THE

NAVIGATION OF THE SCHELD.

IS IT A BRITISH QUESTION?
OR CAUSE FOR HOSTILITIES?

By PHILO JUSTITIÆ.

"La conference de Londres est une mediation, et l'intention du gouvernement du Roi est qu'elle ne perde jamais ce caractere."

(Signé) HORACE SEBASTIANI.

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NAVIGATION OF THE SCHELD.

It was well remarked in a Weekly Paper on the liberal side, that if half the trouble had been taken to prevent the separation between Holland and Belgium, which has been employed to encourage and to promote it, Belgium might *now* still be united to Holland. The Conference would not now sit in vain to reconcile interests which are almost become irreconcileable by the separation, and Europe would not, by the difficulties which arise out of the Belgic question, be continually exposed to the calamities and horrors of a war which, if once began, may not be easily terminated.

The insurrection of Belgium was encouraged and fostered by insidious writings, and afterwards assisted by intrigue. Many writers in this country, as well as elsewhere, confounded

the revolution in Belgium with the revolution in France, though really of an opposite nature and character. The same monarch who had been so loudly praised, held up to the world as a Solomon of a king, as a pattern for other princes, was now represented as an old obstinate imbecile; his firmness in difficult circumstances was called obstinacy; his anxious wish to see justice done to the people who remained faithful to his government was miscalled ambition; his firm and heroic conduct under such difficult circumstances had really exalted and raised his character; but

> The world is led by easier rules,
> Success determines who are wise or fools.

Misfortunes had overtaken him, which was sufficient with some to make him an object of abuse and malignant attacks. People's minds had been agitated by the recent revolution in France, and by the reform question in England, though totally unconnected with the affairs in the Netherlands, and had been easily made susceptible of any impressions, and as easily led astray by any erroneous representations: this time of agitation was the time of confounding things which bore no resemblance. It was king William's additional misfortune to have his mild and liberal government attacked and

defended simultaneouly with the sanguinary sway of an usurper and despot in Portugal. As well might be put on a level, a Nero and a Marc Aurelius, a Caligula and a Trajan.

But it may be asked, what has all this to do with the difficulties which occur in regard to the Belgic question? The separation has actually taken place, and the only question now is, who is reasonable or unreasonable as to the terms of a separation? But all this must be relative, and more or less depend upon what has preceded. Who could rationally pretend to judge of the merits of a dramatic work by only reading the concluding lines of the last act, or by merely getting acquainted, in some way or other, with the catastrophe? It may not, therefore, be altogether useless to endeavour to trace things to their sources, at least as far as is necessary for the better understanding of the subject.

And as the insurrection in Belgium led to the separation, it is natural to ask what proofs are there that the insurrection was uncalled for by any rational or substantial ground for complaint. If one or two facts or circumstances can prove a thing to the conviction of any rational and reasonable being, it would be useless to produce a hundred, and, therefore, I shall confine myself briefly to two proofs, which appear quite conclusive, and will, I

think, bear me out in saying, that the Belgians had no rational grounds for a revolt.

1st. I suppose it will not be contested that the best government must be that which meditates and constantly endeavours to produce the greatest good to the greatest mass of the population. Now I maintain that this was the case with the Netherland government; the Belgians had a population of about four millions, and the Dutch of two; but the four millions paid together no greater amount of taxes than the two millions, therefore they were only taxed half as much as the Dutch, who were besides subject to very heavy municipal taxes in all the great towns, which were on the contrary very light in all places of Belgium. The Belgians participated in a complete equality with the Dutch in the trade with the Colonies, and it will be perceived that this was more advantageous to the former than to the latter, because it procured to the Belgians a sort of monopoly for their manufactured goods in the Colonies, to the exclusion of foreigners, whose commodities were subject to higher duties in the Colonies as well as throughout the Netherlands, and thus the Belgians were favoured even at the expense of the Dutch, who having no manufactures, could not avail themselves of that advantage; therefore they not only enjoyed in common with the Dutch

all their advantages, but even more, and contributed to the state only half what the Dutch did; consequently, there could be no just cause for complaint on this score.

The fostering care of the government encouraged and promoted, by all possible means, manufactories throughout Belgium, ship building, the making of canals, and all sorts of useful undertakings.

