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MILITARISM AND THE WAR

LECTURE BY PROFESSOR
HENDERSON.

With "The Great European War" as his subject, and the assistance of the suffering Belgian people as his aim, Professor G. C. Henderson, of the Adelaide University, commenced a series of three lectures in the Town Hall last night. The opportunity of hearing a studied exposition of the causes of the conflict of nations was attractive to many, and it was a large assemblage which the lecturer had to face. To the student of the war and the causes the points of the discourse were familiar. Professor Henderson, of course, could offer no new material facts or theories. He summed up the recorded happenings, concisely explained their import, and interestingly furnished comments upon various acts and influences.

The Empire's Trial.

The lecturer apologised for bringing forward such a subject. He remarked that he had been constrained to do so partly by his own feelings. He felt that Great Britain and the Empire were engaged in a just and honorable war. He believed the British Empire, in quality and extent, was the greatest Empire history had known. If the experiment in Imperialism tried during the past 25 years succeeded it would mean a great deal to civilisation. That Empire was now upon its trial against another Empire which stood for a far inferior Imperial principle. He felt that the world was face to face with a mighty moral issue. Even for these reasons he could not have dared to have presumed upon the forbearance of his audience

were it not for the fact that one of the smaller countries of Europe was now in a distressing condition owing to the aggression of a greater and very much misguided Power, and than an appeal had been made for assistance. He, like everyone, was wondering what he could do towards the relief of the sufferings of the stricken Belgians.

Hidden Causes.

Proceeding to review the influences leading to the war, Professor Henderson remarked that in almost every war there were causes and more important causes hidden beneath the surface. When they came to examine a history of the war or the negotiations before the war they had the murder of the Archduke Ferdinand. But that was more a symptomatic matter than a cause. The murder might have been the immediate cause, but they knew, through subsequent revelations, that there was an attempt to make Austria participate in a war against Serbia last year. The student of the English White Book could arrive at what he considered to be the truth for himself. The German White Book was no historic record; it was a lawyer's brief. What was a lamentable thing was that the correspondence between Berlin and Vienna had not appeared.

Sincere or Insincere.

The lecturer paid a tribute to Sir Edward Grey. A criticism, he said, levelled against the English diplomat, was that if he had made it plain to Russia and France early in the negotiations that England would not go to war there would have been no war. That criticism or accusation came from the German Chancellor some months after the outbreak of war. How could Sir Edward Grey declare his mind when matters were moving so rapidly and he had no official information as to Germany's intention towards Belgium? The only attitude possible—and that he maintained to the end—was that Britain should have a free hand. On the other side, the case was not so easily disposed of. A grave responsibility rested with Germany for the rejection of Sir Edward Grey's conference proposals. There was

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The Vice-Chancellor of the University (Dr. W. Barlow, C.M.G.), who has been in indifferent health for some weeks, is confined to his bed.

nothing in the correspondence, so far he knew, to bring home an absolute conviction of insincerity against Germany, but the impossible ultimatum to Russia on July 31 made it difficult to believe that she was sincere. If there were doubt, however, as to the relations of Germany and Russia, there was no doubt as far as the war with Great Britain was concerned. Time was so essential to Germany that she decided to go through Belgium, and England was forced into the war. If Britain had failed to throw her force on the side of the allies in the defence of international law the time for preventing war by persuasion and arbitration would have been postponed for centuries. He did not think there was anything to turn the feelings of civilisation against Germany so much as her treatment of Belgium.

The Rule of Militarism.

How came it that a country like Germany could carry on war as she had done? A review of the history of Germany during the past 50 years revealed the rapid growth and triumph of the Prussian military system. Bismarck conceived the idea that the only way to weld the principalities into one great nation was to weld them by war. From the victories of Prussia, militarism developed throughout Germany. It took about 30 years to permeate German life with the military spirit. Salient features of the German Constitution were the weakness of the Reichstag in executive functions, through the lack of effective control over Ministers, and the subordination of the federal council in legislation. The military power was supreme. The Kaiser claimed to rule by Divine right, as the kings of old. There was a gap between the executive of the aristocratic powers and the people. The influence of militarism was found throughout the country. It was displayed in the railway system, the lines being built for strategic purposes. The innumerable regulations had a disastrous effect upon initiative and enterprise. That was shown when the German soldier of that day had to act individually. German diplomacy was military diplomacy—force was used. Germany wanted territory, and she went to war. He considered that Germany would have got more territory if she had not threatened people so much. Bismarck was not so enthusiastic about a colonial policy, but he obtained far more for Germany than the present Emperor. There could have been hardly a greater failure in diplomacy during the past 10 years than the diplomacy of the German Emperor himself. It was military diplomacy, and did not reckon with the self-respect of other nations. France, Russia, England, and Belgium had been affronted by threats. Persuasion would have been far more effective. Another cause of the war was the speeding-up of the army. The question arose—Was one man able to control such an aggressive naval and military power as Germany had built up? He did not know whether the Kaiser was a man of peace or not, but if he were, during the past 50 years a growing dynamic force had converted Germany into a powder magazine, which would explode when the match was applied. It appeared to him that the military spirit might be described as a most potent forte in the European conflagration.

