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BELGIUM AND HER RELATIONS TO THE GREAT WAR

(Continued from page 2)
the cause of Great Britain and her Allies in this war? The fact that, when Italy was struggling for liberty, British help was forthcoming for the patriots.

Greece, too, can scarce forbear to draw the sword on Britain's side, because she remembers that Britain enabled her to free herself of the galling yoke of the Turk.

Japan has given practical proof of her love for Britain, because, when she was struggling to establish herself as a world power, the while she conferred the boon of representative Government on her own people, it was the British hand, upheld in grim warning that restrained Germany and the other European powers from allying themselves with Russia in an attempt to humble her in the dust.

That's the British way. It was this British love of fair-play that brought us into conflict with Germany that is proving we are a greater Empire than we ever dreamed.

Belgium's Champion in 1870

And while we consider our relation to Belgium at this time, it is interesting to hark back to days when the neutrality of this little Kingdom was threatened and the might of Britain warned off nations that would have trespassed on her soil, but dared not. Prussia looked longingly toward this easy road into France, when the war of 1870 broke out, but Prussia at that time was sane enough to fear Great Britain and worked out her plans in other directions. And it is interesting to notice that Gladstone at that time, took a stand almost identical with that assumed by Sir Edward Grey.

It had come to the great commoner's attention that there were designs on the independence of Belgium and he declared Britain's position in no uncertain terms.

What is that country, he demanded. It is a country containing four millions or five millions of people with much of an historic past, and imbued with a sentiment of nationality and a spirit of independence as warm and as that which beats in the breasts of the proudest and most powerful nations.

Looking at a country such as that, is there any man who does not feel that it is in order to satisfy a greedy appetite for aggrandisement, coming whence it may, Belgium were absorbed, the day that witnessed that absorption would hear the knell of public right and law in Europe?

But 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, in 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 participants in this sin.

Germany Signed The Treaty
But, in 1870 Great Britain was spared the necessity of defending the integrity of Belgian territory by force

of arms. Bismarck recognised the fact that his country was not powerful enough to "hack her way through" by force of arms and so, bowing to the inevitable, he left the little Kingdom severely alone. Acting on behalf of Prussia, the founder of the militarist system of the modern Empire of Germany, he signed a treaty guaranteeing Belgian neutrality and independence and France followed suit. It is this Treaty of 1870 that the German Chancellor has characterised as only "a scrap of paper"; it is this international agreement, signed less than two generations ago, that the unscrupulous Germany of today has torn into shreds, to her everlasting shame and disgrace.

Britain saved Belgium in 1870, by assuming exactly the same stand as she did in 1914, and this is the British answer to the statements of certain German champions that our statesmen interfered in the European quarrel, because they themselves had designs on the territory of our little ally.

That Belgium was deeply grateful to Great Britain is proven by the following remarkable document addressed to Her Late Majesty Queen Victoria, by the Belgian people:

The great and glorious people over whose destinies you preside has just given a further proof of its benevolent sentiments towards our country. The voice of the British nation has been heard above the din of arms, and it has asserted the principles of justice and right. Next to the unalterable attachment of the Belgian people to their independence, the strongest sentiment which fills their hearts is that of an imperishable gratitude.

France's Noble Record

France, too, in these latter days has been charged with designs against Belgium, although, by the way, the traducers of our French allies have not been able to produce the slightest evidence in support of their charges. But the noble stand assumed by the French nation in 1870 is ample reply to those slanders. At that time it was even more to the interest of France to violate Belgian territory than it was to that of Germany. But, having given their word, the French played the part of honorable men, and kept it.

There came the fateful day of Sedan when a French army was wedged up against the Belgian frontier, every means of escape shut out by a ring of flame from Prussian cannon. There was one way of escape, but it meant the violation of the neutrality of Belgium and, to the eternal credit of Frenchmen be it said, they preferred ruin and humiliation to the breaking of their bond. The French Emperor, the French Marshals, 100,000 veteran Frenchmen in arms, preferred to surrender and submit to being taken captives to a strange land, rather than besmirch the fair name of their country. They represented the sole hope of France in her conflict with Germany; they were, indeed, the last effective French army in the field and had they violated the neutrality of Belgium they might have changed the whole course of the war.

