

considered, nor that his action "would be determined largely by public opinion." And he certainly would not, the next day (3 August) in parliament, have quoted the following extract from one of Mr. Gladstone's speeches:

"There is, I admit, the obligation of the treaty. It is not necessary, nor would time permit me, to enter into the complicated question of the nature of the obligations of that treaty; but I am not able to subscribe to the doctrine of those who have held in this house what plainly amounts to an assertion, that the simple fact of the existence of a guarantee is binding on every party to it, irrespectively altogether of the particular position in which it may find itself at the time when the occasion for acting on the guarantee arises. The great authorities upon foreign policy to whom I have been accustomed to listen, such as Lord Aberdeen and Lord Palmerston, never to my knowledge took that rigid, and, if I may venture to say so, that impracticable view of the guarantee. The circumstances that there is already an existing guarantee in force is of necessity an important fact, and a weighty element in the case to which we are bound to give full and ample consideration. There is also this further consideration, the force of which we must all feel most deeply, and that is, the common interests against the unmeasured aggrandisement of any power whatever."

There can be little doubt that we should have joined in the war whether Belgium had or had not been invaded. Sir Edward, as will have been observed, would give no pledge to the contrary, and the revelations of his speech (Aug. 3) and the White Book make sufficiently clear what course the government would have adopted. Notice the following:—

1. The entente cordiale with France did not include definite promises of support, but it led to co-operation in military preparation based upon the assumption that a German attack upon France would be followed by Britain's support of her friend (No. 105).
2. The same understanding had, for some years, regulated the disposition of the British and French fleets (No. 105).
3. Prior to the invasion of Belgium, Sir Edward had promised France that

"if the German fleet comes into the Channel or through the North Sea, to undertake hostile operations against the French coasts or shipping, the British fleet will give all the protection in its power" (No. 148).

4. Referring to a German offer (July 29, No. 85) Sir Edward Grey said (No. 101):—

"What he asks us in effect is to engage to stand by while French colonies are taken and France is beaten, so long as Germany does not take French territory as distinct from the colonies. From the material point of view such a proposal is unacceptable, for France, without further territory in Europe being taken from her, could be so crushed as to lose her position as a great power, and become subordinate to German policy. Altogether apart from that, it would be a disgrace for us to make this bargain with Germany at the expense of France, a disgrace from which the good name of this country would never recover."

Mr. Asquith used somewhat the same language in parliament (Aug.