

ing a Balkan affair I did not consider that public opinion would justify us in promising anything more than diplomatic support. More was never asked, more was never given, more was never promised; and up till yesterday we have given no promise of more than diplomatic support.

"I must make this question of obligation clear. The House must go back to the Morocco crisis of 1906. The time of the Algeciras conference was a very difficult time for the Government, as a general election was in progress. I was asked if that crisis developed into a war between France and Germany would we give armed support. I said that I could promise nothing to any foreign Power unless that Power was subsequently to receive the whole-hearted support of public opinion here when the occasion arose. I said that in my opinion if war were forced upon France on the question of Morocco, which had just been the subject of an agreement between Britain and France, Great Britain would rally to the support of France.

"But I made no promise and I used no threat. I expressed that opinion and the position was accepted by the French Government. But they said at the time 'if you think it possible that public opinion in Great Britain might, when a sudden question arose, justify you in giving France the armed support which you cannot promise in advance, unless between military and naval experts some conversations have taken place you will not be able to give that support even if you wish it when the time comes.'

"The Agadir crisis came and throughout that crisis I took precisely the same line as I took in 1906. Subsequently, in 1912, it was decided that we ought to have a definite understanding in writing that these conversations were not binding upon either Government, and on the 22nd of November, 1912, I wrote a letter to the French Ambassador and received from him a reply. That letter will be known to the public now as a record that whatever took place between the military and naval experts, nothing was done binding upon this Government.

"The situation in the present crisis is not precisely the same as in the Morocco question. The

latter was primarily a dispute which concerned France—a dispute fastened upon France out of an agreement existing between us and France under which we engaged to give France diplomatic support. No doubt we were pledged to nothing but diplomatic support.

"The present crisis originated differently. It has not originated with regard to Morocco; it has not originated as regards anything about which we have a special agreement with France. It did not originate with anything primarily concerning France. It originated in a dispute between Austria and Servia.

The Point of View of British Honor.

"No Government, no Country, has less desire to be involved in war or in the dispute between Austria and Servia than the Government and the Country of France. They are involved because their obligation is one of honor, under a definite alliance with Russia. That obligation cannot apply in the same way to us. We are not parties to the French or Russian alliance. We don't even know the terms of their alliance.

"I come now to what we think the present situation requires. We have had many years of long standing friendship with France. I remember well when the agreement was made, the warm and cordial feeling resulting from the fact that these two nations had cleared away their perpetual differences and had become friends. How far that friendship entails obligations as between two nations let every man look into his own heart and construe the extent of obligation to himself.

"Speaking for myself, I say that the French fleet is now in the Mediterranean; the northern and western coasts of France are absolutely undefended. With the French fleet concentrating in the Mediterranean, the situation is very different from what it used to be before the friendship which grew between the two countries gave them a sense of security.

"My own feeling is that if a foreign fleet, engaged in a war with France which she did not seek and in which she was not an aggressor come down the English channel and bombarded and battered the undefended coast of France we could not stand aside. The time would come when we would be



Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs