PEACE OR WAR BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND AMERICA?

(From Willmer's European Times.)

The Liverpool Financial Reform AssocIotion has done the State some service in its day by the publication of its able treatises on various subjects of domestic policy. By the diffusion of sound and enlightened principles on questions of political and especially of financial economy, it has removed ignorance and assuaged or annihilated popular prejudice. The object of the Association, as its title implies, has been chiefly confined to matters of internal administration, and it has rarely travelled out of the record prescribed by its rules. There are occasions, however, on which a body organized for one specific purpose may beneficially apply its influence to another; and the complication of our existing relations with the United States would seem to justify its special interposition. The present "difficulty" between England and America presents to the world the strange spectacle of two great nations united by the ties of kindred, of friendship, and of interest, brought to the verge of a fraternal or parricidal war by the incapacity, the pride, or the treachery of their rulers. Treason has been too vulgarly limited to the act of rebellion by a subject against his Sovereign; but, as it is an acknowledged maxim in law that property has its duties as well as its privileges, and that the principle of mutuality is an essential ingredient in every compact, it follows as a logical deduction that it is quite as possible for the Sovereign to be guilty of treason against the Sovereign. If, therefore, the British Ministry or the American Government, or both, should precipitate the two countries into an internecine war, unless under the pressing necessity of securing the national safety or vindicating the national honour, they are guilty of betraying the interests of their constituents, and consequently of treason against the Republic at large—whether that Republic be democratic or monarchical. Even the fault of incapacity would subject them to impeachment, because, in a statesman, incapacity is a crime.

In commercial and industrial countries like England and America, the commercial and industrial classes are, or ought to be, a potential estate of the realm. Yet it is astonishing to see with what cool indifference these great classes stand aside and see their material interests tossed about like a shuttlecock by the aristocracy of the one country and the "fierce democracy" of the other. They know very well that, if war ensues, they must provide the sinews and the blood. To adopt a vulgar phrase, they must "pay the piper." Why, then, do they not, by an effective remonstrance, at once extinguish such an anomaly? We all admit the maxim of the moralist—

> War is a game which, were the subjects wise,
> Kings would not play at,—

nor Presidents either. And yet, with the sagacity of the ostrich, which thrusts its head into a bush and thinks it is not seen, we dream idly on until the pinch comes, and allow Kings and Presidents to play a game at fives with our fortunes and our lives. War, like murder, is "most foul, as in the best it is; but this most foul, strange, and unnatural." Contentment may be preached as a virtue in slaves, whose efforts for freedom would but rivet their chains; but the apathy of free citizens to their own country's rights implies a degradation of which slaves might be ashamed. A nation which boasts of universal suffrage and the ballot, and yet allows itself to be driven like sheep to the slaughter or oxen to the poll, will suffer and deserve the fate of hereditary bondsmen."

The address which we subjoin proceeds from the Council of the Liverpool Financial Reform Association, and bears the signature of the President, Mr. Robertson Gladstone, the brother of the distinguished statesman who boasts the same patronymic. It is couched in terms so forcible and convincing, and yet in a tone so temperate and conciliatory that it cannot fail to have very great weight with every rational and right-thinking man who gives it a perusal. Its objects is to avert the war by which we have lately been threatened, and the very shadow of which, even should it pass harmless by, casts a gloom over all that it covers. Byron, in the "Vision of Judgment," describes Satan as spreading desolation wherever he turned his eye, Quoting from memory, we think he says—

> Fierce and unfathomable thoughts engraved
> Eternal wrath on his immortal face,
> *And where he gazed a gloom pervaded space.*

The aspect of war is equally horrid—equally desolating, not only in its actual reality, but in its very aprehension. In publishing, therefore, the following earnest appeal which is specially addressed to the citizens of the United States, and was written for that purpose expressly for the colums of the *European Times*, we would ourselves appeal to our own contemporaries of the press on the other side of the Atlantic—to all of them who are engaged in the interests of order, peace, prosperity, and patriotism to give it the benefit of the widest circulation by transferring it to their own columns. The selfsame agency which averts the ruin and calamities of war will *pari passu*, promote the progress of wealth, civilization, peace,—and above all, religion—which is happiness.

TO THE COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL CLASSES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,—In the present critical position of our international relations, we, the COUNCIL of the LIVERPOOL FINANCIAL REFORM ASSOCIATION deem it our duty to address to you a few words of friendly remonstrance, in the hope that our doing so may be the initiation of such an expression of the national determination, on both sides of the Atlantic, as will serve to convince those to whom we have respectively deputed the management of our affairs, that, whatever they may wish or propose, they cannot, and they shall not transform the people of two nations so closely united as yours and ours into deadly and unrelenting enemies. We take up this question on higher grounds than are afforded by financial or mercantile considerations only, though their importance can hardly be over-rated; and we believe that the sentiments we are about to express are those entertained by our fellow-countrymen of the commercial and industrial classes, almost without exception. May they be re-echoed in the same spirit.

