

the present war is one which involved as a first step in their warlike operations the absolute violation of the independence of Belgium. Let me read a few words from Sir Edward Grey's speech in that regard. He said:

We were sounded in the course of last week as to whether, if a guarantee were given that, after the war, Belgian integrity would be preserved, that would content us. We replied that we could not bargain away whatever interests or obligations we had in Belgian neutrality.

In speaking of the interests of the small nationalities of Europe in this event, he pointed out what will commend itself to the judgment of every man in this House: that once a free nation, once any of these small nationalities commits itself to the principle of having its territory overrun by the armed forces of another nation without offering any resistance, from that time not only the neutrality but the independence of that country is gone. Sir Edward Grey went on to say this with regard to Holland and Belgium:

—The smaller states in that region of Europe ask but one thing. Their one desire is that they should be left alone and independent. The one thing they fear is, I think, not so much that their integrity but that their independence should be interfered with. If in this war which is before Europe the neutrality of one of those countries is violated, if the troops of one of the combatants violate its neutrality and no action be taken to resent it, at the end of the war, whatever the integrity may be, the independence will be gone.

Further on he quoted with striking effect the words of Mr. Gladstone, uttered, if I remember correctly, at the time of the Franco-German war of 1870. Mr. Gladstone said:

We have an interest in the independence of Belgium which is wider than that which we may have in the literal operation of the guarantee. It is found in the answer to the question whether under the circumstances of the case, this country, endowed as it is with influence and power, would quietly stand by and witness the perpetration of the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history, and thus become participators in the sin.

That was the question which presented itself for the consideration of the ministers of the United Kingdom, and that was the question which the British Government, acting, I think, as they were bound to act in the interests of this Empire as a whole, declared that they could not answer except by affirming that the whole power and resources of this Empire were pledged to defend the independence and integrity of Belgium as guaranteed by the treaties of 1831 and 1839. It is true that a promise

[Sir Robert Borden.]

was made that after the war was over the neutrality of Belgium would be absolutely respected, but the words of Mr. Asquith put the case with regard to that as cogently and forcibly as it could be put. He said:

What would have been the position of Great Britain to-day in the face of that spectacle if we had assented to this infamous proposal? Yes, and what are we to get in return for the betrayal of our friends and the dishonour of our obligations? What are we to get in return? A promise—nothing more; a promise as to what Germany would do in certain eventualities; a promise, be it observed—I am sorry to have to say it, but it must be put upon record—given by a power which was at that very moment announcing its intention to violate its own treaty and inviting us to do the same. I can only say, if we had dallied or temporized, we, as a government, should have covered ourselves with dishonour, and we should have betrayed the interests of this country, of which we are trustees.

And I am sure that every man in Canada will say Amen to Mr. Asquith's declaration.

I was glad indeed to listen to the words of my right hon. friend with regard to our attitude toward the German people. We have absolutely no quarrel with the German people. I believe that they are a peaceable people, that they are not naturally a warlike people, although unfortunately they are dominated at the present time by a military autocracy. No one can overestimate what civilization and the world owe to Germany. In literature, in science, art and philosophy, in almost every department of human knowledge and activity, they have stood in the very forefront of the world's advancement. Nearly half a million of the very best citizens of Canada are of German origin, and I am sure that no one would for one moment desire to utter any word or use any expression in debate which would wound the self-respect or hurt the feelings of any of our fellow citizens of German descent. So far as those who were born in Germany or Austria-Hungary are concerned, and who have made Canada their adopted home, I may explain that since the outbreak of war we have had to consider the disposition of those who under the laws of their country are bound to perform military service, and we have adopted this principle which I think will commend itself to the judgment and common sense of this House. We have no reason to believe that those people are inspired by the militaristic tendencies which influence the German Government at the present time or the Austrian Government for that matter. We have no reason to doubt, and we do not doubt, that these people will be