

England, and the system of ministerial responsibility, not to the individual ruler (as in Germany) but to the elected representatives of the people, one may assert confidently that our going to war was as much a direct act of the British nation as it could have been under the most republican constitution.

The same critics who profess to believe that England wanted the war taunt us at the same time with not having done more to protect Belgium. The truth is that our delay and our obvious military unpreparedness furnish in themselves the best of answers. Yet for both there are compensations. The impressive spectacle was afforded at home of an immediate cessation from all domestic strife, with a resulting solidarity which could not have been achieved if the government had taken what some would have been certain to attack as a premature decision; while the growth of our military efficiency for fighting purposes is guaranteed by the fact that the Empire is acting as a unit, in a way that promises more for its further organization than another twenty-five years of imperial talk. In fact, if the thing had to be, the stage could not be better set than it is, even if we had had the whole management in our own hands. Hence these (German) tears!

The immediate reason for British intervention was of course, as everybody knows, the invasion of Belgium. Opposition to this sudden move on the part of Germany was for England a matter of duty as well as self-interest. She could not well have stood aside while the Belgian coast-line was passing into the hands of another Power—especially one which was showing so little respect for its plighted word. That would have given the opportunity for “pointing a pistol straight at England’s heart,” as the Germans are now trying to do from Antwerp and Ostend and Zeebrugge. And there was the further motive of preventing, if possible, any would-be combatant from using Belgian soil once more as a battle-ground. Some craven-hearted ones have asked if it would not have been better, especially in view of the