Yet the France of 1870 scorned to resort to the pitiful German plea of "military necessity" as an excuse for violating the highest obligations of honor and, the course to the present war to date has proven that the hearts of Frenchmen beat as high and as honorably as did those of their gallant ancestors of forty-four years ago.

In 1914 the Germans regarded it as to their interests to invade Belgium and they did so, regardless of everything but that self-interest.

Amazed The Whole World

And Belgium? Her sons quit themselves like men. Arrogant in their might the great German armies rolled onward through peaceful villages and smiling corn-fields until the well-manned guns of Liege halted them. And there they had to remain for week after week, while a whole world gazed in amazement and admiration at the handful of heroes that had placed themselves so heroically and so successfully in the path of teeming thousands who represented the advance guard of the armies of the mightiest military nation that has ever numbered the face of Mother Earth.

And, meantime, Britain hurried her men across the Channel and France mobilised her gallant sons and Russia rushed forward her great detachments to the sacrifice in East Prussia. Thus it came about that, when the great German guns had pounded the fortifications of Liege to pieces, France and Britain stood just behind in battle-array ready to dispute the further passage of the unscrupulous invader.

The check of Germany by the gallant Belgian army and fortress had allowed the Allies a space wherein to prepare for the sudden conflict. Belgium had saved Europe; she had pre-

served for us the continued existence of our democratic institutions and all that they represent to men born free and adapted only to breathe the air of liberty.

Some of the mightiest missions of the world's history have been performed by the smallest nations. Over three hundred years before the dawn of the Christian era, Persia sent her mighty hosts to overrun Europe. It was a handful of Spartan heroes who held the Pass of Thermopylae against the Persian hordes and dashed the hopes Xerxes for a speedy conquest of the West, even as the Belgians of to-day brought to naught the cherished German dream of a sudden overwhelming advance on France that should settle the conflict almost at one blow.

England, then a small nation, broke the power of mighty Spain; Holland faced the two mightiest Powers of Europe on land and on sea, and won and maintained her independence. And the English and the Dutch of these historic days preserved the liberty of the individual citizen against the self-assertions of tyrants who would sway the world according to the dictates of their own unreasoning caprices.

Says one of our leading statesmen:

The greatest art in the world was the work of little nations; the most enduring literature of the world came from little nations; the greatest literature of England came when she was a nation of the size of Belgium fighting a great Empire. The heroic deeds that thrill humanity through generations were the deeds of little nations fighting for their freedom. Yes, and the Salvation of Mankind came through a little nation. God has chosen the little nations as the vessels by which He carries His choicest wines to the lips of humanity to rejoice their hearts, to exalt their vision, to stimulate and strengthen their faith.

And heroic Belgium, in 1914, held the pass until the champions of democracy could assemble their armies to roll back the high tide of military tyranny championed by Germany.

Interfered In Cause of Right

Could we stand by and watch that struggle uninvolved? Most assuredly not! It is true that Belgium asked our aid and that our treaty obligations bound us to furnish assistance to that sorely-trying country. But there was absolutely nothing to force us to throw ourselves into the great conflict. Nothing whatever. We might have stood by and allowed the light of Belgian independence to be ruthlessly snuffed out by German militarism, but we didn't, because the British conscience, because British traditions, because British principles would not permit us to follow the bastard's course.

Britain had given her bond and that bond had to be kept, though it meant invoking the whole power of the British Empire, spending the uttermost farthing of British wealth and draining the last drop of British blood. That is why we came to the help of Belgium; that is why British troops to-day fight side by side with Frenchmen and Belgians on the blood-soaked fields of Europe.

So, once again, Great Britain has hastened to the assistance of an imperiled democracy. What could be more inspiring that the thought that, after all, these croakings about the decadence of the British peoples, were but vain imaginings? What prouder boast can we make than that we are actuated by the same spirit as that which made our ancestors the emancipators of a whole world?

Britain Proves Different

Bethink you again of the lessons of history. Are they not that most naive—
(Continued on page 5.)

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