

The Register
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—Germany's Three Errors.—

It appeared to him (Professor Henderson) that grave responsibility had been incurred by Germany in rejecting, first, the proposals of Sir Edward Grey for a meeting in London of representatives of the Powers most immediately concerned; second, the sending of a peremptory ultimatum to Russia to withdraw her troops from the German border when Austria had her forces already mobilized; and, third, the deliberate violation of Belgian neutrality, which forced Great Britain into the war. There was little doubt that Austria had determined to make war on Serbia, apology from the latter or no apology, and a study of the German White Paper showed that grave responsibility laid with Germany for the ensuing European conflagration. It was the invasion of Belgium which caused Great Britain to enter the war. The honour of England was bound up with that of the little kingdom, and as the latter was assailed Great Britain could do no less than keep her sacred bond to protect the weak.

—Germany, Past and Present.—

The lecturer dwelt on the rise of the Prussian military system. Bismarck, the able Prussian, saw the chance for his country to become great, and he laid down the policy, which he induced his Emperor William to follow, and which had led up to the formation of the Germany of to-day. First Denmark was attacked, then Austria, and next France, in which country at Versailles the Prussian King was crowned. It took 30 years for the Prussian spirit to permeate Germany, but it did grow, and the result was seen to-day.

—Teutonic Methods.—

Militarism ruled Germany. Everything was subordinated to it. The public service and the civilian life were dominated towards one end, which was that the military caste must prevail so that the nation could become great. In British communities the will of the people held sway. In Germany the Kaiser had the powers conferred on rulers of the medieval ages. He claimed to rule by Divine right, and to him the Ministers were responsible, and not to the people. As a State, Germany was young and inexperienced. She was only 50 years old, and her people lacked the stimulus of responsible government, and were far behind the democratic peoples of the world in theory and practice of statecraft. There had grown up an avowedly aggressive and notoriously arrogant military power, which took up the attitude of "Do as I tell you, or I will make you." The Kaiser had long been termed a man of peace, but it might be that he had realized that he could not control the power which had grown up—that the dynamic force of militarism which had created Germany had so swollen as to have caused the present explosion with or without the Emperor's power to control it.

The second lecture of the series will be given on Tuesday, April 20.

The Advertiser
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CAUSES OF THE WAR.

LECTURE BY PROFESSOR
HENDERSON.

GERMAN DIPLOMACY AND THE
MILITARY SPIRIT.

One of the most able and instructive discourses that have been given in Adelaide concerning the causes that led up to the great European conflagration was the first of Professor Henderson's series of lectures, given in the Adelaide Town Hall on Wednesday evening, upon "The Great War of 1914-15." There was a large audience, which included his Excellency the Governor and Lady Galway, and the lecture was followed with rapt attention. One of the main reasons for the arrangement of the series was the desire of Professor Henderson to do something to assist in the relief of the suffering people in Belgium. The course will consist of three lectures, the second and third of which will be respectively, "British and German Imperialism" and "Civilisation and the War."

A Just and an Honorable War.

In dealing with the causes of the war, Professor Henderson said perhaps he ought to offer an apology for presuming to address an audience upon a subject with which they must have become so well acquainted through the medium of the press, but he had been constrained to do so partly because of his own feeling. He did feel that Great Britain and the Empire were engaged in a just and an honorable war. (Applause.) He would even go so far as to say that never had he known in history any country engaged in a war that was more just and honorable. And there were other reasons. He believed that the British Empire was in quality, as well as in extent, the greatest Empire there had been in history; that in the last 50 years an experiment in Imperialism was being tried which, if it succeeded, would mean a great deal indeed for the civilization of the world. That Empire was now on its trial, and it was a trial against another Empire, which stood for an Imperial principle far inferior, in his opinion, to that which the British Empire represented. It was because he felt the fatal consequences that would follow the victory of the other Power, that he wanted to address them in his second lecture on the contrast between the two. Moreover, he felt that the world was face to face with a mighty moral issue, that an "unparalleled attack"—to use the phrase of his Majesty the King—had been made upon "the continuity of civilization." Even with those reasons he would scarcely have presumed upon their forbearance had it not been that one of the smaller countries of Europe was now in a most distressing condition owing to the aggression of a greater and very much misguided Power. An appeal had been made to Australia, among other countries, for assistance, and he, like everyone of them, had wondered how he could do something to relieve the suffering of those stricken people. (Applause.)

Belgium as it Was.

