chapter 18 — The German “Superman”

from *Long Heads and Round Heads: Or, What’s the Matter with Germany* (1918)

by William S. Sadler, M.D.

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Sources for Chapter 18, in the order in which they appear

- (1) **William Roscoe Thayer**, “The Collapse of the Superman Myth,” in *The Saturday Evening Post*, Nov. 10, 1917 (pp. 13-14, 53, 57, 61)
- (2) **Anonymous**, “Soldier Boys Enjoy Turkey in Own Homes”

Note: This article, from the Nov. 30, 1917 edition of the *Buffalo Evening News*, quotes from a talk the Rev. Dr. Frank Gunsaulus gave in Buffalo, N.Y. It is likely that Sadler did not read this article, but came across the quoted passage (or one similar to it) while reading of a similar talk Gunsaulus gave, perhaps in Chicago. Gunsaulus lectured in several cities during this period.

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source first appears, or where it reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and Sadler pointedly differ from one another.
- (e) **Pink** indicates passages where Sadler specifically shares his own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.

SOURCE

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“THE COLLAPSE OF THE
SUPERMAN MYTH” (Thayer 13)

The World's Greatest Liars (Thayer 57)

Except for the way in which the Germans carried out frightfulness after the war began, nothing so startled the world as their inability to comprehend the point of view of other nations.

They were themselves astonished

that anybody should criticize their campaign of rape, arson, and murder in Belgium and France or their disregard of solemn compacts (T 57).

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**XVIII: THE GERMAN
“SUPERMAN”**

18:0.1 THE German so-called “Superman” is turning out not to be a man at all, or if so, a barbarian. The product of all of the German’s painstaking industrial and technical labor has proven to be (owing to the loss of morals and ideals), not a super-civilized man but a cruel and murderous beast.

The further proof that a moral deterioration has been taking place in the German system is convincingly shown by the fact that the Germans, while priding themselves on the possession of such a superior Kultur,

are almost wholly unable to comprehend the viewpoint of the other nations.

They seem to be peeved and astounded

that any nation should criticize their acts in Belgium,

that anybody should complain at their continuous campaign of rape, arson, plunder, and murder.

TEUTONIC EGOTISM

18:1.1 The civilized peoples have simply spoiled Germany. Because of the way in which she has worked out practical details—because they were a great nation of technologists—all the world has flocked to their borders just as surgeons are wont to patronize a free and open clinic. And so because Germany has proved herself to be a clearing-house of the world in many branches of industry, science, and art, she has fallen into the erroneous opinion that she was the originator of all these things which caused so many people to come to Germany to observe and to study.

[Note: See 22:1.1.]

18:1.2 And so Teutonic egotism has steadily been held up to the point where

The Germans had been so long in the habit of assuming that the earth **revolved on a German pivot**

the Kaiser and his advisers think this whole world **revolves on a German pivot**

and that what Germany does in the realm of international morals—that what the Prussian military system may do as regards the rules of warfare is right because Germany does it

that they took it for granted that

and so the German people seem to have taken it for granted that

all the other Powers would accept without demur the plea of “German necessity” (T 57).

the civilized world would take their atrocious military conduct as something good and commendable just because it was “made in Germany.”

18:1.3 The Germans have said that the time would come when the civilized world would **bow down on its knees** before Germanic Kultur, and since this whole scheme of ruthlessness is a part of German Kultur,

SOURCE

[contd] In ordinary life this trait is common enough; but instead of reverently kneeling to those who are afflicted by it we pity them, recommend sedatives or a bag of ice at the base of the brain, and meditation on the wisdom of humility. If now we are to believe that the swelled head is the sign of the German Superman

shall we not ask what it profits him? If the state of being a Superman deprives him of the power to understand the thoughts and motives of mere men is he not to be pitied? (T 57)

The Real Supermen at the Marne (Thayer 14)

And here a grotesque conundrum suggests itself: If it took the Germans, by devoting their chief attention to militarism, forty years to organize a magnificent army,

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these Teutons are amazingly shocked that the world has the audacity to question their conduct or challenge their right to prosecute a war, while ignoring all principles and laws which have hitherto guided and controlled civilized nations in their methods of warfare.