The second lecture, which will deal with British and German Imperialism, will be delivered in the Town Hall on Tuesday night next.

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At a special congregation held at the Adelaide University on Wednesday to confer degrees on students who have accepted for active service with the Australian Expeditionary Forces, the Chancellor (Sir Samuel Wray) referred to the presence of Mr. S. Talbot Smith, M.A., LL.B., a member of the council. He said that Mr. Smith was the son of a man whom the community delighted to honour. Sir Edwin Smith was one of the grand old men of South Australia. Every member of the council would agree that Mr. Smith did much valuable work for the University in an unobtrusive way. Proud as he (the Chancellor) was of his position at the University, he would have been the proudest of all if he could have been in the position of Mr. Talbot Smith, two of whose sons were risking their lives for their country in going to the front. It was the sincere wish of all that such fine sons would return safe and sound to rejoin their worthy father.

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"THE GREAT WAR."

Lecture by Professor
Henderson.

"I do feel at the present time that Great Britain and the Empire is engaged in a just and honourable war." The remark was made at the Adelaide Town Hall on Wednesday evening by Professor G. C. Henderson, of the University of Adelaide, who delivered the first of three lectures on "The Great European War." The proceeds will be devoted to the Belgian Relief Fund. In the audience were His Excellency the Governor and Lady Galway. The lecturer went on to say that from his study of history there had never been on the part of the Empire, a more justifiable war, and he wished to tell his fellow-citizens so. The Empire was now faced with its greatest trial. A mighty moral issue was involved, because an attack had really been made upon the continuity of the methods of civilization. One of the smallest countries of the world had appealed for assistance to beat off the attack of a mighty and a misguided power, and in thinking over the matter he had decided to contribute his little effort. Hence the lecture, which was one of a series of three.

—A Blighted Country.—

Last June he had wandered from the borders of Holland to Antwerp. The countryside was a picture of peace, with its windmills revolving in the gentle breezes, and its cattle browsing amid the tinted corn. To-day, what was it? There were smoking ruins. The windmills and the corn were gone, and so, to a large extent, were the people who had created them. Why? Because Belgium had preferred to preserve her honour rather than pursue her material advantage—because Belgium had decided in her love of liberty to fight the battles of "you and me." Australia was far away from the roar of cannon, and thanks for that were due to Belgium. It was the duty, therefore, of Australians to do for Belgium something in recognition of what she had accomplished to preserve the blessings of freedom.

—The Causes of the War.—

In all great wars, the lecturer proceeded to point out, there were superficial causes, but beneath were the more important reasons. There was necessity to distinguish between the cause of the war between Austria and Serbia and the causes of the European outburst. The immediate cause of the hostilities between Austria-Hungary and the Serbs might have been the murder of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, but it was now known that there was an attempt to embroil the little kingdom much earlier than that. Anyway, the spark had set fire to the magazine.

—Official Papers.—

Correspondence in regard to the war had been issued by the British, German, French, and Russian Governments. The "books" were illuminating to students of history. In the English White Book the correspondence between the various Courts before the outbreak of the war were given without comment. On the other hand, the German White Book included only selected documents to which long explanations were attached. The German publication did not contain the correspondence which had taken place between Berlin and Vienna, and that was just what the world wished to know.

—Sir Edward Grey's Policy.—

Only one criticism had been levelled against the British Foreign Minister, which was that he should have made plain at an early stage of the negotiations whether Great Britain would or would not go to war, as if he had done so there might, or might not, have been any war. The German Chancellor had made that charge against Sir Edward, but how could the latter have known with any degree of accuracy what really was in the mind of Germany. He might have had his surmises, but if he had acted on them the world would have condemned him. He had decided right up to the last moment that Great Britain must have a free hand, and which of his countrymen could condemn him?