On many occasions it sacrificed the interest or the prejudices of the Dutch to the wishes of the Belgians; such, for instance, as imposing a restraint upon the importation of corn, which in Holland had always been free, and from which they had derived the advantage of having become a sort of granary for Europe; to please the Belgians, however, a duty was imposed, and this branch of trade was lost to the Dutch, who, besides, had on this account, to pay dearer for their bread; and were further obliged to pay a higher price for worse coals than for those they used to draw from Great Britain. To enter further into details would be useless and irrelevant; enough has been said to prove that the government did all the good it could for the mass of the people.

2ndly. As a tree is considered good according to the good fruit it bears, so a government can best be judged by the result it produces.

Now during the fifteen years that the Union lasted, not only was Belgium in a state of the greatest prosperity, but it made more rapid strides than did any other country. This prosperity was never stationary, but always progressive; the prosperity of every year always outstripped its antecedent; the country rose continually in industry, ease, and wealth.

These are matters of fact, notorious to every one, and cannot be controverted; for facts are stubborn things and cannot be argued away; they have not been, and cannot be denied. What was Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp, &c. before the Union? what were they during the union? and what are those places now? Let those who have seen the country at those different periods answer.

Well then, it may be asked, if the Belgians had so many reasons to be satisfied, why were they not content?

But I am not aware that it is incumbent upon any one to assign rational grounds for foolish acts, nor would this be a very easy task. I would rather beg leave, by way of diversion, to mention a little anecdote, or an occurrence which happened about the time of Bocaccio. The story is entitled "The Bishop and the little Culprit."

In those days there was a bishop in Arezzo,

who was not only a great lord, but even sovereign of that place; for then the schoolmaster was not yet abroad, and there was no objection yet to bishops being not only lords, but even sovereign princes, such as we all know were the bishops of Cologne, Mentz, Munster, and so forth. This Lord Bishop of Arezzo then had built adjoining his palace an elegant chapel, which he was desirous to have handsomely decorated and painted, such as the altar-piece, ceiling, and so forth, as is customary in Catholic churches and chapels; and as he was bent upon having this done in a superior style, he applied to one Bonamico, surnamed Buffelmacco, an artist of great reputation in those days, who accordingly undertook the task.

Many a day did he labour, and much did he exert his great genius, to trace with becoming attitudes and expression the different figures of saints and angels which his inventive mind had suggested to him with a view to produce effect, and to answer the high expectation of his patron.

At last he had nearly finished one Saturday evening, and he thought he had nothing else to do on the Monday morning but to put the finishing stroke to his wonderful work. What was his surprise, on entering the chapel, to see his production, which had cost so much pains, marred and spoiled. His work was smeared

all over with paint; his angels and saints had blots and bars of all hues, yellow and green, blue and black, red and white, all over their figures and their faces—his paintings were bedaubed all over. Who had done this? The Bishop was astonished, and could not account for it—his domestics knew nothing about it. Who was it who could bear such base malice to angels and to saints?—it was an incomprehensible mystery. Could it have been done by the arch-fiend?—but he had never been known to visit Arezzo at all, and the palace and the chapel had always been hermetically sealed against him by the prayers and exorcisms of the Lord Bishop. Well, there was no help for it—the mischief was done—the Bishop prevailed upon Bonamico to bear his vexation with christian fortitude. With renewed courage he began to retouch and repaint, as well as he could, his angels and his saints; and he was not without hopes that he would make them resplendent with renewed lustre. The Bishop had the entrances of the chapel guarded by six of his warriors, sword in hand, (for in those days bishops had warriors as well as priests at their command,) who paraded and kept watch day and night. No human being could enter; and as for the arch-fiend, he was no visitor, and never had been a visitor in Arezzo, and yet, for fear of the worst, the Bishop

prayed and exorcised anew, and banished him for ever, particularly from the chapel: so now all was safe. The work was progressing, as Jonathan might say—it approached again its completion. The painter one day entered the chapel: all was marred again, but he now saw who was devastating and mutilating his work. The little culprit was a sort of domestic of the Lord Bishop; he had sagaciously observed how the painter mixed the colours, how into the paint he put first a large, then a small painting brush; how, with the painting brush in his hand, at one time he stood upon the floor, at another time upon a ladder, or upon a board to reach the ceiling. What he had seen and observed had not been lost upon him. The little monkey (for such it was) would needs copy the great master. With the painting brush in his little claw he jumped down on the floor, ran up the ladder and the columns, mixed all sorts of paint, drew large lines, threw blots of all hues in every direction; he thought he was clever, and meant no harm in doing that which he had seen another do, applauded for and caressed. He bore no malice either to saints or angels; and had not the smallest idea that he was doing mischief—it was all well meant; but yet it was deemed best to prevent him in future from imitating his betters again.

