

A Letter from New Zealand

(From Our Special Correspondent.)

(Mr. Morgan gives a clear view of the situation in the sister Dominion, a fortnight after the declaration of war. Apparently he could have told more if he had not been afraid of the censor. It is notable, however, that he says one contingent, 1,100 strong, had already departed. Some speed for New Zealand—eh, what!—Editorial note.)

Wellington, N. Z.,

August 17th, 1914.

WE stand in the shadow of a great tragedy—the greatest the world has ever witnessed. A continent is convulsed by the shock of armies in battle, and all the world trembles at the spectacle. The most distant lands are concerned equally with those near at hand to the chief theatre of conflict. A vainglorious ruler has plunged a dozen peoples into the horrors and miseries of war; and brought upon his own subjects the bitterness of defeat in the earlier stages of an enterprise that was obviously expected to be carried through before the enemy (in this case France) was prepared to oppose it. The short cut, through Belgium, necessary to this end being barred, a resort to force became necessary in neutral territory, and so Britain was embroiled as the champion of the oppressed. So also does it come about that we in the far south find ourselves for the first time in our history actively preparing to repel an invader that we fear may just possibly attempt a landing somewhere on our shores from a desperate raiding ship. Not even in Boer War times were the people stirred so much. Then the sphere of hostilities was circumscribed; to-day it is world-wide. To-day a German raiding force may attack us; in a very few days our own New Zealand troops may be thrown upon a German possession, to take it as we hope, and to hold it after as one more key to the mastery of the seas which is the heritage of those who live under the Union Jack. To us the sea is all-important. The advance party of our New Zealand expeditionary force is already on the water, and though the censor will not permit us a glimpse even of what may happen a few hours hence—and not much of the doings of some hours past—it does not require any very great degree of perspicacity to form a conclusion on the subject. But it is idle to pursue that theme; we live in stirring times; the censor is abroad, and he may meander curiously through these pages.

Already we have sent away one contingent composed of the flower of our young manhood, about 1,100 strong. Where it has gone none know but those in authority; but the general opinion is that Samoa is its objective. The ships of the Australian fleet have, it is believed, cleared the way for a force to occupy the German territory, and so far as can be learned at present the ships of the German Pacific fleet are not troubling our waters. That is not to say they are hors de combat, of course, and so while New Zealand is organizing a main expeditionary force for service in Europe particular attention is being paid to our own coast defence measures also. All men liable to serve are practically under arms, the ordinary territorial citizen soldiers being reinforced by rifle club men, who comprise a large portion with years of experience in the old volunteer system. They are, moreover, good shots, and so in the work of repelling an invader they would be of very real value as sharpshooters. The response to the call for men, horses, equipment and money has been remarkable. Political and other party lines have been effaced; even the strongest opponents to the military training system have rallied to the standard in the hour of trial, and we stand a people united to meet any foe who may come along.

F. H. MORGAN.



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