

(March 1, 1915.)

The War, as Seen From the Far East

BY PROFESSOR A. P. COLEMAN, M.A., F.R.S.*

AT a regular luncheon of the Club, held on the 1st March, Professor Coleman said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen.—Early in the winter, or rather at the end of the winter of the Southern Hemisphere, during the past year, the British Association was on its way to Australia. It is rather hard for us to think of winter as coming in August, but that is the case. Early in August, then, between two and three hundred members of the British Association, including people from other countries as well as Great Britain, were on board an Orient Liner, on their way to Adelaide, Australia. On the 5th we heard by wireless that Britain had made war on Germany, or put it the other way—Germany had made war on Britain. We had Germans amongst us, distinguished scientists, and some of them old friends of my own. We hardly knew what to think about it. Some said that it was impossible—that Germany and Britain were on too good terms. However, we found that it was not only possible, but that it was too true. When we landed at Adelaide, we learned how the war was already going on. We were about as far away from the centre of it as we could well be: of course New Zealand is the exact Antipodes of Great Britain, but Australia is about as far away as you can get. One might think that in so distant a country, set off between the seas, we should find all peaceful; yet the war did exist at that moment in Adelaide: the newspapers were full of it; every speech formally made before the British Association referred to it, but gravely and with deprecation, because we had German and Austrian guests with us, and we must not do anything to hurt their feelings. Officially, things were kept quiet. You have some idea here, I believe, of "Business as usual"; and there also the effort was made superficially to observe the same motto, and to have business go on as before

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in Melbourne and Sydney. Though on the surface everything went on as though no change had taken place; yet there was an undercurrent of anxiety, as well as a general feeling that the British Empire was going to come through all right, and that they were going to help. That was the feeling of everybody. I had a chance as guest in friends' houses to see what the war meant to them.

In Australia nearly every large city is a seaport, and so felt the effect of the war as inland cities would not. You could not enter a harbor at night, you had to stand your distance, and enter only when there was a chance to see who you were and make sure of your identity. Then, too, you would find in the back of a harbor two or three German vessels, or sometimes four or five German vessels, laid up,—no more business done by them, the war meant a sudden cessation of their trade. German ships had a share almost equal to those of Great Britain in the far eastern steamship traffic, for the Nord-Deutscher Lloyd is quite the equal of the P. and O. lines; but all at once the German vessels were stopped. It was quite a striking thing.

I went with one of my old friends, Professor Penck, for a walk in the Botanical Gardens at Brisbane. We found three German ships lying there tied up in the harbor—I didn't look at him, nor he at me, but we went away! (Laughter.) You could see the effects of the war showing themselves there and generally everywhere.

When starting away, some of us had made arrangements to travel homewards by German ships; but now we could not get one!

I went to New Zealand—I am giving you just the high lights, you understand,—it would take too long to tell you all we did, and it would not be particularly interesting, but there were striking things in many places. For instance, when in Auckland, looking at their volcanoes,—they have some fine ones there—I saw a long troop of unkempt horses trotting along the streets; asking what they were for, I was told they were for the mounted troops of New Zealand. When we got off the ship at Wellington, the capital, we saw eight big liners painted grey, and with no names—they were now troopships, and British warships were waiting to convoy them.

All sorts of rumors were going about:—where was the Australian fleet?—you know they have a real fleet in Australia! (Applause)—nobody knew; everyone surmised that it was in the north, but the fleet and troopers from New Zealand were not idle:—German Samoa presently became British ter-

ritory, and the German part of New Guinea presently belonged to Australia—Australia already owned part of it, but now they added the German part just to the north. The Australians and New Zealanders were quietly doing this imperial work, but here you probably heard little about it or paid little attention to it.

We were wondering what Canada was doing all this time, and were anxious to hear, but there was nothing published, except this statement, which was given prominent headlines in the newspapers, that Canada was sending thirty thousand troops as a first contingent. People began to shake my hand then, and to think a little more of me than before. (Laughter.)

Leaving Australia, we were pretty well on the way northward when we learned that the German cruisers were beginning their depredations, among them the famous Emden. We had to cross to Thursday Island, a centre of the pearl industry, but as you don't wear pearls of course you don't know anything about Thursday Island. Now, there was no market for mother of pearl shells, for they all go to Vienna, so the Kanakas, the Japs and all the others interested in the pearl fishery, were out of work because of this world war.

We set out from that place for Singapore where all lines of travel in the far East meet, you know. Ours was a British ship, the "Mataram," bound for Java, and I was promising myself a nice little run through the island, but instead we started out across the Indian Ocean, and with light out, or screened, sailed along, a ghost ship, through the waters, until we came to Christmas Island, where we turned north. And so we saw nothing of the famous island of Java. The reason was, of course, the Emden. We gave out that we were going to Java, but we went somewhere else! (Laughter.)