If there had been no revolution in Paris,

there would have been none in Brussels—but the example was given. "What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander;" so thought the sagacious people of the barricades in Brussels. Some of the agitators and demagogues, (who were as stirring and as active in Belgium, as they are now a days in Ireland,) cried, "Rise, and let's have a revolution; it was a good thing in France; it will be a good thing in Belgium; the sooner the better; the sooner done, the sooner amended." Foreigners and people of no character bore the most prominent part; a notorious Spaniard, who had escaped from prison; a showman who had travelled the country to exhibit the same whale afterwards shown in London! a French comedian, who had fled Paris on suspicion of forgery, were amongst the heroes of the revolution in Brussels. It was principally achieved by the rabble and by some Frenchmen, the very dregs of the movement party in France, at the instigation of demagogues and fanatical priests, assisted with money from a neighbouring country. If I mistake not, (and I am pretty sure I do not,) there was an item in the French Budget, (I think the last,) "for money to get up the revolution in Belgium." Almost all the respectable part of the community throughout the country kept aloof from this revolution. The watchword of the Dr. Doyle's and

O'Connell's in Belgium soon became "A Separation;" as in Ireland the cry now is "A Repeal of the Union." There is more affinity between the two cases than is thought fit to confess; it is all affectation to deny it.

The Belgians are said to be good natured, easily influenced, and easily led; but they are not a calculating people, like the phlegmatic Dutch. They do not always reflect, nor always consider consequences. They were told that they were oppressed; they had not been aware of it till they were told; every thing around them might convince them it could not be, but they believed it. The priests, whose influence is great over the minds of a credulous and bigoted people, lent their powerful aid. The revolt took place, and it only remained to invent the grievances; the more the government conceded, the more was asked; the demands succeeded one another so rapidly that there was no time allowed even to give an answer to one, before others had already been started. The wheel of state got entangled with difficulties; the military force of the country was small, and, what was worse, composed in a manner that rendered it ineffective upon such an occasion; two thirds Belgians, and one third Dutch, all intermixed, officers and men in every battalion and in every company. When a serious conflict took place, disorganization naturally ensued.

In this dilemma the government of the King of the Netherlands naturally called upon the Great Powers who had formed the Union, and more particularly upon its old allies, to assist in the re-establishment of order. "He asked for bread and they gave him a stone;" instead of receiving assistance to repress the revolt, it was patronised; the consequences may, one of these days, fall on the heads of those who were cowardly enough to suffer it, or who from mistaken policy, took advantage of the foolish and wicked acts of a knot of political adventurers, in order to make a provision for one prince, who was an inconvenient appendage to the nation, by apportioning to him a part of the rightful possessions of another, even at the risk of involving Great Britain in the labyrinth of Belgic affairs; as if the embarrassments arising out of our connexion with a single Hanover, were not a sufficient portion of the perplexities inseparable from continental connexions. "Honesty will, after all, prove in the end to be the best policy." Whether it proceeded from intimidation, or egotism, or from whatever other causes, King William was not only most shamefully abandoned, but used even worse; not merely deserted in his utmost need by his allies, and left to his own resources, but when he employed these, and had nearly got the better again of the revolt, he was unwar-

rantably stopped in his career. The great powers had set out with the principle of non-intervention, and an armed force interfered in and prevented the settlement of the domestic affairs of an independent government, and his allies suffered it! Nay, allowed a prince to rule over the revolted provinces, contrary to the decision of the Conference, that such ruler was not to be allied to the family of any of the Five Powers. Could any thing be more crooked and more cruel?