There is rumour of war between us! For a long time past your diplomatists and ours have been corresponding, with more or less of acrimony and superciliousness on either side. We confess frankly that, hitherto, we have paid no attention, or very little to their disputes. Do not attribute this apparent neglect to indifference. It has arisen partly from a sort of foregone conclusion that, whatever they might say or do, a quarrel between you and us, to be brought to the mortal arbitrament of arms, was, in the nature of things, all but impossible; and partly from the fact that our system of diplomacy, aristocratic both in its instruments and objects, is secret in its operations. The theory of our rulers is that the making of treaties, whether these relate to peace or war, is a branch of the royal prerogative, with which we (the people) have no concern beyond finding the means for their observance,—not even the right to know what is doing until all is done, and we are irrevocably bound by their stipulations. We aim at the reversal or modification of this very slavish theory, and hope to accomplish it by and by. In the meanwhile, permit us to observe, that you also have been quiescent, without the same excuse for your supireness; for your diplomacyis open; your executive can do nothing definitive without the sanction of the legislative branch of your constitution, of which you have the appointment far more effectively than we of ours. Whence is it, then, if you do really disapprove of the acts of your Ministers, as we are led to believe you do, that there has been no public manifestation of your disapproval?

The causes of our inactivity up to the present period have been indicated; for yours we can only account on the supposition that you, with us, have believed it all but impossible that diplomatic warfare should terminate in actual hostilities. As to the merits of the questions at issue we shall, of course, differ; but you must agree with us that, whatever be the pretexts, a war between Great Britain and America would cast into the shade of insignificance all the scenes of carnage that have disgraced and cursed the world since the son of the first man slew his brother Abel. Standing apparently on the verge of such a deadly check to human progress and civilization, it surely becomes the people of both countries, as rational beings, to ask themselves seriously for what it is they are about to fight, and whether there is any necessity for fighting at all. Aggressive war may be the *ultima ratio* of kings; but for the rest of mankind, it is, generally speaking, the perfection of human folly.

Connected with you by affinities of race, language, institutions, and religion, as well as by common interests, we have no feelings towards you but those of friendship, no wishes but for your prosperity, no desire but that the immense capabilities of your country may be developed to the fullest possible extent. In all this, we claim no credit for disinterestedness, since with your welfare our own is closely involved; you cannot prosper without our deriving most substantial advantages from your progress; nor can you suffer a check to your well-being which will not re-act most strongly upon our own. All that is true of material British interests as regards America is equally true of American interests as regards Great Britain. Are we wrong in assuming that the feelings of the commercial and industrial classes of this country towards America are those which animate Americans of the same classes towards Great Britain?

If there be indeed this bond of friendship and mutual interest between us, for what is it that our respective rulers, no matter which are right or wrong, would have us quarrel? Is it to vindicate any great principle, to enforce any right, or to avenge any wrong? Nothing of the kind. The mother of mischief, says the proverb, is no bigger than a midge's wing; and, verily, the origin of the misunderstanding which threatens such tremendous consequences would seem to be of no larger dimensions. It rests on two grounds, the Enlistment question, and the actual meaning of a treaty concluded between our respective Governments. Of these it is difficult to say which, comparing both with the mighty results that may proceed from them, is most insignificant.

As to the first, the people of this country disapproved from the first of the Government project for raising reinforcements for the Crimean war either in America or in Europe, and it was only forced on Parliament by the threat of Ministerial resignation. It was and is the universal conviction, that, with the same inducements that were offered to foreigners, at much less expense, and without danger of embroilment with friendly nations, any number of British recruits that might be required would have been forthcoming. We must say, however, that for what our Government proposed to do in America they seem to have had the implied if not the express sanction of yours. What else is to be inferred from your Minister's observation, that the American Government would enforce the strictest observance of the neutrality laws in its own territory, but that there was nothing to prevent any American citizen or resident from leaving the States and enlisting elsewhere in any foreign service, if it pleased him so to do? On this hint, arrangements, supposed to be perfectly compatible with your laws, seem to have been made; but these were abandoned, before a single man had been enlisted, on grounds which common sense ought to have suggested to our Minister,—in the first instance, as conclusive against the making of any such experiment. They have since, however, formally and solemnly disclaimed all intention to infringe your laws; they have expressed their regret, if any such infringement has occurred; they have tendered what is here considered an apology for all that may have been done amiss, either by themselves or their agents; but they have refused to submit to the degradation of branding with recall and disgrace the principal of these agents, because they say they believe him to be guiltless of any offence. Your Government has dismissed or are about to dismiss Mr. Crampton; should ours lack the magnanimity of refraining from reprisals, and dismiss Mr. Dallas, you will no longer have a minister at London nor we at Washington; but the temporary cessation of diplomatic relations between our respective Governments need not bring with it any interruption of friendly intercourse between you and us. We can manage our affairs quite as well without as with them; and, in any event, this is no question for us to go to war about.

