

Britain's Obvious Duty.

"It is said we might stand aside and husband our reserves in order to intervene in the end and put things right.

"If in a crisis of this kind we ran away from our obligations of honor and interest with regard to the Belgian treaty, I doubt whatever material force we might possess at the end will be of much value in face of the respect we shall have lost.

"Do not imagine that if a great power stands aside in a war like this it is going to be in a position to exert its influence at the end. I am not quite sure whether the facts regarding Belgium are as they reached this Government, but there is an obligation on this country to do its utmost to prevent the consequences to which those facts would lead if they were not opposed.

"I do not for a moment conceal that we must be prepared for the consequences of having to use all the strength we have at any moment, we know not how soon, to defend ourselves and to take our part. I have announced no final decision until I shall have the whole case before me.

"If we engage in war we shall suffer but little more than if we stood aside. We are going to suffer terribly in this war, whether this country is at peace or war, for foreign trade is going to stop. We have as yet made no engagement for sending an expeditionary force out of this country, but we have mobilized our fleet and the mobilization of our army is taking place. So far as the forces of the Crown are concerned the Premier and the First Lord of the Admiralty have no doubt whatever of their readiness and their efficiency. They never were at a higher mark of readiness. There never was a time when confidence was more justified in their ability to protect our shores and our commerce.

"If the situation develops as it seems probable it will develop, we shall face it. I believe when the country realizes what is at stake, it will support the Government with determination, with resolution and with endurance.

Later in the day Sir Edward Grey made a second appearance in the House of Commons. On this occasion he said:—

"A message has been received by the Belgian Legation here stating that Germany sent to Belgium at 7 o'clock last night a note proposing to Belgium friendly neutrality coupled with the free passage through Belgian territory of German troops, promising the maintenance of Belgian independence at the conclusion of peace, and threatening in case of refusal to treat Belgium as an enemy. The time limit of twelve hours was fixed for the reply.

"Belgium answered that an attack on her neutrality would be a flagrant violation of the rights of nations, that to accept the German proposal would be to sacrifice her honor, and, being conscious of her duty, Belgium was firmly resolved to repel aggression by all possible means.

"The British Government is taking into grave consideration the information received, and I will make no further comments."

Protection of Belgian Neutrality Makes War Inevitable.

When Parliament assembled on Tuesday, August 4, Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, informed the House of Commons that in conformity with the statement made by Sir Edward Grey the day before, a telegram had been sent early Tuesday morning to Sir Edward Goschen, British Ambassador in Berlin, to the following effect:—

"The King of the Belgians has appealed to his Britannic Majesty's Government for diplomatic intervention on behalf of Belgium. The British Government is also informed that the German Government has delivered to the Belgian Government a note proposing friendly neutrality pending a free passage of German troops through Belgium, and promising to maintain the independence and integrity of the Kingdom and its possessions on the conclusion of peace, threatening in case of refusal to treat Belgium as an enemy. We understand that Belgium categorically refused to assent to a flagrant violation of the law of nations.

"His Majesty's Government was bound to protest against this violation of a treaty to which Germany was a party in common with Britain, and must request an assurance that the demand made upon Belgium by Germany be not proceeded with, and that Belgium's neutrality be respected by Germany, and we have asked for an immediate reply.

"We have received this morning from our Minister in Brussels the following telegram:—"The German Minister has this morning addressed a note to the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, stating that as the Belgian Government has declined a well-intentioned proposal submitted to it by the Imperial German Government, the latter deeply to its regret will be compelled to carry out, if necessary by force of arms, the measures considered indispensable in view of the French menace."

"Immediately after this we received from the Belgian Legation here the following telegram from the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs:—"The Belgian General Staff announces that Belgian territory has been violated at Verviere, near Aix-la-Chapelle."

"Subsequent information tends to show that a German force has penetrated still farther into Belgian territory.

"We also received this note this morning from the German Ambassador here:—

"Please dispel any distrust that may subsist on the part of the British Government with regard to our intentions by repeating most positively the formal assurance that even in case of armed conflict with Belgium, Germany will under no pretensions whatever annex Belgian territory. The sincerity of this declaration is borne out by the fact that we have solemnly pledged our word to Holland strictly to respect her neutrality. It is obvious that we could not profitably annex Belgian territory without making territorial acquisition at the expense of Holland.

"Please impress upon Sir Edward Grey that the German army could not remain exposed to a French attack across Belgium, which was planned, according to absolutely unimpeachable information,