

no difficulty so far, though it has not been thought possible for the Powers to unite in joint diplomatic action as was proposed on Monday."

The British Parliament Warned.

Premier Asquith also spoke of the extreme gravity of the situation. He and Mr. Bonar Law, the Leader of the Opposition, had driven together that morning to the office of the Foreign Secretary, and an agreement had been reached that in the light of the serious situation of Europe, domestic differences would, for the time being, be forgotten, and to this end a postponement made of the second reading of the bill to amend the Irish Home Rule Bill, which was to have come up that afternoon. In announcing this decision Mr. Asquith said:—

"We meet today under conditions of gravity which are almost unparalleled in the experience of any one of us.

"The issues of peace and war are hanging in the balance, and with us is the risk of a catastrophe of which it is impossible to measure either the dimensions or the effects.

"In these circumstances it is of vital importance to the interests of the whole world that this country, which has no interests of its own directly at stake, should present a united front and be able to speak and to act with authority as an undivided nation.

"If we were to proceed today with the amending bill we should inevitably—unless the debate were conducted in an artificial tone—be involved in acute controversies in regard to domestic differences whose importance to ourselves none is disposed to belittle.

"I need not say more than that such a use of our time at such a moment, might have an injurious and lasting effect on the international situation.

"Mr. Bonar Law, leader of the Opposition, shares to the full the views I have expressed. We, therefore, propose to postpone for the present the second reading of the amending bill without prejudice to its future, in the hope that by the postponement of this discussion the patriotism of all parties will contribute to what lies in our power, if not to avert, at least to circumscribe the calamity which threatens the whole world."

The next day, Friday, July 31, Premier Asquith was even more guarded in the information he gave the British Parliament. His statement was as follows:—

"We have just heard, not from St. Petersburg, but from Germany, that Russia has proclaimed the general mobilization of her army and her fleet, and that in consequence of this martial law is to be proclaimed in Germany.

"We understand this to mean that mobilization will follow in Germany if the Russian mobilization is general and is proceeded with.

"In these circumstances I prefer not to answer any further questions till Monday."

Sir Edward Grey's Statement of Britain's Position.

When the British Parliament re-assembled on Monday, August 3, happenings the most significant perhaps in the history of the world had taken place in the interval of adjournment. Formal declaration

of war had been made by Germany on Russia and a state of war existed with France and Belgium as well. The Commons and the Lords were there to learn of the actions of the Ministry during the adjournment and to determine Britain's position in the European crisis. What this action was can best be told in the words of the Ministers themselves. It was Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who informed the House of Britain's action and policy. He did so in the following words:

"As I said last week, Great Britain was urgently moving to preserve the peace of Europe. Events today, however, move so rapidly that it is exceedingly difficult to state the actual position of affairs. It is now clear that the peace of Europe cannot be preserved. Russia and Germany have declared war against each other.

"I should like to make clear the situation in order that the House may realize exactly under what obligation Great Britain lies so that the House may be fully informed before coming to a decision.

"Let me say very shortly that we have persistently and with earnestness worked with all our power to preserve peace. The House may be satisfied upon that point. Throughout the Balkan crisis we worked for peace; the co-operation of the great Powers was successful then. It is true that some of the Powers had great difficulty in adjusting their points of view, and took much time, labor and discussion before they could settle their differences. But peace was secured because peace was our main object.

"In the presence of this crisis it has not, unhappily, been possible to secure the peace of Europe, because there has been little time and there has been a disposition in some quarters to force things rapidly to an issue to the great risk of peace. The result, we now know, is that the policy of peace so far as the great Powers are concerned, has failed. I do not desire to dwell upon this nor to say where the blame lies, because I should like the house to approach this crisis from the point of view of British interest, British honor and British obligations.

"As to why peace has not been preserved we shall publish papers as soon as we can regarding what took place last week when we were working towards peace and when the papers are published we have no doubt that they will make it clear how strenuous, genuine and whole-hearted were our efforts, and they will enable the people to form their own judgment as to the forces operating against peace.

The Point of View of British Obligations.

"I come now to the question of British obligation. I have assured the House and the Prime Minister has assured the House that if any crisis arose we could come before the House of Commons and be able to say that it was free for us to decide what the British attitude should be; that we would have no secret engagement. There have been in Europe two diplomatic groups—the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. The latter was not an alliance.

"The House will remember that in 1908 there was a crisis originating in the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Russian Minister happened to come to London. I told him definitely that this be-