But the worst was still to come! in the terms of the separation the injured party was still to be further insulted, and their vital interests to be utterly destroyed. Instead of receiving assistance or even countenance from his friends and allies, the tables were turned against him, and an armed force was threatened and prepared to impose unreasonable and unbearable conditions upon a liberal minded and venerable monarch, and upon an independent, industrious, and brave people. And all this, it is said, to silence the noisy and senseless clamours, and the idle blustering of some interested demagogues. How are the mighty fallen!

But will the Dutch submit to it, and what will be the consequence whether they do or not?

It is not likely that the Dutch will submit,

because they feel that in endeavouring to ward off the blow which strikes at their existence, they can after all only perish at last. What may be the consequences lies in the womb of uncertain futurity.

The Dutch are not naturally a fighting people; they love peace too well to be fond of fighting; but they have shewn that though they do not swagger, they can handle arms in case of necessity; they say, "Happen what "may, we cannot submit to such terms; they "are unbearable, and strike at our very exist- "ence; we must try for it, not as a matter of "choice, but as a matter of necessity."

To judge whether the terms offered to them are fair or not, it is not necessary to state the whole of them—it will be sufficient to cite two or three that are most essential.

The first is the portion of the debt: to Belgium with a population of four millions, a fertile soil, a fine country, and a great many intrinsic resources, one-third of the debt is allotted; and two-thirds is imposed on the Dutch with a population of about two millions, with a marshy soil, having within themselves no resources whatever. Does not this proportion already bear very hard upon the Dutch, and light upon the Belgians? And yet to this the Dutch, for the sake of peace have not refused their assent.

But now comes the most harsh and the most preposterous of the proffered conditions; the free navigation of the Scheld, and even of the internal waters in Holland: to this the Belgians cannot pretend, in whatever point of view the matter be considered.

They cannot pretend to dictate terms, but ought rather to be disposed to receive reasonable ones; their troops were defeated, their country all but conquered, and would have been entirely so, if not rescued by the intervention of a foreign force. This was a mere suspension at the time to the actual occupation of their country, and nothing more; they cannot pretend to better terms on that account, but rather the reverse.

Nor can any stress be laid upon the treaty of Vienna, because it has been broken in almost every instance. If it allowed the navigation of the Scheld, it at the same time stipulated the union of the two countries; how can it be pretended that if one falls away the other must stand. Things must in that case revert to their former position, previous to the union, and the Dutch must retain the controul over the Scheld. It is their property, which cannot be alienated from them with any degree of justice or equity. Their ancestors acquired that right at the expense of their blood and treasure, during the struggle which freed them from

Spain; it was secured to them by the treaty of Munster; they hold the right in the same way as other property is held, by long undisputed possession, by a possession of upwards of a century. The Belgians never had that right; if they for a short time participated in it, it was during the union, and it naturally ceases with the union. The Dutch hold the right also by possessing both banks, which gives them the command of the Scheld, in the same way that the possession of Maestricht gives them the command of the Meuse. Of what use would these commanding situations be, if not for the very purpose that they should be made available of to controul those rivers. To argue the contrary, it might as well be said that a fortress should have guns allowed, but no powder and ball, nor men to fire them; and those who hold this argument may by-and-by be expected to suggest to the conference, in order to smooth the present difficulty as regards the citadel of Antwerp, that the Dutch should retain it till the final settlement of the whole of the Belgic question, but on condition that they should remove all the artillery, and withdraw all its garrison—it would be much the same sort of reasoning. But party spirit must needs take up the cudgels for the Belgians, and pretend that the disputed navigation of the Scheld is not merely a ques-

tion between Holland and Belgium but a great European question; for which Great Britain must put on its armour, and in a chivalrous manner (if injustice and oppression of the weak can be chivalrous) begin a new crusade of which neither the issue nor the duration can be known. But, how is the question an European question? What is the navigation of the Scheld to Russia, to Austria, or even to France herself? Of no visible or perceptible importance whatever, no more than to Spain, Portugal, Sweden, or Denmark; but these States form together almost the whole of Europe. As a mere *possible* thing, to Prussia *alone* it may be of some little consequence with relation to the Rhenish provinces; though even this is very doubtful, for what does it signify in the end to the Rhenish provinces whether they draw their supplies from Flanders through the Dutch waters, or from Dutch ports? With Holland, as being neither a corn, nor a manufacturing country, (like the former) they have naturally a constant interchange of commodities, which is quite out of the question with Belgium; then why should they care much about the matter? And after all, supposing, and only for argument sake, that it was otherwise, why cannot this be settled between themselves? What has Great Britain to do with the matter? Why is she to be at the

expense of sending a large fleet, and threaten to destroy an ancient ally, for what purpose?

