

ments published by the different governments are more or less complete seems to us one of minor importance. However, the contents of the Austro-Hungarian Red Book, which has lately been issued, supplies the greater part of the gaps which our English colleagues felt obliged to point out as existing in the German compilation. The historians among them, and not only they, are sufficiently aware that a scientific presentation of the events immediately preceding the outbreak of the war, and one that is free from objection, will not be possible for a long time to come. Until this period arrives, they, as well as we, must take care to avoid pronouncing a definitive judgment.

IV.

It can no longer be disputed that the murder of the successor to the Austro-Hungarian throne and his wife was carried out with the help of Servian officials, and just as little can it be doubted that Austria had the right to demand retribution for this crime, and at the same time to secure herself against like attempts to overthrow the Monarchy. And this is so, no matter how various the opinions may be as to the way in which this right should have been made effective. What must be disputed, however, is the right of Russia to call a halt in the attempt to punish Serbia, and to make Serbia's cause her own. In this claim of Russia's to act as the protector of Serbia—a claim which could not rightly be based, either on the fact that she was a border State, or on economic or dynastic connections, or even on sameness of language—lay a demand which challenged the resistance of Austria-Hungary and likewise of Germany.

When we find the words of the German White Book cited by the English scholars in the following way:

"We were, in this connection, well aware that hostile proceedings, if taken by Austria-Hungary against Serbia, might bring Russia upon the scene, and thereby involve us in a war. We could not,* however, advise our ally to yield where it would be incompatible with her dignity to do so." We are astonished that men, who in their investigations are accustomed to aim in other cases at the greatest accuracy, have thought proper to omit from the second sentence of the above the justification there stated: "In recognition of the fact that the vital interests of Austria-Hungary were at stake." For it was just the necessity of protecting the vital interests of Austria-Hungary, and accordingly our own, which assigned us our place by the side of our ally. And when the English scholars draw from the same sentence the conclusion that the German government with those words conceded ("eingedrückt") that it did not secretly advise Austria to diminish its demands even in the least, they charge that government with having, either voluntarily or involuntarily, let out a secret, which it was incumbent upon it, as an alleged State secret, to have preserved. The reasons which have led the English scholars to attribute so childlike a simplicity to earnest men, such as they themselves must admit the leaders of German politics to be, lie assuredly very deep; they remain hidden from us.

Since the English scholars call in doubt, on the other hand, the respect of the German government for the truth "in its assurances to the other Powers," it would be without purpose to refer to the despatches of the German Emperor, inspired as they are with the warmest love of peace; but the testimony of the Belgian chargé d'affaires in St. Petersburg, M. de l'Escaille, must be proof even against their mistrust. He writes on July 30th to his minister as follows:

"The one thing incontestable is, that Germany has striven both here and in Vienna to find some means of avoiding a general conflict."

When they insist, however, that Germany should have taken part in a conference of the representatives of France, England and Italy, as proposed by Sir Edward Grey, they appear to have left out of consideration the fact that Germany's joining in an attempt to cite Austria before a European tribunal would have had the result, almost by a natural necessity, of severing our relations with our ally. Even our most bitter adversaries should not deem us capable of such criminal frivolity.

Up to this point—and we gladly make them the acknowledgment—our English colleagues have sought to justify their views by statements which can well form legitimate matter for discussion. When, however, they go on to say:

"One thing we willingly concede: Germany would most probably

*The word "not" is wanting, although the sense demands it.

have preferred not to become, just yet, involved in a war with England. She would rather first have weakened and humiliated Russia, subjected Serbia to the power of Austria, rendered France harmless and Belgium dependent, and then, in possession of a vast superiority of power, have had her reckoning with England." And, further: "Germany's ground of complaint is: England would not agree to this." We can only remark that this language is a regrettable departure from the lines of a scientific mode of thinking and discussing, and we disdain to speak further of an insinuation which is contradicted by the whole course of the politics of the German Empire.

V.

We have no doubt that large numbers in England cherished the sincere wish to live in peace with Germany, and the efforts they made to bring about a permanent understanding were fully reciprocated by the endeavors of the German educated classes, acting in accord with their government. But the English government had been already, and before the question of our position towards Belgium aroused them to fever heat, too long involved in an understanding with the Franco-Russian coalition (see Blue Book No. 105, appendix 1) for it to be able or willing to observe a true peace-policy. To prove this it is only necessary for us to refer to the attitude which the English government assumed during the critical time immediately preceding the outbreak of the war. It may be permitted in this connection to make a further quotation from the secret report, already mentioned, of the Belgian chargé d'affaires, M. de l'Escaille. He writes:

"To-day in St. Petersburg one is fully persuaded, nay, one has even the assurance, that England will stand by France. This is a matter of great importance, and has contributed not a little to give the war party the upper hand." (White Book No. 28.)

And we add to this a reference to No. 89 of the English Blue Book, according to which Sir Edward Grey, already on the 29th of July, made a statement to the German ambassador, Prince Lichnowsky, which cannot be distinguished from a threat of war:

"We knew very well that if the issue did become such that we thought British interests required us to intervene, we must intervene at once, and the decision would have to be very rapid, just as the decisions of the other Powers had to be."

And if any one should be still in doubt where, according to the opinion of her leading statesman, the interests of England lay, we would refer him to No. 87 of the Blue Book, according to which Sir Edward Grey, immediately after the conversation with Prince Lichnowsky, reported this to the French ambassador, M. Paul Cambon, and the ambassador received the impression that what Sir Edward Grey means—and this interpretation was acknowledged to be correct by the latter—was this: That should other issues be raised—i. e., than that of a conflict between Austria and Russia—and Germany and France become involved so that the question became one of the hegemony of Europe, England would then decide what it was necessary for her to do.

M. Cambon, who knew how to construe rightly this guarded language, was naturally in the highest degree satisfied with it. We are of the opinion, however, that a government, which was sincerely endeavoring to preserve international peace, could have proved its love for this in a more effectual and less equivocal manner than by stirring up the contentious disposition of two States, who were still hesitating to enter upon hostilities, by presenting them with the enticing prospect that they could be sure of its powerful assistance in case of war.

VI.

This prospect would indeed have proved deceptive, if the English scholars are right in their assertion, that up to the very last there existed in England the determined desire to remain neutral, in case this could have been done without injury to the honor of the nation. Germany herself, so they say, made the fulfilling of this wish impossible.

So Germany's action touched the honor of England! In what way? In that she violated the neutrality of Belgium, which England with other countries, including disloyal Germany, had guaranteed, a guarantee which England felt herself obliged to uphold under all circumstances.