

The American Verdict on the War

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Wandering today through one of the greatest bookshops in the world, in one of the greatest avenues in the world, I happened upon a little book entitled: "The American Verdict on the War." Being an Englishman deeply interested in the war, and recognizing the paramount importance of American opinion, I laid down half a dollar and pocketed the book.

I find that it is mainly a manifest issued by ninety-three distinguished representatives of German science and art. The manifest states that "neither the people, the government, nor the Kaiser wanted war"; that "it is not true that the life and property of a single Belgian citizen was injured by our soldiers without the bitterest self-defense having made it necessary," that "it is not true that our warfare pays no respect to international law." The manifesto ends with the words: "For this we pledge you our names and our honor."

The names appended are some of the most famous and honorable names in the whole world – names of men who have done great work for humanity, names of men renowned for their learning and for their passion for truth. Among them I see such names as Adolph von Baeyer, Emil von Behring, Paul Ehrlich, Rudolph Eucken, Emil Fischer, Ernst Haeckel, Philipp Lenard, Wilhelm Ostwald, Wilhelm Wandt – great workers and great thinkers, who all men have delighted to honor.

Personally, I feel bound to believe the protestations of each man, both because they are great, honorable and truthful men, and because they are likely to know more about most of those matters than any Englishman can know. Further, I am glad to believe these protesta-

tions because, if, as these great men so pathetically assert, the Germans have been misjudged and maligned, then we shall be able to fight them with less bitterness and with more hope of a good end to it all. As an Englishman and a scientist, and a humanitarian, I gladly and gratefully welcome and accept the protestation.

But, I look to see what America has to say, and what Mr. Church has to report.

I read, and I am simply astounded. Mr. Church, president of the Carnegie Institute at Pittsburgh, proceeds to give his own version of the facts, and his version of the facts seems to amount to nothing less than a perversion of them.

To deal with all Mr. Church's amazing perversions and distortions of the truth would require a volume, but a very slight analysis of his statements will serve, I think, to discredit his whole booklet.

He begins his story thus: "Well we all know that Austria, away back in 1908, made seizure of the two provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. A thing like that enrages the human spirit, and the brains of some men will not act normally under extreme provocation. In May 1914, the Austrian Crown Prince went into these provinces. The people looked upon him as an invader, an usurper, a conqueror, a tyrant, and he was assassinated.

Will Mr. Church for a single moment dare to maintain that that is a fair representation of the facts – that that is the truth, and the whole truth, as given in the official documents. to which he appeals, and which he claims to have profoundly studied?

Let us face him with undeniable diplomatic and historical facts.

Prior to 1878 Bosnia-Herzegovina, owing largely – as our own consuls and ministers assured us – to Slavish intrigues, was a hothouse of revolt, and a source of great anxiety to her neighbor, Austria-Hungary, and in 1898, at the wish of the Great Powers, Austria-Hungary occupied these turbulent provinces.

No doubt, Mr. Church, who has so profoundly studied official documents, has read the consular reports prior to the occupation, and has read, too, the finely phrased proclamation issued to the occupied provinces.

For thirty years Bosnia-Herzegovina was justly and wisely ruled by Austria-Hungary – Mr. Church has also, no doubt, read the voluminous papers published by Austria-Hungary giving an account of her stewardship – and the provinces were redeemed from a state of anarchy and misery and became civilized, contented and prosperous lands.

In 1908, then, after all these years of work, after all these years of successful occupation, Austria-Hungary, under protest from Turkey, and in spite of threats from Russia, formally annexed the provinces which, whether right or wrong, was a very good thing, I should imagine, for the provinces.

These are the historical facts of the case, and when Mr. Church ignores these facts, and states boldly that Austria made seizure of the two provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina – a thing that enrages the human spirit – he is guilty of *suppression veri*, and he is certainly not giving a fair representation of the case.

Nor is Mr. Church's statement that the Crown Prince was assassinated by the people, as an invader and a tyrant, a fair statement of the facts, as given in the official papers which Mr. Church has so profoundly studied.

When he wrote his brochure Mr. Church had apparently not read the Austro-Hungarian Red Book, but presumably he had read the Austro-Hungarian note of July 23, which states "that the murder at Sarajevo was conceived at Belgrade, that the murderers received the arms and bombs with which they were equipped from Servian officers and officials who belonged to the Narodna Odbrana, and that, lastly, the transportation of the criminals and their arms to Bosnia was arranged and carried out by leading Servian frontier officials."

Even for Serbia it was a very brutal and heartless murder.

Of course Mr. Church may have secret papers not hitherto published, but so far as the official papers, which he has so profoundly studied, go, his statement is not a fair representation of the facts.

Why Mr. Church should give such a garbled and incorrect representation of the facts it is difficult to say. He is writing to learned men, including historians well acquainted with the truth; he could hardly hope to deceive them, even though his tone towards them is absurdly patronizing. Did he wish, perhaps, to deceive the American nation?

A little later we meet with the most amazing assertion that "already Austria had ravished Serbia of two of her precious jewels." Is it possible, in spite of his profound study of official documents, that Mr. Church is under the impression that Bosnia and Herzegovina belonged to Serbia?

But it is not amusing, it is really very tragic and very pitiful, for there is Mr. Church sitting in a comfortable armchair at the Carnegie Institute, obstructing attempts at conciliation and fomenting that spirit of ignorance, hatred and injustice which has made, and is still making, a very Inferno of Europe.

A book like this should be put in the same category as foul-minded tales of atrocity, for it makes for hate, and it makes for death.

But I do not think that Mr. Church's verdict is at all likely to be the final verdict of a shrewd, fair-minded people like those of the United States.