

prising all the members of the two groups pledged to act in common against any one disturber of the peace."

Now, for the purpose of this war, seven nations have combined against Germany and Austria. Why for the purpose of a permanent peace should not eight, or for that matter eighteen, undertake to combine against any one nation that commits aggression upon its neighbours? This would be a step at least toward allaying that fear which has produced such dire results.

The very fact of the discussion of such a proposal will place in the hands of those elements of the German population that will have become weary of this war an alternative to that re-arming which the Prussian party will certainly counsel.

Such a step is the natural development of the system of alliances to which we are already committed. It is the preliminary stage of the international police which we are unlikely to achieve at one bound from the present condition.

The step I have suggested is that which was taken by Sir Edward Grey himself in the last crisis which threatened Europe with war—the Balkan affair. It is the step which he took when the die had already, unfortunately, been cast in the crisis that led to this war.* Where time was available for the plan to operate, the new method succeeded in preventing war. All the circumstances after the war will probably be much more favourable for such a plan than they were before the war. The reshufflings and rearrangements, the weariness and exhaustion, the disposition to try new methods, and all the other psychological factors that generally precede developments of this nature, will be operative in full.

* See despatch, cited p. 70.