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WHERE THE AUSTRALIANS ARE FIGHTING.

THE DARDANELLES IS HISTORIC GROUND.

BYRON SWAM ACROSS THE NARROWS.

PROFESSOR DARNLEY NAYLOR ON CERTAIN WAR ASPECTS.

"The abandonment of Christian ethics has been at bottom the cause of this war. It is perfectly plain that Germany has for some decades cast Christianity to the winds, at least in University and official circles. Had the churches throughout the world exercised their influence always on the side of peace this horrible situation might not have arisen. But as a rule the churches have not done their duty. They have tried to serve both God and Mammon at the same time. . . . I am by no means a bloodthirsty man, as everybody knows, but I do sincerely wish that the men primarily responsible for the war should, at its conclusion, be hanged for the criminals they are."

Professor Darnley Naylor is essentially a man of peace, but war having been declared he does not condemn the sword's arbitrament. He delves into history, and grieves that conditions were allowed to exist that had the power of bringing such a catastrophe about. "The public, of course," he remarked, when our pipes were drawing well and we had settled down before a comfortable fire, "is not particularly interested in my opinions about the war."

I replied that they were keenly interested in anything he had to say, and his deprecating but good-natured laugh was the introduction to quite a number of interesting social theories.

"As the Australian troops are fighting at the Dardanelles," he began, "it may be worth while recalling that the Dardanelles are historically of the greatest interest."

Famous Crossings Over the Dardanelles.

"They were the scene of great military feats in the heyday of Athenian glory?"

"Yes; some notable instances are recorded of their being crossed in those times. The famous Persian general Xerxes performed this feat in 480 B.C., when he took an army from Abydos, on the Asian side of the Straits, to Sestos, on the Gallipoli Peninsula. One hundred and fifty years later Alexander made the passage the other way in his victorious conquest of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and India. It is true that neither met with any military opposition, but it was a great feat in those days to take huge armies across a stretch of sea. Then later the Narrows, where the fighting between the Turks and the Allies is now most sanguinary, was the scene of the romance of Hero and Leander. Leander, you will recall, used to swim night after night to Sestos to meet his lady love. In 1810 Byron repeated that feat.

The Downfall of Athens.

"Going back to ancient history again, it was on the Gallipoli Peninsula, some ten miles north of Sestos, on the River Aegospotami—meaning 'Goat River'—in 405 B.C., that Lysander, the Spartan, defeated the Athenian Conon, and gave the deathblow to the Athenian Empire. The events which led up to the destruction of the Athenian Empire are significant. In 416 Athens refused to recognise the neutrality of the little Island of Melos, to-day called Milo, and famous for the statue of Venus. The Melians desired to remain neutral in the war between Athens and Sparta, but the Athenians would have none of it, and put to death every man, woman, and child in that unhappy but heroic island. The great Greek historian Thucydides has described the negotiations which went on between the representatives of Athens and the Melian Assembly. The Athenians are in their tone utterly callous and ideally Prussian. 'Might is right'—the exact words used as a matter of fact—is their only excuse for interference, and acting on that principle the Island of Melos was subjugated. In the following year the Imperial Party in Athens forced on a war with Sicily, an undertaking which in these days was stupendous. Now, when distance has been reduced by the aid of steam and electricity, it is impossible to conceive how vast a task the Athenians set themselves in their descent on Sicily. No Athenian ship of war could travel more than five miles an hour, and with one exception they passed entirely along the coast and sailed only in the day time. Probably the boats carried not more than 100 soldiers, and were mere cockleshells at that. They also took horses with them, and every equipment necessary for such an expedition. It was an ill-starred venture, however, for two years later the invading army met with disastrous defeat, and not a man returned to Athens to tell the tale. Athens got her deserts on that occasion, and she never recovered from the blow. So may it ever be with arrogant lust of dominion."

A Curious Parallel.

"It may interest your readers to know that the relations of Sparta and Athens bear something of an analogy with the relations of Germany and England. Sparta was essentially a military State like Germany. She adopted alien exclusion Acts, and her women were little better than brood mares. On the other hand, Athens was a naval Power, the counterpart of England. Hers was the policy of the open door, admitting to whole or partial citizenship every foreigner who might be of service to the community, and before the great war with Sparta broke out she was already taking women into true partnership of life, a famous instance of which was the relation between Pericles and Aspasia. Unfortunately Athens was equally inflated with Imperial ambitions, became unscrupulous and cruel as all merely military nations have done, and the inevitable end came quickly. That end I believe to have been well merited, for I am one of those who hold that eternal justice is more obvious in history than some historians would have us believe.

Leonidas and the Persians.

"Keeping these facts in mind, I conscientiously believe that the present war must be fought right to a finish, not merely to preserve the nation, but to save civilisation itself. I entirely agree with all Viscount Bryce has said on that point. When men behave like brute beasts there is nothing left but to treat them as such, but we must see to it that all militarism, and not Prussian militarism only, is crushed out of existence for ever. Militarism, mark you, has never done any good for civilisation. It has contributed nothing to spiritual or intellectual progress. Sparta, a military nation, whose sons were born exclusively for the purposes of war, tried the experiment, and not all the ruins of Sparta hid so much as a germ of achievement in science or literature or art. No one forgets Leonidas, who held back the Persian hordes at the pass of Thermopylae, but as great things were done