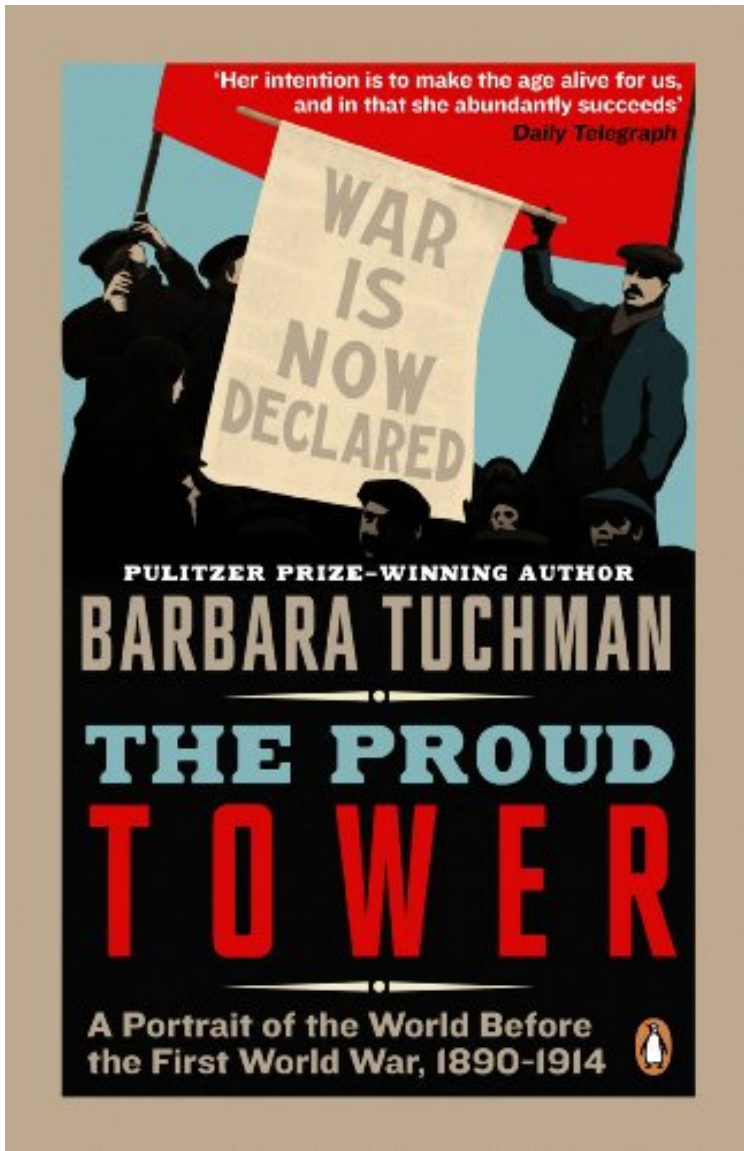


The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914



Par Barbara Tuchman
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[Mobile book] The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914

Par Barbara Tuchman : **The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914:

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur Barbara Tuchman's The Proud Tower is a haunting account of Britain on the cusp of total war - reissued for the 2014 Centenary. The last government in the Western world to possess all the attributes of aristocracy in working condition took office in England in June of 1895 . . . In this now classic work, Pulitzer prize-winning historian Barbara Tuchman explores the quarter century leading up to the First World War, from the dying embers of the British aristocracy to the fitful eruptions of the anarchist movement. She provides a compelling portrait of the key figures and conflicting ideologies of this time,

giving an intimate view of an epoch that was soon to be swept away by the tide of history.'Her intention is to make the age alive for us, and in that she abundantly succeeds' Daily Telegraph'Tuchman has a gift of recreating a period and a mood by an inspired selection of detail and sheer narrative sweep. A volcano of a book' Evening Standard'Impeccable scholarship and literary polish. Impossible to read without pleasure and admiration' New York TimesBarbara Tuchman achieved prominence as a historian with *The Zimmerman Telegram* and international fame with the Pulitzer-Prize winning *The Guns of August*. She is also the author of *Stilwell* and *The American Experience in China* (also awarded the Pulitzer Prize), *A Distant Mirror* and *The March of Folly*. She died in 1989. *The Guns of August* and *The Zimmerman Telegram* are published by Penguin.