Our second supposed ground of quarrel seems to us equally irrational with the first. There is a difference as to the interpretation of a treaty. Our negotiator says, that he meant one thing,—yours, that he meant another; our two Governments are at issue as to the meaning of both, and the true construction of their united handiwork, which, nevertheless, is there in black and white and to speak for itself. Our Government has offered to submit the whole question to any arbitrator whom yours shall select, and to abide by his decision, whatever that may be. As between man and man nothing can be fairer than such a proposition; why not, then, as between nation and nation? Your ministers refuse to act upon it. They say that their own construction is the only true one,—that there cannot be two opinions on the matter, and consequently, that there is nothing whereon to arbitrate. But, being so confident, why reject a reference? If they be right, the the task of the arbitrator will be all the lighter, the delay in an amicable settlement all the less, but when there are notoriously two opinions on the subject which is said to admit only of one, the party standing so obstinately on its own as to refuse to submit them to an umpire of its own selection would seem to be manifestly and consciously in the wrong. Such, at least, would be the conclusion in any dispute between individuals, and the same reasoning holds as to a dispute between nations.

Again we ask you, in all solemnity, is there anything in this second ground of difference, or in both of them put together, which should set us to destroying each others sites, cutting each others' throats, and doing all that in us lies for the utter destruction of each other's name and nation? Reason, justice, common sense, humanity, Religion, all answer loudly and emphatically, "No."

We are told by our Prince Consort, during the late war, that that war had representative institutions on their trial, and that it might be found necessary to diminish our present freedom both of speech and publication. This was the captious objection of an individual whose residence amongst us seems not yet to have eradicated the despotic leanings contracted by his continental birth and breeding; but if war between the only two great countries in the world which have representative institutions, founded on the sovereignty of the people, is to result from such causes as those which we have examined, most truly may it be said, not that such institutions are upon their trial, but that they have been tried, and are condemned. How utterly worthless must they be if the squabbles of deputed ministers, having merely personal ends of their own to serve, can suffice to set two friendly nations in deadly opposition to each other! How gladly will the upholders of the despotic principle look on and laugh, whilst the two great champions of human freedom and human progress are engaged in an internecine, a fratricidal, and a suicidal struggle, which, in whatever way it terminates must be mutually exhaustive, and is sure to end at last in some paltry compromise, and the shedding of oceans of blood!

To protest against so dire a calamity to you, to ourselves, and to the whole human race, is the object of this address. We may say, also, to prevent its occurrrence; for we feel assured that if you, the commercial and industrial classes of America, are actuated towards us by the same feelings as those which animate the people of this country with regard to you, we shall not enter upon this course of mutual destruction. Our rulers and yours may bluster as they please, but with the vote of their constituents on any proceeding to extremeties, war between us is impossible.

By order of the Council,
ROBERTSON GLADSTONE,
Liverpool, June 9, 1856. PRESIDENT.

PEACE WITH AMERICA.

As we last week ventured to predict would be the case, the British Government has not thought fit to imitate the uncourteous, if not unfriendly, conduct of the Cabinet of Washington. Mr. Crampton and the three British Consuls have been dismissed—somewhat ignominiously, but Mr. Dallas is to remain at the Court of St. James's. Public opinion will approve the wise forbearance of the British Government This country is too strong—has too splendid a fleet—too efficient an army—too patriotic a people—and too capacious a treasury—to be supected of unworthy deference to the United States or any other Power in either hemisphere. There is no risk, that her generosity will be misunderstood, or that her patience will be attributed to pusillanimity. The American people know her mettle, as they know their own, and will not suffer Mr. Pierce and his moribund Administration to provoke a war that would inflict incalculble injury upon both nations, and stamp indelible disgrace upon the one that should unnecessarly commence it.

Reckless as Mr. Pierce has hitherto shown himself, it is not likely, that he desires to push matters to the last extremity. He has run about with his torch at the edge of the powder-magazine to show his daring, and to win the applause of such "barren spectators" as have a relish for such feats, but he would probably regret as much as any man in America or England if an explosion were to result. He has already evinced a disposition to withdraw from the perilous contiguity of combustible material, and has accompanied the dismissal of Mr. Crampton and the three Consuls by the exposition of the reasons on which he grounded the act;—reasons which will go far to satisfy the English public that their interests will not suffer by the transference of Mr. Crampton to some other sphere of usefulness. The Enlistment question, that at one time threatened to be so exasperating, is virtually at an end. It has expired with Mr. Crampton's mission, and the world will hear no more of it. Mr. Crampton and the Consuls have been sacrificed to its *manes*, and, if the United States are satisfied, Great Britain is well content.