All this clamour, so violently and so dogmatically put forth, about the navigation of the Scheld being a grand European question, is mere rhodomontade, and mere pretence for indulging in a propensity to give hard names, and to mystify.

Is it then a British question? Some few British merchants, (or styling themselves such) resident at Antwerp, have stated that it is. To them, *as residents of Antwerp*, it is of course of some consequence; not as Englishmen, but as residents at Antwerp; this makes all the difference. The English merchants at Amsterdam and Rotterdam might just as well petition the British Government to keep the Scheld closed; it would only be on a par with the other. It appears thus, that with a little close examination all this idle vapouring vanishes; it looks as if all this noise were merely made to stultify, and to catch the unwary and the superficial.

But, it is said, Antwerp is so fine a port, so centrical, so easy of access, so admirably adapted to form a grand emporium of Europe! But that Antwerp is to become this great depôt is entirely the work of imagination. Mere locality is not decisive in those matters; as Amsterdam, and Venice as it was in former times, are striking instances: there are many other

things wanting besides, to make a place or a country thrive! People are very apt to confound matters, and to reason on what Antwerp might become under new circumstances, from the prosperity she did enjoy under the fostering care of the former government, when she participated in all the advantages of a union with Holland, a share in the trade to the Dutch colonies, and the great facility which the money market in Holland afforded; which latter is of no less consequence to the former, for there is but little capital in Flanders applicable to trade; certainly nothing which is anything like adequate to carry on business even on a moderate, much less very extensive scale. All this great emporium is a mere castle in the air.

But suppose, for argument's sake, that Antwerp is to start once more, phœnix-like, from its ashes, and rise with renewed vigour and lustre to become the wonderful emporium which fancy has created; how is all this to benefit Great Britain? Would it not operate in a direct opposite way? How will it benefit those interested in the West India, London, St. Katharine, and other docks; and how will it benefit the brokers and the merchants, when they behold ships that would have come to London, Liverpool, &c., which would have given occupation to the import and export merchants, and to others—when they see ship after ship, instead

of coming to England, going to add to the stock of this great emporium? How is this to improve our trade? Will it not evidently operate against us?

What then is the substance of those assertions put forth with so much confidence, and so dogmatically, about the navigation being an European and a British question? what else is it but mere vapouring?

The subject is therefore reduced to a question between Holland and Belgium; but yet, as Great Britain has taken so prominent a part in the settlement, and is, in consequence, involved in diplomatic perplexities, by which she is unfortunately dragged on, and is moreover, as it is stated, for the purpose of preserving peace, on the point of beginning hostilities by sending out a great naval armament at a great expence, it is yet of importance to understand who is right or wrong, reasonable or unreasonable, and who really prevents the settlement of this tedious concern.

A great outcry is now raised about the navigtion of the Scheld, and of th e inland waters within the Dutch territory. But, without denying that the complete free navigation of the Scheld would be advantageous to Antwerp, (probably, however, to the prejudice of Ostend and Ghent) it is really more idle declamation than any thing else, for it is not true that it is a

question of life or death to the Belgians, though it is perfectly true that it is so to the Dutch. To be convinced of this it is only necessary to consider the relative situation and nature of the two countries.

