

Reginald 15<sup>th</sup> September 1914



## GERMAN-AUSTRALIANS.

To the Editor.

Sir—Mr. F. H. Provis takes Mr. F. W. Lehmann to task for some utterances which Mr. Lehmann is said to have made. His letter is foolish, uncalled for, and irrelevant. 1. By some strange reasonings, which probably only Mr. Provis can follow, he connects Mr. Lehmann's attitude on the preference to unionists with the attitude of Germans towards the present war. Whether Mr. Lehmann believes in preference to unionists is of very little importance to most people, but it is of the utmost importance that at the present juncture nothing should be said to raise local feeling. 2. From accurate knowledge I am convinced that fully 99 per cent. (and perhaps more) of the Austral-Germans are absolutely loyal, and no honest man would question that loyalty unless he had definite proof in his possession; but that does not mean that every Austral-German who has family ties with and memories of the "Fatherland" is "flint." If they are human at all (and we know them to be a kind and tender-hearted race) they must have very sore hearts in this time of war—sore hearts because of the pain and suffering the war is causing. 3. I would remind Mr. Provis that loyalty is not always manifested by an external "buzzing" and "bubbling over," and I express the opinion that in all German hearts (including Mr. Lehmann's) there is a very strong sentiment of loyalty for and appreciation of the British flag. 4. It is incumbent upon all in these days to walk in a calm and dignified way, and to be scrupulously careful to avoid by speech or action unseemly differences. In all reported cases where strife has arisen between Germans and Britons in South Australia it has been through the medium of beer or spirits. If the Government desires to maintain peace, it should consider the matter of closing all liquor bars during the war. I appeal to all Austral-Germans to disdain to notice anything that is said questioning their loyalty or slighting their nationality, for they have at this time of stress and strain the loving sympathy of the vast majority of their fellow-citizens. They may very well go in and out as usual with dignity and self-respect; for this, the land of their birth or adoption, values them for their manhood and high standard of citizenship and colonization.

I am, Sir, &c., CIVIS AUSTRALIS SUM.

Sir—In reference to Mr. Elkan's letter to The Register, I do not think he has overstepped the mark in saying he would not take up arms against Germany, the land of his birth. I certainly think there is no tie stronger on this earth than the tie of human blood. Take a simple child, for instance—mother alive, but mother's sister adopts child. Would you say that that child should go against her mother simply because the adopted one wants her to do so, even when memories are always brought back to the child of their relation. No pure-minded person would think of such a thing. I know of German people who would rather die than go to Germany



to fight against their own relations; but, should they happen to come here they would be as loyal as any Briton against invaders of their country (Australia). They also had two sons who fought alongside the Britons in the Boer war, and were proud to help their Empire; but they would not go to the other States, to help to fight their relations. I know also they would stand alongside of their father in time of need in doing their duty to the Empire. "A. H. M." seems to glory in the fall of the German Empire; but let him not forget that it was a German who brought Protestantism into the world—Martin Luther, one of the greatest men of ancient history. So, therefore, we cannot look down upon a German. I do not mean any harm whatever to the Roman Catholics, because I think one is as good as another. People seem to have the idea that the Germans came out here solely for their freedom, but they came like everybody else—to better their positions. Australia, a new country, offered every inducement. Money seemed so plentiful that people almost expected to pick it up in the streets, but what they got they worked very hard for. Some day Australia will be one of the finest countries in the world. Why should racial feeling be aroused? Personally I have a kindly feeling for every nation in the world, and a big one for Australia.

I am, Sir, &c., TRUE AUSTRALIAN.



Sir—Mr. Elkan has brought an avalanche on his head through stating in his letter that he would not take up arms against Germany, though she be at war with England, his adopted country. After this admission—and he says he is voicing the opinion of other Germans here—it is time for us Britons to be up and doing. Our last census shows us that we have over 30,000 Germans in South Australia, and—if this statement accurately represents their views—we cannot trust them. Mr. Elkan comes to Australia and enjoys the freedom of the British flag, getting away from his own country because of the military system and restriction of freedom. I say as one of your correspondents says, he should be deported back to Germany. If a naturalized Englishman in Germany had written a letter like Mr. Elkan he would probably have met with dire punishment.

I am, Sir, &c., TRUE BRITISH.

Sir—If Mr. Elkan and other Germans take my advice, they will not talk too much about the war, as the feelings of Australians and British are very sore on account of the way in which the barbarous Germans are carrying on. Could the Turks have behaved much worse towards poor, brave little Belgium? I suppose by this time they have about eaten the Belgians out, as they were noted during the last French war for having great appetites. I have a fair knowledge about German patriotism, having been in business so long. I took particular notice during the Boer war of the quiet smile some had on their faces when the English suffered a reverse. A few talked very large, but a great many had sense enough to keep their ideas to themselves, which was the proper policy. We all know in Germany if you do not keep a civil tongue you stand a chance of getting a sword run through you and very little said about it, even in times of peace. I overheard to-day several gentlemen on the tram saying that every German should be taxed £100 a head to help the war, and also for the protection they enjoy. What with the bad season and the war, we are going to have quite enough trouble for a long time to look forward to.