18:1.4 If we are to believe that consummate egotism—a “swelled head”—is characteristic of the Superman,

then he has long been on earth, and the Germans are not entitled to the exclusive honor of his parentage.

ORGANIZATION AND PREPAREDNESS

18:2.1 And the German of today is not even a Superman in a military sense, for their initiative in the war is due, as can clearly be seen, to

their forty years of diligent study and unparalleled preparation.

SOURCE

and if it has taken the English, a non-militarist nation, two years

to organize an army equal and in some respects superior to

the German,

who are the Supermen? (T 14)

Sneaks Not Supermen (Thayer 57)

Even over here in America it was a little annoying to harbor the suspicion that possibly the German professor, or the editor of the German newspaper, or the fellow who blew up factories and wrecked trains and hid bombs in passenger steamers, being German, might be a Superman.

To Yankee eyes the professor was simply a sneak, oily and eely;

the editor one of the brood whom Bismarck called "reptile"; the bomber a low villain in whom great cowardice did not preclude great crime (T 57).

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Once let the Frenchman, Englishman, or the American become trained and prepared, not necessarily with forty years of accumulated preparedness but with only one or two years,

and experience has shown that

the soldiers of these nations become at least the equal, if not the superior, of

even the faithfully obedient and doggedly perseverant round-headed Alpine soldier who goes to make up the rank and file of the German army.

18:2.2 In Germany they may apply the title of "Superman" to faithless diplomats, deceitful editors, craven professors, brutal soldiers, and their degraded spies who blow up industrial plants, wreck trains, torpedo passenger vessels, and bomb hospitals;

but here in America we are wont to characterize such people as sneak-thieves, criminals, crooks and murderers.

We do not call the likes of these culprits Supermen, nor do we look upon them as qualified to rule all the earth.

SOURCE

The Kaiser's workers here are no more and no less than our Yankee eyes have seen them to be—curious types of *Inframen* whose portraits, under other names, adorn the Rogues' Galleries,

and whose peculiar activities are the study of the criminal pathologists of many nations (T 57).

The World's Greatest Liars (Thayer 57)

I have heard it argued that though we must deny to the Germans their claim, on military grounds, of being supreme ... yet in mendacity and deceit they have beaten the world's record. Their spies burrow in all lands; their cunning corrodes every class of society; they have so far forgotten what truth is that they cannot fabricate a lie that looks enough like truth to be effective (T 57).

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No, our estimate of such characters is shown by the fact that their statues do not adorn our public squares and parks,

but their photographic likenesses do ornament the walls of our "rogues' galleries."

18:2.3 Maybe the Germans would seek to prove the Superman by

their world-wide spy system and their cunning detective system organized to promote their plans for the conquest of the world.

We know from many unfortunate experiences here in America that this spy system was a thoroughly organized machine, but its efficiency lay, not in the brilliancy of its organizers or in the acumen of its individual operatives, but rather in the fact that the Germans had had plenty of time and money to bring about their intrigues, plans, and preparations.

SOURCE

Masters of Low Cunning (Thayer 57)

[I]f we look simply at the practical side, the fact that an American detective served Count Bernstorff, German Ambassador, as valet for twenty months must always dispose of the German Superman's claims to supremacy even in cunning (T 57).

Supermania seems so obsolete that it requires almost as great an effort of the imagination to believe that it has come to life again as that we are in danger of the resurrection of the Harpies (T 57).

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When the American secret service got busy, it did not take long to uncover the world wide German duplicity and deception; and it does not suggest that Bernstorff was a Superman when we learn that

for over a year and a half one or two of his most trusted employes were American detectives.

The doctrine of the Superman is a German auto-delusion—

it is simply Supermania.

MILITARY INSANITY

18:3.1 The German Superman is a Prussian bugaboo, a part of the Germanic scheme of overawing, terrorizing, and dominating first the simple German people, and then the whole world.

