

The rector's letter

There can be but one think on our minds at the present time and that is the Great War. It meets us at every turn. Whether it is that we watch with great anxiety the great battle field of Europe or throw ourselves into the task of preparing at home for the wounded, or whether we see the stupendous efforts which are being made to keep our works open and the nation employed. We also are watching the precautions which are in hand to procure food for the tens of thousands who may be called upon to suffer and strain our eyes to see the Navy which is watching with untiring diligence not only the German fleet but is keeping open the pathway for food and commerce.

We note the steady building up of the Home Army which may yet be called upon to go abroad and our hearts go out to the Australians and New Zealanders and Canadians who are preparing to come over with such glad enthusiasm.

Millions in Great Britain are daily joining in prayer to Almighty God to give us courage and stability and that confidence which he alone can give. Surely every Englishman understands by now why we are at war and why without sacrificing our honour we cannot stand aside. Anyone with the slightest acquaintance with the literature of Germany for the last ten years knew that it was coming, but none of us perhaps dared to imagine that tentative assumptions would have led to such a stupendous bid for worldwide empires. One tries to think of the great Babylonian Abyssinian invasions, of the mighty onslaught of Xerxes, of the dreams of Napoleon or even of the building up of the great Roman Empire, and all of them pale into insignificance before this swift, sudden and daring dash for universal power. The very thought appals us and we must wait to see whether it is the outcome of genius or madness.

There then follows this piece which is unsigned...

"The terrors and sadness of the war begin now to be evident. Our first loss of 2000 men with no names makes all who have friends and relatives at the front extremely anxious. We rejoice to know that our little Army has behaved so splendidly in the first engagement as we knew it would. All it wants now is backing up. The call to arms is a call which every able-bodied Englishman of military age should take to heart as a personal call, for the sake of his country and his home. It is not a question of argument; it is a question of plain common sense, and the men who say that they would just as soon be governed by Germany as by George V and his parliament must be as mad as the man who is reported to consider himself Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany.

(The rector at the time was Revd Addison)