Extrait | *The Patricians* The last government in the Western world to possess all the attributes of aristocracy in working condition took office in England in June of 1895. Great Britain was at the zenith of empire when the Conservatives won the General Election of that year, and the Cabinet they formed was her superb and resplendent image. Its members represented the greater landowners of the country who had been accustomed to govern for generations. As its superior citizens they felt they owed a duty to the State to guard its interests and manage its affairs. They governed from duty, heritage and habitand, as they saw it, from right. The Prime Minister was a Marquess and lineal descendant of the father and son who had been chief ministers to Queen Elizabeth and James I. The Secretary for War was another Marquess who traced his inferior title of Baron back to the year 1181, whose great-grandfather had been Prime Minister under George III and whose grandfather had served in six cabinets under three reigns. The Lord President of the Council was a Duke who owned 186,000 acres in eleven counties, whose ancestors had served in government since the Fourteenth Century, who had himself served thirty-four years in the House of Commons and three times refused to be Prime Minister. The Secretary for India was the son of another Duke whose family seat was received in 1315 by grant from Robert the Bruce and who had four sons serving in Parliament at the same time. The President of the Local Government Board was a pre-eminent country squire who had a Duke for brother-in-law, a Marquess for son-in-law, an ancestor who had been Lord Mayor of London in the reign of Charles II, and who had himself been a Member of Parliament for twenty-seven years. The Lord Chancellor bore a family name brought to England by a Norman follower of William the Conqueror and maintained thereafter over eight centuries without a title. The Lord Lieutenant for Ireland was an Earl, a grandnephew of the Duke of Wellington and a hereditary trustee of the British Museum. The Cabinet also included a Viscount, three Barons and two Baronets. Of its six commoners, one was a director of the Bank of England, one was a squire whose family had represented the same county in Parliament since the Sixteenth Century, one who acted as Leader of the House of Commons was the Prime Ministers nephew and inheritor of a Scottish fortune of 4,000,000, and one, a notable and disturbing cuckoo in the nest, was a Birmingham manufacturer widely regarded as the most successful man in England. Besides riches, rank, broad acres and ancient lineage, the new Government also possessed, to the regret of the Liberal Opposition and in the words of one of them, an almost embarrassing wealth of talent and capacity. Secure in authority, resting comfortably on their electoral majority in the House of Commons and on a permanent majority in the House of Lords, of whom four-fifths were Conservatives, they were in a position, admitted the same opponent, of unassailable strength. Enriching their ranks were the Whig aristocrats who had seceded from the Liberal party in 1886 rather than accept Mr. Gladstones insistence on Home Rule for Ireland. They were for the most part great landowners who, like their natural brothers the Tories, regarded union with Ireland as sacrosanct. Led by the Duke of Devonshire, the Marquess of Lansdowne and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, they had remained independent until 1895, when they joined with the Conservative party, and the two groups emerged as the Unionist party, in recognition of the policy that had brought them together. With the exception of Mr. Chamberlain, this coalition represented that class in whose blood, training and practice over the centuries, landowning and governing had been inseparable. Ever since Saxon chieftains met to advise the King in the first national assembly, the landowners of England had been sending members to Parliament and performing the duties of High Sheriff, Justice of the Peace and Lord Lieutenant of the Militia in their own counties. They had learned the practice of government from the possession of great estates, and they undertook to manage the affairs of the nation as inevitably and unquestionably as beavers build a dam. It was their ordained role and natural task. But it was threatened. By a rising rumble of protest from below, by the Radicals of the Opposition who talked about taxing unearned increment on land, by Home Rulers who wanted to detach the Irish island from which so much English income came, by Trade Unionists who talked of Labour representation in Parliament and demanded the legal right to strike and otherwise interfere with the free play of economic forces, by Socialists who wanted to nationalize property and Anarchists who