The lecturer said what they had before them now in Belgium was a national tragedy, and he drew an eloquent word picture of the country as he viewed it only two months before the tide of war swept over it. "It was in June last," he said, "that I wandered from the borders of Holland to Antwerp, and passed through a country that was essentially a picture of peace—picturesque cottages and windmills, cattle grazing amid a variety of flowers, and fields of tinted corn. Now what is it? Along those roadways you have had travelling homeless fugitives. Those picturesque villages are reduced in many cases to smoking ruins. And why? Because Belgium preferred honor to material advantage. (Applause.) Belgium has suffered. In suffering she has fought your battles and mine. It is surely a fitting thing that we, placed in such advantageous conditions in this country, so far from the roar of cannon and the devastation of fire, should do what we can to help to alleviate the sufferings of those to whom we are indebted not only for our comfort but for great blessings like freedom." (Applause.)

The Fundamental Causes.

For almost every war, Professor Henderson went on, there was a superficial cause, and more important causes hidden beneath the surface. When they came to examine the history of this war they had before them the murder of the Archduke Francis, but it was symptomatic rather than the cause of the upheaval. The immediate cause might have been that murder, but it was known from subsequent revelations that there was an attempt to make Austria participate in a war against Serbia a year previously. Dealing with the fundamental causes, the professor proceeded to examine official documents which had been published. The point of supreme importance from the student's point of view was in the English "White Book." So far as he knew, every message that passed between Sir Edward Grey and the Continental Powers was in that volume. In the German "White Book" they had a selection of the correspondence most favorable to the German cause. It was not an historical document at all, but a lawyer's brief. What was most memorable from the historian's standpoint was that none of the correspondence between Berlin and Vienna had appeared, and that was just what they wanted to know. (Applause.)

It was a great source of satisfaction that the man who stood for the Empire in that crisis (Sir Edward Grey) was almost universally now among civilized peoples adjudged to be absolutely straightforward in his dealings. There was an unmistakable candor about his word and his deed. (Applause.) One criticism had been made of Sir Edward Grey—and so far as he knew one only—and that is he should have made it known in the early stage of the negotiations that he would not go to war. It was affirmed in the German Reichstag some months after the outbreak that if he had made that plain to Russia and France there would have been no war. But it seemed to him (Professor Henderson) that the charge could be refuted in the easiest possible way. How could Sir Edward Grey declare his mind when matters were moving so rapidly, and before he had an official intimation of what Germany was going to do, for instance, in Belgium? Could a man in the responsible position of Sir Edward Grey, with the lives and fortunes of millions of people dependent upon the stroke of his pen, afford to act on rumor? It would have been preposterous, and he would have become the laughing-stock of Europe. What he did was to tell France and Russia that Great Britain must have a free hand.

Germany's Grave Responsibility.

Grave responsibility lay with Germany in regard to three matters. The first was in the rejection of Sir Edward Grey's fair proposal, in the early stage of negotiations, that there should be appointed a conference of the four European Powers concerned to express their opinion on the terms of the Austrian note to Serbia. The second was the sending of a peremptory ultimatum to Russia when the message concerning Austria's willingness to discuss the Serbian note was before them; and the third was in deliberately violating the neutrality of Belgium, thereby forcing Great Britain into the war. By treaty, by conference, and by Imperial promise since 1839 the neutrality of that country had been guaranteed by the Germans, and yet Great Britain was accused of dealing Germany a "felon's blow" when she decided to help the Belgians to defend the honor of Belgium. He believed Britain went to war mainly for that cause, and also because her interests were directly involved, for the most vulnerable place in Europe to England was Belgium. National honor and national interests in that case went hand-in-hand. But it was not only because of that. If Britain had failed to throw her force on the side of the Allies in defence of international law, the time for preventing war by persuasion and arbitration would have been postponed for centuries. (Applause.)

Military Despotism Uncurbed.

People had asked how it was that the country which produced Beethoven and Goethe had done what it had in violating Belgium and carrying on the war in the manner the Germans had done. He traced the development of the German Empire from mediæval times, and the rapid growth and triumph of the Prussian military system during the last 50 years. It was sometimes argued that universal suffrage was the true test of a democracy, but the Reichstag had been aptly described as only a figleaf to hide the naked absolutism of the German Government. There was no control over the executive, whose heads were not responsible to the Reichstag, but to the Emperor. There was nothing in the German Constitution to curb the military power. The Kaiser did not think he ruled as a national officer dependent on the public will, but by Divine right, just as emperors did in the Middle Ages. German diplomacy was a military diplomacy. Instead of persuading men, it used force, saying, "If you do not do what I want you to do, I will compel you."

Territorial Hunger.

One reason why Germany had gone to war was territorial hunger; but they must not forget, even when they sympathized with Germany in that connection, that she would have got more territory than she had if she had not threatened people, but had tried to persuade them a little more. By persuasive diplomacy Bismarck had got far more than the Kaiser had been able to secure, for there could hardly have been a greater failure in diplomacy during the last 10 years. His diplomacy was a part of the military spirit of Germany, and it took no account of the self-respect of nations.