

Reginald 9th September 1914

Sir—I would like to ask Mr. Elkan if any Australian in Germany would be allowed to write as he did on September 7, and what would be the result. He says he loves Australia, and has been here 30 years, but still he would not fight for Australia against the Germans. If he really loves this country he would surely fight for its existence. If a man would not fight for this glorious land he does not deserve to live in it. Apparently Mr. Elkan would like to be safe both ways, whichever nation may win. If England wins he will still go on living here, but if Germany should win, and then come out and take Australia, he would still be quite safe. If anything should befall this country by way of Germany he could show his letter to the Germans, and prove how he stuck up for his country when all this strife was on. But I don't think he need get excited, because this will be the end of the German Empire. Mr. Elkan ought really to go back to his native land—the land he would sooner shoot himself for, than fight for Australian freedom and liberty.

I am, Sir, &c..

A. H. M.

Sir.—The letter of Mr. E. Elkan in Monday's Register raises the question—What does a man owe to the land of his adoption? "We came out here," he writes, "to better our positions, not so much from a financial point of view as from the point of freedom. The 'rammels and social grooves had become irksome to us. We wanted

free air to breathe and more elbow room. Australia, above all other countries, offered us our opportunity. We had complete faith in the British sanctuary offered to all nations as long as they submitted cheerfully to the laws and usages of their adopted country." Further on he says the German-Australians will "more than ever adhere to the solemn obligations of their oath of allegiance. They would be the first to condemn any action which would point to an act of treachery." Then we have this statement:—"If there were a call to arms against any enemy but Germany you'd find every one respond heartily in the defence of Australia. I would offer my services as one of the first; but before I would take up arms against the country of my birth I would rather put a bullet through my head, and so would many more. I would offer my services in an ambulance corps, but otherwise I would remain neutral in the strictest sense of the word." The matter presents itself to me in this way:—Mr. Elkan left Germany, and thenceforth threw off allegiance to his native land, becoming a naturalized British subject in Australia. His loyalty to the British Empire in so far as assisting to defend it against an invader is concerned is, it appears, subject to the reservation that that invader is some other nation than Germany. Rather than resist with arms an attack by Germany on the land of his adoption he would "put a bullet" through his head. He would be prepared to "join an ambulance corps." but by remaining

"neutral in the strictest sense of the word" he would stand by and see the defenders of the country he had preferred before his own to live in shot down by German invaders without raising a hand to prevent it! Other Germans would, he says, do as he would. The question which is thus raised by Mr. Elkan is an important one. As a naturalized British subject, would he be doing what loyalty demanded of him by negatively assisting a German invader to bring this land of freedom under the yoke of German rule? This war, for instance, is "the Kaiser's war." Apparently playing a double-handed game—preaching peace until the time was apparently opportune to strike—what claim can he have upon the passive assistance of "German-Australians" to accomplish the downfall of the country of their adoption? Are we to believe that Mr. Elkan represents the mass of German subjects of the British Sovereign in this part of the Empire when he puts the land of his birth before the land of his adoption? Are we to believe that, if it rested with the German-Australians to turn the fortune of war in favour of Britain, they would deliberately "remain neutral in the strictest sense of the word;" and thus assist the Kaiser to defeat the defenders of Australia? Having become British subjects—having deliberately preferred the freedom enjoyable under British rule to the oppression of German rule—to whom, I ask, do they owe their allegiance in the fullest possible sense of the term, if not to their adopted land?

There were in Australia on April 3, 1911, when the last census was taken, 32,990 persons of German birth. In the opinion of prominent public men, the only foe that Australia has to look for is Germany. There is not the remotest likelihood of any other nation seeking to undermine or in any way interfere with British interests under the Southern Cross. This being so, it is quite safe for Mr. Elkan to proclaim his readiness to be "one of the first" to respond if there were a call to arms against "any enemy but Germany." I have liked to think of the many thousands of naturalized German residents of the Commonwealth as Australians first in any time of danger from any foreign foe—even a German foe. It has never occurred to me that in the case of a German invasion they would be found defaulters in the defence of the land of their adoption; and, Mr. Elkan notwithstanding, I decline to believe that in an emergency they would be found passively assisting the enemy by remaining "neutral in the strictest sense of the word." Mr. Elkan's letter, however, set me thinking; and, if he will give further consideration to the question of what is due from a man to the land of his adoption, he may be prepared to admit that true loyalty and common gratitude demand a readiness and a willingness to defend it against all enemies.

I am, Sir, &c., F. S. WALLIS.
North Unley, September 8.