wanted to abolish it, by upstart nations and strange challenges from abroad. The rumble was distant, but it spoke with one voice that said Change, and those whose business was government could not help but hear. Planted firmly across the path of change, operating warily, shrewdly yet with passionate conviction in defence of the existing order, was a peer who was Chancellor of Oxford University for life, had twice held the India Office, twice the Foreign Office and was now Prime Minister for the third time. He was Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-Cecil, Lord Salisbury, ninth Earl and third Marquess of his line. Lord Salisbury was both the epitome of his class and uncharacteristic of it except insofar as the freedom to be different was a class characteristic. He was six feet four inches tall, and as a young man had been thin, ungainly, stooping and shortsighted, with hair unusually black for an Englishman. Now sixty-five, his youthful lankiness had turned to bulk, his shoulders had grown massive and more stooped than ever, and his heavy bald head with full curly gray beard rested on them as if weighted down. Melancholy, intensely intellectual, subject to sleepwalking and fits of depression which he called nerve storms, caustic, tactless, absent-minded, bored by society and fond of solitude, with a penetrating, skeptical, questioning mind, he had been called the Hamlet of English politics. He was above the conventions and refused to live in Downing Street. His devotion was to religion, his interest in science. In his own home he attended private chapel every morning before breakfast, and had fitted up a chemical laboratory where he conducted solitary experiments. He harnessed the river at Hatfield for an electric power plant on his estate and strung up along the old beams of his home one of England's first electric light systems, at which his family threw cushions when the wires sparked and sputtered while they went on talking and arguing, a customary occupation of the Cecils. Lord Salisbury cared nothing for sport and little for people. His aloofness was enhanced by shortsightedness so intense that he once failed to recognize a member of his own Cabinet, and once, his own butler. At the close of the Boer War he picked up a signed photograph of King Edward and, gazing at it pensively, remarked, Poor Buller [referring to the Commander-in-Chief at the start of the War], what a mess he made of it. On another occasion he was seen in prolonged military conversation with a minor peer under the impression that he was talking to Field Marshal Lord Roberts. For the upper-class Englishman's alter ego, most intimate companion and constant preoccupation, his horse, Lord Salisbury had no more regard. Riding was to him purely a means of locomotion to which the horse was a necessary but extremely inconvenient adjunct. Nor was he addicted to shooting. When Parliament rose he did not go north to slaughter grouse upon the moors or stalk deer in Scottish forests, and when protocol required his attendance upon royalty at Balmoral, he would not go for walks and positively refused, wrote Queen Victoria's Private Secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, to admire the prospect or the deer. Ponsonby was told to have his room in the dismal castle kept warm a minimum temperature of sixty degrees. Otherwise he retired for his holidays to France, where he owned a villa at Beaulieu on the Riviera and where he could exercise his fluent French and lose himself in *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the only book, he once told Dumas fils, which allowed him to forget politics. His acquaintance with games was confined to tennis, but when elderly he invented his own form of exercise, which consisted in riding a tricycle through St. James's Park in the early mornings or along paths cemented for the purpose in the park of his estate at Hatfield. Wearing for the occasion a kind of sombrero hat and a short sleeveless cloak with a hole in the middle in which he resembled a monk, he would be accompanied by a young coachman to push him up the hills. At the downhill slopes, the young man would be told to jump on behind, and the Prime Minister, with the coachman's hands on his shoulders, would roll away, cloak flying and pedals whirring. Hatfield, twenty miles north of London in Hertfordshire, had been the home of the Cecils for nearly three hundred years since James I had given it, in 1607, to his Prime Minister, Robert Cecil, first Earl of Salisbury, in exchange for a house of Cecils to which the King had taken a fancy. It was the royal residence where Queen Elizabeth had spent her childhood and where, on receiving news of her accession, she held her first council, to swear in William Cecil, Lord Burghley, as her chief Secretary of State. Its Long Gallery, with intricately carved paneled walls and gold-leaf ceiling, was 180 feet in length. The Marble Hall, named for the black and white marble floor, glowed like a jewel case with painted and gilded ceiling and Brussels tapestries. The red King James Drawing Room was hung with full-length family portraits by Romney and Reynolds and Lawrence. The library was lined from floor to gallery and ceiling with 10,000 volumes bound in leather and vellum. In other rooms were kept the Casket Letters of Mary Queen of Scots, suits of armor taken from men of the Spanish Armada, the cradle of the beheaded King, Charles I, and presentation portraits of James I and George III. Outside were yew hedges clipped in the form of crenelated battlements, and the gardens, of which Pepys wrote that he never saw so good flowers, nor so great gooseberries as big as nutmegs. Over the entrance hall hung flags captured at Waterloo and presented to