On the way to Singapore, I was very much amused when standing beside the Captain, to see an approaching steamer suddenly dash off in another direction, but presently come back: they had thought we might be the Emden. We arrived at Singapore without seeing or hearing anything of the cruiser, since our wireless was dismantled for fear the Emden might get information.

In Singapore we found business was all at loose ends. There was no more sale for copra. You may imagine here that copra is not of much importance, but its production is the principal business there. Copra is the dried meat of the coconut, and its market is found mainly in Germany. At ordinary times the South Sea Islanders live comfortably on

the proceeds of the cocoanut, but there is no more sale for that now, the material is unsalable. It is just the same with the tin and rubber, so the inhabitants are all affected by the war.

Passing on from Singapore, we touched some points in the Straits Settlements, of which I suppose you have not heard much, but they are extraordinarily interesting. There are only a few thousand British there, planters and so on, the great bulk of the population being Malays and Chinese, who come in and often become prosperous planters, specially in Malacca. The British have inherited a good many things from other peoples, so that there is risk of jealousy on some points. It is to be remembered that Malacca was once Dutch, and looks Dutch to this day.

At length we came to Penang, arriving early one morning—we could not get in at night, you remember. We found there a feeling of dismay among the people, for a vessel had been sunk in the harbor, and its masts were still sticking up out of the water. The Emden had been there the night before! The masts were those of the Zhemtchug, a Russian cruiser, which had been anchored just about the place where we were. You know how the Emden came in at dawn, when things were dim, showing four smokestacks instead of three—the fourth put up on purpose to look like a British cruiser there which had four smokestacks. The Russians saw this vessel, but noticing the four smokestacks thought there was nothing wrong. The Emden came right alongside the cruiser before firing on her, and presently she sank, eighty-eight people being killed, and a hundred or more desperately wounded. The hospital was crowded with wounded Russians. All done in an instant almost!—it gives one a strange, uncanny idea of the force of modern explosives, to see how a big vessel could be destroyed in fifteen minutes. The wounded were soon picked up by sampans, but there were still dead bodies floating around—for it is the tropics, you remember,—shapeless masses which we almost came in contact with as we sat in the launch going ashore. On shore we found all in a state of disturbance. I had lost a knife, and wanted to buy one, so I went to an English shop—for there are English and Chinese shops there,—but the young man who waited on me could not stop to give me what I needed until he had told me all about the Emden's work. He had seen it. Another curious thing—when I bought the pen-knife, I found it was covered with vaseline, and wondered why, but was told that everything of steel in that tropical climate gets so rusted that they

have to keep it covered with vaseline. When I cleaned it up, and looked at it, I found it was marked "Made in Germany." (Laughter.)

As she left Penang, the Emden met a little French torpedo boat, the Mousquet, which was quickly sent to the bottom; but strangely enough two other French torpedo boats lying alongside the pier were overlooked. They had been there all the time, but the Emden never saw them! She had been informed of the presence of the Russian cruiser, which she immediately attacked, but had not heard of the French vessels. That, I suppose, is all that need be said about Penang. The presence of the Germans was brought very close to us.

I was on the way to India, on the Japanese ship, Suwa Maru, and the captain told us, "We will go on this evening." But we did not. Then he said we shall start in the morning; still we stayed there. And so we were delayed for nine days. The Emden had been collecting ships of every country, just as you collect postage stamps! She had a number of British ships, and had just got a French one, the little vessel I spoke of a moment ago, as well as the Russian cruiser, and it was said that she wanted a Jap vessel, so our Jap Captain was bound not to go out and be caught. On our way to Penang we must have passed the Emden within about fifty miles, steaming off into the deserts of the ocean, for a Jap cruiser was after her. Finally I got a ship, of the British India Company, which went to Burma and then another on to Calcutta.

What about India? It has always seemed to me the most attractive, yet mysterious country in the world. There had been reports of sedition, bomb explosions, etcetera, and it had seemed to me not entirely safe for white men, but when I called on some friends at the Geological Survey at Calcutta, they seemed quite unconcerned, and sent me north to Darjeeling, to see the Himalayas. Afterwards one of them took me through the heart of India, the jungly part where you see the wild animals come out to the fields of millet. When one watches those dark people going along the street, with their inscrutable faces, one wonders what they are thinking, at the bottom of their dark minds? You don't know; it is very unsafe to guess. Nevertheless, in Calcutta I found my friends taking everything colly. When you listened to them, you would think there was no trouble at all. The natives were all friendly, kindly, polite. I was amazed. But I found that the white man does not worry. He is not expecting a bomb. A bomb comes once in a long while, but he is not worried about it.

