

No. 387.—The following notice which appeared in the *London Gazette* on the 8th August, 1914, is published for general information.

CLAUD SEVERN,  
Colonial Secretary.

9th October, 1914.

On the night of August 4th, 1914, the Secretary of State received the following notice from the German Ambassador :—

“The Imperial Government will keep merchant vessels flying the British flag interned in German harbours, but will liberate them if the Imperial Government receive a counter undertaking from the British Government within forty-eight hours.”

On August 5th a copy of the Order in Council issued on August 4th as to the treatment of enemy merchant vessels in British ports at the date of the outbreak of hostilities was communicated to the Ambassador of the United States in London, who was then in charge of German interests in this country, with a request that he would be so good as to cause enquiry to be made of the German Government as to whether the terms of Articles III to VIII of the Order in Council constituted an undertaking of the nature the German Government required, and under which they would liberate merchant vessels flying the British flag interned in German harbours.

On August 7th a communication was received from the United States Embassy that the United States Minister at Stockholm had sent the following telegram signed by the United States Ambassador at Berlin :—

“Please state if England has issued Proclamation that she gives permission to enemy ships to leave British ports until midnight, August 14th. If this is so, Germany will issue corresponding orders. Reply through German Legation, Stockholm.”

The United States Embassy added that they did not believe that this telegram was a reply to the message which had been transmitted to Berlin.

On enquiry at the United States Embassy shortly before midnight it was ascertained that no further communication had been received from Berlin.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has therefore no information as to the treatment accorded to British merchant ships and their cargoes in German ports, and has accordingly addressed the undermentioned notification to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury and to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.,

MIDNIGHT, August 7th, 1914.

MY LORDS,—I have the honour to state that no information has reached me that the treatment accorded to British merchant ships and their cargoes which were in German ports at the date of the outbreak of hostilities or which subsequently entered them is not less favourable than that accorded to enemy merchant ships by Articles III to VIII of the Order in Council issued on the 4th day of August, 1914, with reference to enemy ships being in British ports at the outbreak of hostilities or subsequently entering them. Articles III to VIII of the said Order in Council will therefore not come into operation.

I have the honour to be,

My Lords,

Your Lordships' most obedient humble servant,

E. GREY.