

THE BALTIC AND THE NORTH SEAS

On November 2, 1907, Great Britain, France, Norway, Germany, and Russia, "animated by the desire to secure to Norway, within her present frontiers and with her neutral zone, her independence and territorial integrity, as also the benefits of peace" (preamble), concluded a treaty to this effect, by the terms of which Norway undertook not to cede any portion of its territory to any power, whether the cession in question should be based upon occupation or on any ground whatsoever. In consideration of this promise on the part of Norway, the British, French, German, and Russian Governments recognized and undertook to respect the integrity of Norway, and further bound themselves that if the integrity of Norway is threatened or impaired by any power whatsoever the Governments in question bind themselves, on the receipt of a previous communication to this effect from the Norwegian Government, to afford to that Government their support by such means as may be deemed the most appropriate with a view to safeguarding the integrity of Norway. This obligation was undertaken for a period of ten years. (For a further discussion of the treaty and its antecedents, see Editorial Comment, II, 176, and for the text of the treaty, see Supplement (the present number, p. 267).

The importance of this treaty is hard to overestimate, because the separation of Norway from Sweden led not a few political prophets to believe that the new Kingdom might fall a prey to its stronger neighbors. Its integrity is guaranteed by the great and interested powers, and one less cause of war exists. But if Norway were weak, Sweden was weakened by the separation from Norway, and as Sweden has gradually been absorbed by Russia, it was feared, perhaps unjustly, that the process of the past might continue in the future until the absorption of Sweden became, in the language of diplomacy, a *fait accompli*.

A guaranty of integrity may be looked upon as a confession of weakness, and it may be humiliating to a nation which has long been independent and played a conspicuous part in the world's affairs to confess that it needs to have its integrity assured. The new-born Norway may court such a guaranty; the country of Gustavus Adolphus dare not. Hence, all nations of Europe bordering upon the Baltic entered into a solemn agreement on the 23d day of April, 1908, based upon a desire to strengthen the friendship between them and "to contribute thereby to the maintenance of universal peace," "to preserve intact the rights of

the Emperor of Germany, King of Prussia; of the King of Denmark; of the Emperor of Russia, and of the King of Sweden in whatever concerns their continental or insular possessions" within the Baltic regions. The maintenance of the *status quo* is thus the object of this solemn agreement, and if the territorial status be threatened the Signatory Powers agree to confer as to the measures to be taken in order to maintain the existing status.

The treaty is to be taken in connection with a memorandum signed the same day, which on account of its brevity is quoted in full:

At the moment of signing the declaration of this day's date, the undersigned, by order of their respective Governments, consider it necessary to state that the principle of the maintenance of the *status quo* as laid down by the said declaration applies solely to the territorial integrity of all the existing possessions of the High Contracting Parties in the region bordering upon the Baltic Sea, and that consequently the declaration can in no case be invoked where the free exercise of the sovereign rights of the High Contracting Parties over their above-mentioned possessions is in question.

But the date of April 23, 1908, is likely to be memorable for another declaration; for on the same day representatives of Germany, Denmark, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Sweden, moved by a neighborly spirit and a desire to contribute to the general peace of the world, declared their firm resolution to "preserve intact, and mutually to respect, the sovereign rights which their countries at present enjoy over their respective territories" in or bordering upon the North Sea. In the memorandum signed the same day by the representatives of the five contracting powers the North Sea is considered "to extend eastward as far as its junction with the waters of the Baltic."

An examination of these two documents shows that Sweden and Denmark enjoy a double guaranty of their integrity, for they are parties to each agreement. It further appears that Germany, as a contracting party to both, pledges its faith to the maintenance of the *status quo* within the North Sea as well as within the Baltic. The absorption of Denmark, begun in recent years by the annexation of Schleswig-Holstein, seems to be arrested by mutual agreement, and the little country of Holland, the home of Grotius, seems unlikely to be absorbed by its strong neighbors on the south and east. A further examination of these two remarkable declarations shows that Norway, whose independence was guaranteed by the treaty of November 2, 1907, is considered as neutralized, for it is treated on an equality with Belgium, a neutralized state. Neither is a party to the recent declarations.

In a word, if man thought as much of his immortal soul as he does of his stomach, and if nations thought as much of right and justice as they do of their possessions, the world would be at peace; and when we consider how simply and quietly these agreements were reached, that they have not created even a ripple of excitement, that their very existence is only known to the few, we see how easy it would be for neighboring nations to guarantee their territorial possessions and thus by a stroke of the pen to make war an outcast. Every lover of his kind must hail with delight these declarations of peace on earth, good will to men.