Hatfield by the Duke of Wellington, who was a constant visitor and devoted admirer of the Prime Ministers mother, the second Marchioness. In her honor Wellington wore the hunt coat of the Hatfield Hounds when he was on campaign. The first Marchioness was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds and hunted till the day she died at eighty-five, when, half-blind and strapped to the saddle, she was accompanied by a groom who would shout, when her horse approached a fence, Jump, dammit, my Lady, jump! It was this exceptional person who reinvigorated the Cecil blood, which, after Burghley and his son, had produced no further examples of superior mentality. Rather, the general mediocrity of succeeding generations had been varied only, according to a later Cecil, by instances of quite exceptional stupidity. But the second Marquess proved a vigorous and able man with a strong sense of public duty who served in several mid-century Tory cabinets. His second son, another Robert Cecil, was the Prime Minister of 1895. He in turn produced five sons who were to distinguish themselves. One became a general, one a bishop, one a minister of state, one M.P. for Oxford, and one, through service to the government, won a peerage in his own right. In human beings as in horses, Lord Birkenhead was moved to comment on the Cecil record, there is something to be said for the hereditary principle. At Oxford in 1850 the contemporaries of young Robert Cecil agreed that he would end as Prime Minister either because or in spite of his remorselessly uncompromising opinions. Throughout life he never bothered to restrain them. His youthful speeches were remarkable for their virulence and insolence; he was not, said Disraeli, a man who measures his phrases. A Salisbury became a synonym for political imprudence. He once compared the Irish in their incapacity for self-government to Hottentots and spoke of an Indian candidate for Parliament as that black man. In the opinion of Lord Morley his speeches were always a pleasure to read because they were sure to contain one blazing indiscretion which it is a delight to remember. Whether these were altogether accidental is open to question, for though Lord Salisbury delivered his speeches without notes, they were worked out in his head beforehand and emerged clear and perfect in sentence structure. In that time the art of oratory was considered part of the equipment of a statesman and anyone reading from a written speech would have been regarded as pitiable. When Lord Salisbury spoke, every sentence, said a fellow member, seemed as essential, as articulate, as vital to the argument as the members of his body to an athlete. Appearing in public before an audience about whom he cared nothing, Salisbury was awkward; but in the Upper House, where he addressed his equals, he was perfectly and strikingly at home. He spoke sonorously, with an occasional change of tone to icy mockery or withering sarcasm. When a recently ennobled Whig took the floor to lecture the House of Lords in high-flown and solemn Whig sentiments, Salisbury asked a neighbor who the speaker was and on hearing the whispered identification, replied perfectly audibly, I thought he was dead. When he listened to others he could become easily bored, revealed by a telltale wagging of his leg which seemed to one observer to be saying, When will all this be over? Or sometimes, raising his heels off the floor, he would set up a sustained quivering of his knees and legs which could last for half an hour at a time. At home, when made restless by visitors, it shook the floor and made the furniture rattle, and in the House his colleagues on the front bench complained it made them seasick. If his legs were at rest his long fingers would be in motion, incessantly twisting and turning a paper knife or beating a tattoo on his knee or on the arm of his chair. He never dined out and rarely entertained beyond one or two political receptions at his town house in Arlington Street and an occasional garden party at Hatfield. He avoided the Carlton, official club of the Conservatives, in favor of the Junior Carlton, where a special luncheon table was set aside for him alone and the library was hung with huge placards inscribed silence. He worked from breakfast to one in the morning, returning to his desk after dinner as if he were beginning a new day. His clothes were drab and often untidy. He wore trousers and waistcoat of a dismal gray under a broadcloth frock coat grown shiny. But though careless in dress, he was particular about the trimming of his beard and carefully directed operations in the barbers chair, indicating just a little more off here while artist and subject gazed fixedly in the mirror to judge the result. *Revue de presse* [Barbara W. Tuchmans] Pulitzer Prizewinning *The Guns of August* was an expert evocation of the first spasm of the 1914-1918 war. She brings the same narrative gifts and panoramic camera eye to her portrait of the antebellum world. *Newsweek* A rare combination of impeccable scholarship and literary polish . . . It would be impossible to read *The Proud Tower* without pleasure and admiration. *The New York Times* An exquisitely written and thoroughly engrossing work . . . The authors knowledge and skill are so impressive that they whet the appetite for more. *Chicago Tribune* [Tuchman] tells her story with cool wit and warm understanding. *Time*