

## DOES INTERNATIONAL LAW STILL EXIST ? 9

We have done so because Germany has violated the neutrality of Belgium, and that action raises a clear issue of International Law.

Belgium was a neutral State ; it was not concerned in the quarrel between Germany and France, and did not wish to take part in any hostilities between those States. That being so, the law is clear, that neither belligerent had any right to enter on Belgian territory : and the law is equally clear that Belgium, so far as she was able, was bound to prevent the troops of either belligerent from coming into her territory. If she had permitted that to be done, she would have taken sides with the belligerent whose entry she permitted, and by that very fact would have become an enemy of the other belligerent.

That being the undoubted law, Germany demanded a right of passage through Belgium ; and I ask you to think what this meant. It meant that Belgium was to lend its territory as a cockpit in which the war could be fought out, for obviously if German troops passed through Belgium to attack France, the latter Power must be entitled to enter on Belgian soil to attack the German troops. Further, it meant that Belgium must take sides against France. If Germany won, then some compensation, assessed by Germany, was to be payable for damage as a matter of grace ; but if France won, then Belgium would be at the mercy of France, and subject to such penalties as France at her pleasure would impose. This proposal has been called by the German Government a 'well-intentioned offer', but I ask you could any demand more unreasonable be made ? It was a gross violation of International Law in the matter of neutrality ; but it was more than that : it was an infringement of the principle of the law that all States have equal rights. No such demand could ever have been