That is extraordinary. You must not forget that there are two hundred and forty to two hundred and fifty million people there, natives, who don't understand our views entirely, yet the civil service that rules over them consists of only twelve hundred men! Think of that—the fraction can hardly be expressed in decimals, of the Englishmen ruling that huge Empire! Yet it gives no trouble while this biggest war in the world's history is raging. I went to Jubbulpore, an important garrison city and a very interesting one; they told me there at the Club that all the white troops had gone to the war. Think of it! taking troops away in the midst of a war, and they felt there was no danger to the whites! I lost any little trepidation I might have had, and felt as much at home as one could when the faces were dark, and the climate was different, and all things were different from one's home surroundings.

More than that, I heard that the Nizam of So-and-So had offered fifty thousand pounds, or so many lacs of rupees, for the war; that the Prince of So-and-So was willing to send so many of his troops to the war. Everyone was joining in! (Applause.) The importance of that cannot be fully realized: instead of showing any sign of disaffection, they are sending troops to help us. You know, after all, decency and honesty count in the world. (Hear, hear, and applause.) There is no doubt India has been ruled in that way. No country in the world was ever ruled in a more kindly spirit. Sometimes there is a little rigidity—officials are sometimes that way—but everybody recognizes that honesty and uprightness of intention do much. The Indians themselves, even the disaffected ones, recognize that. They would not have any other country in the world rule them. Britain is the one they must cling to; so they are fighting for Britain now. (Applause.)

The question of India seemed to me very important. I went to Bombay, where the whites are not numerous; the merchants and higher classes being Parsees, and I was at Madras, where the Emden had flung in a shot or two a couple of weeks before. Some people had moved inland, but they came back, and Madras was going on with its business as before, because the Emden at that time was running for her life; and very soon we heard that an Australian cruiser, the Sydney, had smashed her at Cocos Island, which I had seen a few weeks before. (Applause.)

I had been in some of the most democratic parts of the Empire; I suppose New Zealand is the most democratic part, and Australia is nearly equal to it; and now I was in one of

the most autocratic parts of the Empire, among the millions and millions of Indians ruled by white men; but I found the same spirit everywhere. (Applause.) When I got back to Singapore—you have to go that way every time—I saw men going home from various parts of the East to take part in the war, among them a hundred and five men from Shanghai, fine young fellows—for that is far enough north to be healthy for white men. They were running about the ship for exercise every morning and leaping into the harbor for a swim, paying no attention to the sharks said to be there. It was a gathering of the clans; they were turning up from everywhere, and all on their way back to fight for the Empire. The Indians were anxious to join in. Why, the Empire is a unit now as it never was in the world before!

(Here Professor Coleman sat down, but the applause was so hearty and long continued as to amount to an encore, and President Lesslie Wilson rose and said, "I told Professor Coleman he stopped too soon," so the Professor stood up again and added):

Gentlemen, I have said the bulk of what I wanted to say, but there are a few things that might be added. I had intended to come home by the C.P.R. Line, for the C.P.R. boats are the fastest on the Pacific. (Hear, hear.) When I got back to Colombo I enquired about it, but learned to my discomfort that there were no C.P.R. boats. What had happened? They were all taken for auxiliary cruisers or troopships! I had promised my colleagues who were doing my work on this side of the water that I would be back at my work soon, so I lost no time in looking for another ship. I found that there was a boat of the American Line, which took eight days more than the C.P.R., also a Japanese boat, which took about the same time. I came home by the American Line, as it started a little sooner than the Japanese. But what has the war got to do with American Liners? I thought I should feel at home on board the Korea, for after all we are part of the North American continent. But on the pier at Shanghai I noticed that the German language was everywhere in evidence. German flags were displayed, there were German "Hochs" and German accents everywhere. After we left Shanghai I found that we had a hundred and fifty Germans on board, and German was the language of the ship! German the language of the ship? That rather puzzled me, and I made enquiries. They were refugees from Kiao Chau, all women and children except two or three medical men, going back to Germany! Their husbands could not go with them;

they could not reach home that way. The Japanese are in Kiao Chau now, and the Germans can never go back there again! So we have the reverse side of the war, the pathetic side. There was a nice little German four-year-old girl that used to come and see me in my stateroom; she seemed to like to do so as I talk a little German, but am still a pretty good Britisher, I hope! (Laughter.) It was interesting to hear that child say, "Mein Vater ist im Kriege!" with great pride. That is their side of it. They think they are right. But the common people are suffering for it, the peasants are feeling it everywhere. The whole of German business has gone to pieces in the world,—a great and prosperous country has now no foreign business—the whole thing has vanished before the power of the British navy, and here these poor refugees were going home to meet what the war has brought to them! (Applause.)
