

William Henry Barton – court case, Burma, WW1

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**PUBLICATION OF NAVAL  
INFORMATION.**

CHARGE AGAINST AN EDITOR.

Rangoon, Oct. 12th.—To day, in the District Magistrate's Court, Mr W. H. Barton, proprietor and publisher, "Times of Burma," appeared to answer a charge under Section 3 of Ordinance No. 1 of 1914, in that he, on the 23rd September, published information regarding the dispositions of one of His Majesty's ships and also with reference to the pursuit of the "Emden."

The Assistant Government Advocate briefly opened the case, alluding to the Ordinance under which the prosecution was instituted. This prosecution was by no means a formal matter. Government regarded the infringement of this Ordinance as a serious offence and they wished to make it clear that the Ordinance was not a dead letter. These were matters which were not within the province of the Editor of a newspaper, but were matters of policy for Government to decide.

In answer to the Magistrate, the accused stated that his reason for publishing the statements in question was in order to allay a scare which was apparent among people resident in the quarter where his office was situated. He much regretted that the paragraph should have appeared. The accused pleaded guilty, reiterating his expression of regret.

His Worship then passed orders. Having referred to the articles, the subject of the prosecution, His Worship went on to say that the writer remarked:—"If the steamer for the Straits happens to meet the "Emden," she will be in a position to

supply the Officers with reading matter which gives the latest available news of the war." One might, said the Magistrate easily realise the pleasure with which Mr Barton's article would be read by the Commander of the "Emden" if he had the good fortune to see it. It was a matter of history that the Military plan of campaign in 1870 was largely ruined by the publication of military news by a French newspaper of unquestioned loyalty. While taking into account, therefore, the intentions of the accused as some extenuation of his act. His Worship thought it necessary to impose a substantial penalty. Accused was sentenced to pay a fine of Re. 250, or to three months' simple imprisonment.