SOURCE

[contd] In an insane asylum a patient had the delusion that he was Julius Caesar, and his keepers humored him—and all went well. After a while another patient came who imagined himself Charlemagne. He began to rattle the imaginary scabbard of an imaginary sword and to strut imperially; and the keepers humored him too—and all went well. That is the common-sense way in which, outside of Germany, they treat victims of Supermania.

Beyond the Rhine, however,

they prefer a different régime. They say, “Hail, Cæsar!” or “Hoch! Hoch! Charlemagne!” and they give him a real sword in a real scabbard, and obsequiously kiss the hem of his garment; and so they confirm his delusion in him (T 57).

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18:3.2 In this country, certain unbalanced individuals often get the idea that they are either Julius Caesar or Napoleon Bonaparte. They often become obsessed with the idea that they are commanders of great armies and are destined to rule the world.

We are wont to lock such peculiar individuals up in places we call “insane asylums” where their trusty guards may humor them in their military delusions;

but in Germany,

it seems that when the Prussian rattles his scabbard, draws his sword, christens himself the “elect” of all the earth and starts out on the conquest of the world—

why, it appears that in Prussia they call such a war-mad individual the Superman.

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Germany Natural Advantages (Thayer 14)

The champions of the philosophy of Supermania lean heavily on biology to support their creed. They have been misled by the phrase “the survival of the fittest” (T 53).

18:4.1 The biological doctrine of the “survival of the fittest”

is merely a formulation or statement of what happens in raw nature—what happens in the animal world and among uncivilized and barbarous peoples.

In modern civilization it is not always the “fit” which “survive.” One civilization may triumph over another, not because it is more “fit” or superior, but because it may be either more virile, more brutal, or, perchance, better organized and possess greater racial or national solidarity. The “survival of the fittest,” while it may be in a way good physical law, is not a doctrine which is either moral or civilized. Of course, it is true that modern society may have later on to pay a severe penalty for conspiring with both science and philanthropy to bring about the survival of the unfit, by the manner in which we see sentimental humanitarianism practiced in some places today along certain medical and charitable lines. The “survival of the fittest” is indeed the law of the jungle, but the civilized nations and democracies of the present hour I believe will never consent to return to either jungle ethics or barbarian morals.

SOURCE

Supermen, Sham and Real (Thayer 53)

Marcus Aurelius, for instance,

would have gone down before one of the brawny gladiators in the Colosseum ... (T 53).

“SOLDIER BOYS ENJOY TURKEY IN OWN HOMES” (Anonymous)

[Quoting Rev. Dr. Frank Gunsaulus:]
“Germany for 50 years was beset with the theory of a materialistic evolution. She taught the survival of the fittest, [and] the survival of the strongest.

Meanwhile, a newer and nobler world was in the making and all the old materialistic evolution theories were going into the scrap heap before the realization that the survival of the fittest is the survival of the best and the noblest...” (A).

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18:4.2 I think there are many noble men and women in this world who are fit to survive, who deserve to live, and who would prove a blessing to their fellows—to the world—

but who might not be able to survive in any hand-to-hand struggle with such a physical specimen of humanity as a modern prize fighter or even a General von Hindenburg.

SURVIVAL OF THE WORTHIEST

18:5.1 Civilization is nothing more nor less than a steady, organized, continuous effort to substitute for the law of the jungle,

the “survival of the fittest,”

the superior law of humanity—

the survival of the worthiest.

I do not believe that the so-called German Kultur of today represents all that is best and most worthy in modern civilization.

SOURCE

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I do believe that the German military organization is the most perfect and fit of its kind on the earth, but when we weigh in the balance the culture of the civilized nations of the world against the Kultur of the Germanic peoples which has crystallized itself into those teachings and doctrines which have culminated in, and borne the fruit of their marvelously efficient and terribly cruel military machine, then, I do not for one moment hesitate to align myself, body, soul, and spirit with those forces which are to struggle in defense of civilized culture in its mortal combat for the overthrow of the barbarous German Kultur—the law of the jungle.