

Meanwhile Sir Edward Grey had on August 2nd given France 'an assurance that, if the German fleet came into the Channel or through the North Sea to undertake hostile operations against French coasts or shipping, the British fleet would give all the protection in its power.' (W.P. 148). It was perfectly clear from Germany's unwillingness to offer any undertaking about Belgium and from the movement of German troops into Luxembourg that war was now inevitable. Hitherto Sir Edward Grey had refused to give any pledge either to Russia or to France. Encouraged by such a pledge either Power might have adopted a threatening attitude towards Germany, with the result that before the public in England and elsewhere, English policy might bear the appearance of aggression. On the other hand, Sir Edward Grey had not failed his friends for he had been careful to impress upon Germany the fact that if she brought on war England could scarcely keep out. His diplomacy was intended to restrain both sides, so that the controversy might be kept as long as possible in the field of peaceful discussion. Now that his object had failed, he was concerned to protect France. The French fleet had been stationed in the Mediterranean while England guarded the North Sea. It was now necessary for France to know what new arrangement, if any, she would have to make. Sir Edward Grey, therefore, undertook to defend French coasts and shipping against a German attack.

The German demand upon Belgium and the telegram from the King of the Belgians rendered even more unmistakable the character of German designs. The Belgian Minister in Great Britain was told by