

THE CAUSES AND THE PROGRESS OF THE GREAT WAR.

On the 19th instant, His Excellency the Governor of Newfoundland delivered a very comprehensive and interesting lecture at St. John's, Nfld., on the above subject which was listened to with intense interest by a large audience. We quote the following extract:

Any excuse will do to start a fight, if you want to force a fight, no matter how unwilling the other man may be, and the excuse was quickly found. The heir to the Empire of Austria—himself of German race—went on a Royal tour throughout some new provinces where most of the people were Slavs—and he was assassinated by two men one of which was an Austrian subject and the other a Serbian subject, though both were Slavs like the Russians.

Thereupon, after first obtaining the permission of the German Emperor, a demand was sent to the King of Serbia of a very insulting character, ordering him to do very humiliating things such as no king had ever been before told to do. Nevertheless, the Ministers of the King of Serbia promised to perform nine of the ten orders but asked that the tenth might be referred to the Hague Tribunal for amicable settlement. But this humble answer would not suffice, for the decision had been arrived at beforehand; and despite the remonstrances of our Foreign Minister, Austria declared war on Serbia and overran that country. The Czar of Russia remonstrated and ordered some of his armies to be got ready on a war footing, whereupon Germany and Austria (who had been preparing for war for months past) both declared war on Russia and on France as well. It was known that France and Russia were bound by treaty each to support the other in case a war of aggression was forced on either of these nations. Therefore, the German Emperor gave the order to invade France before the French should have time to get ready for war, and, because the French fortresses on the German frontier were strong and prepared for defence, the German armies were ordered to invade the territory of Belgium, so that the German invasion might pour into France along an unprotected frontier.

Then came the critical moment. Germany was confident that her military organization could crush both France and Russia. She had secretly prepared her arrangements that her troops should be ready on the very day of the declaration to invade France through Belgium, devastate the country, sack and burn the towns, butcher the population and dictate terms of utter subjection within one month; and then turn on Russia and smash her armies as soon as France was done with. And she trusted that England, the peace-loving and the unready, would temporize, and then not strike until too late. And even if England did intervene, her land forces were insignificant, the men of England were untrained, the Colonies, even if willing, would be too late to be of any value. If England could be cajoled into not fighting at all, she could be conquered later; if England did agree to fight, that could be used as an excuse for the conquest of the British Empire, once France had been humbled and the Russian armies had been defeated. And here is where the German Emperor and his arrogant generals, and his pettifogging lying diplomats, made their cardinal blunder.

They chose their own time, before France had

brought into force her new law of three years' military training (instead of two), and before she could provide new heavy artillery to meet the siege artillery which Krupp had prepared. They chose their time, when Russia had lost her Navy and had not recovered from the disastrous war in Manchuria. They chose their time when England appeared to be in difficulties with Ireland, where a civil war appeared imminent, both sides having received their weapons from Germany itself.

They reckoned that France would again beg for mercy, knowing that her fair land must be devastated. They reckoned that Russia, being unprepared, might fear the results of a war, and would let the Serbs be conquered and the Balkan States be divided anew between Austria and Turkey. They reckoned that Italy would contribute her Army to attack France and her Navy to control the Mediterranean. They reckoned that Turkey would assail Egypt and raise a religious war on the borders of India. They reckoned that peace-loving England and her Colonial Empire had lost the capacity to defend themselves and that the Irish would revolt. They reckoned that the Americans would be content to reap the benefit to be obtained from the ruin of England's trade. And they reckoned, above all, that their magnificent war organization would triumph at every contest.

Here is where these little Bismarcks reckoned wrong. France was prepared to fight for her existence. Belgium was prepared to fight for her independence. Russia was prepared to fight for her fellow-countrymen in Serbia. England was prepared to fight for the observance of solemn treaties, for the freedom of Belgium for right against might, for her own honour. Ireland was prepared to sink her differences for the maintenance of the Empire; the Dominions Overseas were prepared to do all they could to help; India was prepared to give her fighting men and her resources for the country which had treated her so well and so justly. America was prepared to denounce the attempt of might to overcome right.

So much for her enemies. And as to those whom she expected to help the conquest of the world by Prussia:—Italy was not prepared to fight against England, her greatest benefactor; the Mohammadans of India and Egypt declined to rebel against our Liege Lord, the King-Emperor. The Turks realized that a fight against England and Russia meant utter ruin. So the edifice of hate and cunning crumbled in the dust. Great Britain, Russia, France, Belgium and Servia are banded against the would-be oppressor. Ireland and the Dominions—including the Union of South Africa—the Indian Empire, the Colonies, all declared their loyalty. It seems as if very little would cause Italy, Roumania, Bulgaria and Greece to join in the league against oppression. America has with one voice declared that England is in the right and Germany is in the wrong. Turkey is wise enough to remain quiet. Egypt, Algeria, Tunis and Morocco show no signs of hostility. The whole edifice of the diplomatists tumbles down like a pack of cards, and the country which has pushed over the cards is Great Britain, the country which the Prussian officers sneer at as the land of shopkeepers and poltroons.

But, mark it well, it is the championing of justice and the protection of the weak and the oppressed—in her old-fashioned way—by Great Britain which has secured the isolation of Germany and will, in the end, humble the pride of her over-bearing soldiery.