Belgium is an agricultural and manufacturing country, with a rich and well cultivated soil, producing abundance of corn far beyond her her own wants, possessing coal mines, iron mines, &c., manufactories of various kinds, of cotton, broad-cloth, linen, iron ware, &c.; in all which, by the by, she comes in competition with Great Britain. She has existed for centuries without the navigation of the Scheld; and now, when the Walloon country, which was formerly a separate principality under the Bishop of Liege, has been joined to her territory, why should she not be able to exist now, exist very well, and thrive too? She has all these intrinsic and immense resources permanently her own; but the Dutch have nothing whatever of all these: their territory is principally composed of marshes, bits and scraps of land, dikes, and causeways surrounded with water on all sides; it produces but little; she must depend upon foreign importations of corn for her subsistence; she has no mines of any sort, no resources within herself, nor any manufactories; and as such she is one of the best customers of Great Britain. Would it be wise and

rational in John Bull to lend a hand to destroy his best customer and his old friend, to whom it is recommended to administer twenty-four strong mercurials, prescribed by five very potent doctors, who have declared that it will not only do him much good, but benefit mankind. At which John Bull stands amazed, and cannot comprehend how a violent purging of his old friend can do him and his neighbours any good; he suspects it is all mere Gallic invention and Charlatanerie, and he hears that a great Parisian conjuror, who goes with all tides, and sails with all winds, is already come over to make the operation go off with "eclat," so as to be talked of and produce effect in a great chamber: he suspects this is the real motive.

A coup *d'eclat* but just saved, last year, Perrier's administration, by Marshal Gerard's march into Belgium; there had been then no coup d'etat as yet under Louis Philippe: there have however two coups d'etat since; (that of declaring Paris in a state of siege after the disturbances had been suppressed, and the recent creation of fifty-nine peers all at once;) there must now be at least one coup *d'eclat* to be set off against these two coups d'etat: and shall Great Britain, naturally and properly jealous of her honour and national glory, be made a mere tool for the purpose of French manœuvring?

Holland, without any internal resources, has

nothing but her little trade to depend and to subsist upon. She is besides bowed down with an immense debt, and consequent heavy taxation; and with this load on her shoulders she must compete with foreigners lightly taxed, such as the Americans, the Swedes, Danes, the Hanseatic towns, &c, &c.: and yet her little trade is her sole dependence—her sole existence: that trade is besides very much reduced; the carrying trade, which was her principal support for one or two centuries, is lost to her long since. Almost the only branch left her is her trade with her few colonies, and distributing the commodities she thence receives through Germany by the Rhine—deprive her of that and you destroy her!

How idle, therefore, (to say the least of it) and how misapplied are the epithets of "obstinate," "arrogant," and so forth, so liberally lavished upon the government and the people by some "soi-disant" ultra liberal papers:—is this liberal?—nay, is this fair?

That Holland, therefore, cannot abandon her right, does not proceed either from obstinacy or arrogance; it is sheer self-defence, and nothing else.

She holds the right by long posesssion, supported by possessing both banks of the Scheld. Any other form which these rights might have received by the Vienna treaty,

altered or modified as those rights may have been, cannot be implied as having been given to Belgium, which did not exist at the time as a separate state; and in fact any claim on that head cannot arise, but are really in opposition to that treaty, which united the two countries. *After all, there is no dispute at all about the free navigation itself of the Scheld; the only question is the mode.* Holland does not pretend to exclude navigation, but bends to the times and to circumstances. She merely wants a moderate, not an extravagant, toll, and that the usual Custom-house regulations, such as proper measures to prevent smuggling and other frauds, should be observed; that Dutch Custom-house officers should be on board, and that Dutch pilots should guide the vessels as far as *the Dutch territory* extends, *and no further;* where the Belgic territory begins the Dutch are quite willing that Belgic Custom-house officers and Belgic pilots should replace the Dutch. Is there any hardship in all this; any thing but what is perfectly fair? *It is not true that extravagant rates are demanded.* It has been currently reported in Holland that the Dutch Government are willing to content themselves with nearly the same toll on a Belgic or any other vessel to and from Antwerp, as is paid on a vessel of the same tonnage from the Texel to Amsterdam or from

Amsterdam to the Texel. But all this is not sufficient for the Belgians, who now act a similar part to what the demagogues made them act at the time of the revolution, when they scarcely knew themselves what they wanted; and when one claim was hardly made but it was immediately succeeded by another. They refuse now the very stipulation about the navigation which they subscribed to in the twenty-four articles. A British minister is made the organ of new Belgic proposals. *fl.* 150,000 (about £12,000) is offered annually to do away with Dutch Custom-house officers and Dutch pilots; and this annuity is to be bought outright afterwards to do away altogether with the rights of controul over the river. Is not this offer a confession of right "*de facto et de jure?*" Esau is required to sell his birthright; but Esau may refuse or accept. If he prefers to retain his right, what fairness is there to force him? This has, however, nothing to do with the free navigation of the Scheld, which is not objected to under the usual regulation.

