

Paquisten <sup>to</sup> 14 September 1914

## GERMAN AUSTRALIANS.

To the Editor.

Sir—I have read with great interest the article in *The Register* relative to the status of Germans naturalized in Australia. With your general argument I am in entire accord. When a foreigner becomes naturalized, he adopts the country in which he becomes naturalized. He acquires the rights and privileges of a subject of that country; and, as you point out, he cannot honourably disclaim the responsibilities. I know of no law or treaty obligations which entitle him to do so with the exception of certain reservations in the British Naturalization Act of 1870 which are irrelevant to the status of Germans naturalized in Australia and continuing to reside here. On the other hand, I must confess to a feeling of keen regret that the subject should be discussed in the tone in which it is discussed by some of your correspondents. There are a number of Germans in Australia at present whose absolute loyalty to the Empire is beyond question. There are, however, some Germans who would resent being compelled to fight against their country of origin. Now, with regard to the class last mentioned, their position, though it may be illogical, is not unnatural. But, however that may be, it is certain that no compulsion will be brought to bear upon them in the matter. Legally, they are, as I believe, compellable to serve if the civil authorities so decree; but, as a matter of expediency and fact, we want no "pressed men" in our expeditionary or home forces. The only effect of such correspondence as appeared in Saturday's issue seems to me to be to breed ill blood where there is no necessity or excuse. I am reminded of the married couple who lived in perfect amity until on one unfortunate day they proceeded to discuss what they would do under certain hypothetical circumstances never likely to arise. Then the trouble began. The moral of the story is obvious. Some of our most valued citizens are of German origin. Even if they are large hearted enough to realize the solemn responsibilities undertaken by naturalization, their position is not an easy one. Why should correspondents rub it in by raising questions which are practically certain not to arise in practice? The individual—be he of German or British origin, who raises such questions at the present juncture—is fomenting strife when there is no occasion for strife. He is acting, however good his intentions may be, as an enemy of the State which protects him.

I am, Sir, &c., W. JETHRO BROWN.

Sir—If, as reported, there are any German teachers in our public schools who neglect or refuse to honour the English flag the sooner they are removed the better. We ought to be breeding a race of pure Australians, free from all the racial and national antipathies of the old world, and the only way to do this is to abolish all other than English schools. Our papers were full some time ago of a honoured visit paid to our chief German settlements by

the German Consul-General, and some interesting notes were made of presents from the Kaiser sent out to various German schools. What were those presents, and why did the Consul-General take such interest in those settlements? Mr. Elkan's letter is very significant regarding those who have settled long in Australia, and benefited materially thereby. The military authorities should not ignore the strong German influence in Australia, and South Australia, in particular. We are altogether too easy-going. We must have a drastic Test Act, and ruthlessly deport all those who refuse to swear loyalty to England and Australia. There must be no half and half, and everybody who is not thoroughly known to be Australian in heart and soul should be disarmed. A little firmness now will save much trouble later.

I am, Sir, &c.,

VERAX.

Sir—Why, in the circumstances, should any township in South Australia, continue to be known under German names? May I suggest that they be renamed after Continental towns and cities, in which our troops have, or will have distinguished themselves during the campaign. In any case a change of names is required.

I am, Sir, &c.,

PATRIOT.

Sir—The public generally, I believe, will favour the suggestion that all places in South Australia bearing German names should be altered at once. It is a mistake to allow the names to remain in this British-Australian colony. The nomenclature of South Australia can supply plenty of names that will fit Australian towns much better than Blumberg, Hahndorf, or any others distinctly German. Names of streets should also come under review.

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

Sir—It is to be hoped, after your able leader 'Under Which Flag?' that the Kaiser of the Semaphore will take your good advice and remember that the Government may have to order him to quit on short notice. Let him bear in mind that if he had said one half of what he has said here, had he been in any other country he would have been in serious trouble with the authorities.

I am, Sir, &c., ANTI-TEUTON.

Sir—At the commencement of the war I was one of those who, in the columns of The Register, counselled chivalry towards Germans resident in our midst. But the remarks of Mr. Elkan, voicing, as he says, and I believe rightly, the sentiments of most of his fellow-Germans in South Australia, can only nullify the good intentions of those who, like myself, would forbear from intensifying an already uncomfortable situation. Mr. Elkan merely confirms what every sensible Briton knows when he says that he and—by inference—his compatriots, and, in fact, all foreigners who have come to and taken up permanent residence in this country, have done so from selfish motives. Often they have been a decided acquisition, but that does not alter the fact. To my mind the question suggests itself as to the wisdom of naturalizing foreigners at all. It is a privilege pure and simple, and raises the individual upon whom it is conferred to the dignity of citizenship, without—as Mr. Elkan has unequivocally shown—ensuring that the recipient will unqualifiedly conform to the laws of the British Empire. It is beside the question for Mr. Elkan and others like him to urge that they have sons in the Australian military forces. It is not pleasant to reflect that those particular sons may have, in their most impressionable years, imbibed sentiments inimical to the welfare and solidarity of the British Empire. In view of the fact that our national existence is assailed—I will not say in jeopardy, because I do not believe it—we cannot afford to take risks. There can be no compromise, no reservation. Instead of condemning Mr. Elkan we ought to be grateful for his frankness, as it should make many of us think hard.

I am, Sir, &c., G. B.

Sir—On behalf of many German-Australians, I protest strongly against Mr. Elkan's statements. I was perfectly aware when swearing allegiance to King George that it meant renouncing allegiance to the Kaiser, and standing by Australia for better or for worse. I left Germany a few years ago to evade what in your paper has been called a "cursed system," and there was nothing more a certainty to me that in no distant future great changes will have to take place in Germany. The population was rapidly increasing, and any emigration was discouraged by the Government. Feverish military activity was evident everywhere. I felt that there was something in the atmosphere as regards the future that made one very uneasy. It depended on Germany's rulers to guide the ship safely. The war raging now is the worst thing that could have happened to Germany and the whole of Europe, and will bring untold misery and ruin to millions of innocent people. If the Kaiser and his party could have prevented the war they have committed the greatest blunder and crime ever man has committed. If any Germans before the war broke out wanted to come here they could come, and had the same chances to get on as people from England. If they should come with war-

boats I feel sure that every naturalized Australian-German (with the exception of Mr. Elkan, who will blow his brains out) will oppose them and defend Australia against the Kaiser's dominance. I do not deny that to redeem my oath by fighting the country of my birth would be hard in my case, having left Germany only some four years ago, and I would die fighting for Australia, as I could never stand before my sisters, relations, and friends at home thinking I fought against them. I trust your readers will not take some isolated cases when some German reservists or sailors who deserted their boats and are not naturalized, cause some friction and trouble, and blame the colonial Germans for their actions. Since the war broke out I have been treated by my English friends as well as ever, and if the Australians were not broad and fairminded I would have returned home long ago and probably would be fighting to-day against England. As long as we show ourselves loyal and behave ourselves there is no cause for animosity between us and other Australians which, in the Premier's words, is to be deprecated. I do not seek notoriety, and therefore sign my initials.

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

Sir—Your excellent sub-leader in The Register on Saturday has met with universal approval. It is about time that the authorities took steps to cancel the naturalization certificates of all aliens who, like Mr. Elkan, look upon such documents as "merely scraps of paper." I would suggest that until the war is over Mr. Elkan and others who hold like views as to the sanctity of an oath of allegiance should be placed under detention, as undesirable residents of the State. Most honest men would sooner blow their brains out than deliberately assert that they would break an oath.

I am, Sir, &c., ADELAIDEAN