I am, Sir, &c., DEVONSHIRE.

Sir—It may be conceded that Mr. Elkan has in the past written letters containing a certain amount of "horse sense," and that he is gifted with a native courtesy. This latest effusion, however, only tends to accentuate a situation already sufficiently delicate to us of British stock, who have near and dear friends among the genuine Austral-Germans. Well may the latter say, "Save us from our friends," and "Who made this man a judge over us?" Mr. Elkan has evidently allowed his zeal to outrun that discretion which is said to be the better part of valour, and does "protest too much." If he is in doubt regarding his sworn duty to the land of his adoption, why not keep it to himself, as he would have to do in his native land, where "Lese Majeste" would soon step in if he prattled there as he does here. I do not know if he looks on himself as a "modern Daniel come to judgment," but



we do know that as a modern prophet he has been a dismal failure in regard to international happenings. Any man living under our flag should not abuse liberty of speech simply because he has that liberty. To my mind this latest letter suggests the opinions of a well-known character in literature, "Mr. Facing Both Ways," and is well suited to a "heads-I-win-tails-you-lose" policy. It is, perhaps, not unfortunate, in one way, that his letter was written, in that it shows at least one in his true colours in this crisis; but I do hope that Mr. Elkan is the solitary representative of his type, and that this cacoethescribendi-afflicted Teutonic Vicar of Bray will be well advised, and not cause further doubts and mistrust by rushing into print with insufficiently considered letters.

I am, Sir, &c.,

NARRINYERI.



Sir—Mr. Elkan states in effect that he will put a bullet in his head sooner than defend Australia against the Kaiser. There would be no need for him to do that if Australia should be attacked. We give all a fair deal, and expect some fairness in return. I have often noticed what I regarded as sneers in some of Mr. Elkan's letters regarding things British, and it puzzles me how he can live apart from his precious country. I feel confident that there are thousands of good solid Germans who would help to defend Australia, in spite of Mr. Elkan's assertion. Germans must remember that we are fighting the crowd who drove the German people to Australia, and not the people themselves.

I am, Sir, &c., GOOD OLD ENGLAND.

Sir—As an Australian who has committed the crime of allowing German blood to flow in his veins—a crime to which the whole Royal Family of England and Prince Louis of Battenberg must plead guilty—kindly allow me to assure you and all other sane and levelheaded Australians of the sincere loyalty of German-Australians, naturalized and natural born, to their King and the country of their choice or birth. Neither Mr. Elkan nor foolish and hysterical anonymous letter writers express our feelings and sentiments correctly. We are, as citizens and as Lutheran Christians, conscious of our duty; and will, as loyal citizens, at the proper time, place our lives and property at the disposal of that King—King George—that Royal Family, that Government, and that country—Australia—for which we, as faithful Christians, offer up sincere prayer at every service. German-Australians served in South Africa, are enlisting for service now, have given and are giving toward various patriotic funds, and are in proportion to their numbers proving their loyalty as well as, if not more effectually than, those who howl so loud and long about their patriotism and loyalty. They know well that deliberate lying, bombastic, and foolish language, jingoism, and senseless hooraying never yet won a victory; but that solidarity and the sound common-sense which they have ever displayed, which in the past has made them good citizens, are of most service to Australia. We love our country; and, shoulder to shoulder with those of English, Scotch, and Irish blood or birth, will fight against any enemy who would seek to rob us of that liberty and freedom we have and cherish.

I am, Sir, &c., A. MACKENZIE.

Boomeroo Centre, September 9.

Sir—According to some correspondents' views the oath of allegiance appears of no real value when war is proceeding against the country of their birth. Permit me to propose that throughout the British Empire a war tax of £5 a head should be imposed on all subjects who take that view, and collected yearly in advance during their lifetime, under penalty of deportation and confiscation of property.

I am, Sir, &c., E. THOMSON.

Young street, Parkside.



Sir—The British writers in The Register are beginning to hit the right nail on the head, and it reminds me that we have, in connection with our school masters and teachers, been handicapping the Briton for the benefit of German aspirants to teaching as a profession. The qualification for a teacher are that he or she shall be conversant with one other modern language besides English; and, in consequence, the Englishman has, in addition to the required Latin and other subjects, to become proficient in a foreign language. On the other hand, the German, or those who have learnt German from their relatives, start off with that language as an advantage, and can devote more time to the other subjects. It is now time that applicants who are Germans or have German antecedents should be compelled to take another language—say, French—so that the British may at least have a fair chance in a British country.

I am, Sir, &c., H. M. SPENCE.  
Grenfell street, Adelaide.