The object, therefore, for which so much clamour still continues to be raised is already attained. What, then, can the Belgians further ask or want? Does it not indicate a spirit of turbulence and discontent under all governments and under all circumstances?

The revolution, unjustifiable and silly as it was, brought before the Conference many knotty points to discuss and to decide. The Belgians have had it all their own way. Separation and independence, (essential points and contrary to existing treaties); a king of their own choice, or whom at least they accepted; favourable terms in regard to the debt of the united kingdom (of which, in proportion to the population, the Dutch take over four times the amount of what the Belgians do); and finally the free navigation of the Scheld. All essential points have been conceded to them; and thus, as they can no longer complain of the faults which they had invented and attributed to the former Government, they might find reason at last to rest satisfied without looking for pretexts for fresh agitation under their new king, whose reign the existing spirit in Belgium seems already to augur as merely temporary. The movement party want things to move again. It is no doubt more than time that matters should be settled between Belgium and Holland, and Europe be no longer agitated with this question; but King William has conceded all,—from the abandonment of great part of his dominions down to the navigation of the Scheld. What more can *he* do towards the settlement? It does not appear that a hostile demonstration

against him can answer any rational purpose. If coercion be resorted to, it should be applied to where it is really needed, and where it would be more justly applied.

To resume. The naviyation of the Scheld is neither a British nor an European question; then why should it come in question to make a hostile demonstration towards Holland, with whom Great Britain has no quarrel, and with whom she has many commercial relations, which must be interrupted by hostile proceedings?

The armament will cost money, and the cessation of the commercial relations will be a loss to British merchants, ship-owners, and manufacturers; thus it will operate both ways.

It is professed that Great Britain wishes to preserve peace.

The armament must have in view, at least (if nothing beyond it) a blockade of the Dutch ports, which is an act of hostility.

An act of hostility to preserve peace?

And with regard to any dispute there may be between Holland and Belgium, a few questions may be asked.

Was there not a principle laid down of non-intervention.

Was it not declared by a minister of state in France, that the object of the conference was amicable mediation, and not intervention by force of arms?

Were coercive and hostile measures employed against the Belgians to enforce the 12*th Protocol of the* 27*th of January,* 1831, *declared by the Conferenee to be final and irrevocable, and which King William, out of deference to the Five Powers, and for the sake of peace, accepted on the* 18*th of February,* 1831, (*upwards of twenty months ago,*) *but which was refused by the refractory party in Belgium?*

Had not King William the right to recover, if he could, such part of his dominions as had revolted, in the same way as the King of the French used force in Lyons, Paris, La Vendeé? &c.

Did not a French army prevent King William from recovering what had revolted from him; and, though victorious, did he obstinately insist upon his rights, or did he yield?

Has he not yielded every thing; even conceded the navigation of the Scheld, which the Dutch held exclusively, and of which the territory they hold on both banks of the river gives them the decided controul. Is it pretended that Great Britain should condescend to cheapen the toll and send a great fleet to drive for the Belgians a hard bargain with the Dutch at the cannon's mouth?

From all this the public may judge what all the cant about the navigation of the Scheld be worth, and how far the Belgic question can really be made a British question; and whether it could and would contribute to the

interest and glory of Great Britain to mix herself up with the intricacies of revolutions, and by more and more identifying herself with French politics become a sort of auxiliary, and help to do the work for a set who talk idly and loudly, but run away in battle? Shall Great Britian for purposes not her own, use her great means and power to attack and oppress an ancient ally who has given no offence, but who has on the contrary been already unjustly, and hardly dealt with? Would this be a rational motive for hostile proceedings? It is left to the public to form an opinion and to decide.

In conclusion, it may be remarked that by an act of hostility, Great Britain would make herself decidedly a party to the quarrel, lose the advantage ef a neutral, could at no time act as a mediator to preserve or restore peace in Europe; nor could she escape the risk of very soon embroiling herself with the United States of America always jealous of and opposed to blockades; reasons sufficient, one would suppose, against the reported project of a blockade.

THE END.

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