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# THE QUESTION OF THE NETHERLANDS IN 1829-1830

By G. W. T. OMOND, M.A., F.R.HIST.S.

*Read May 8, 1919*

IN the year 1829 the disputes between the Northern and the Southern Netherlands were rapidly coming to a head.

It will be remembered that shortly before the Congress of Châtillon was dissolved in March, 1814, the Allies having found it impossible to make peace with Napoleon, a secret article in the Treaty of Chaumont provided that Holland was to receive an increase of territory, and be erected into a kingdom for the Prince of Orange. After the abdication of Napoleon the Definitive Treaty of Peace with France, signed at Paris on May 30, 1814, carried the settlement of the Netherlands a step further by a secret article defining the increase of territory which Holland was to receive. Flanders and the other Belgian provinces, which had been taken from Austria by the armies of the French Revolution, were now, together with the Principality of Liège, to be joined to Holland, and the united countries were to constitute a Kingdom of the Netherlands under the sovereignty of the House of Orange.

The Belgian provinces and the Principality of Liège had been in the possession of France for twenty years. The phrase "self-determination," so often used to-day, had not then been invented, but it would have passed the wit of man to discover the wishes of a people, partly Flemish and partly Walloon, which had been ruled at one time by Burgundy, at other times by Spain or  
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Austria, and latterly by France. In many places there were partisans of re-union to France. In other places union to Holland was desired. Everywhere there was an Austrian party. The Emperor Francis, however, had no wish to recover his Belgian provinces; and the Allies, whose aim was to lay the foundations of a lasting peace, and to prevent the corner of Europe lying between the Meuse and the North Sea from continuing to be a perpetual bone of contention between Germany and France, had decided to establish a Kingdom of the whole Netherlands. To consult the people of the Low Countries, even if some means of doing so could have been devised, would have been a mere form. Lord Castlereagh, therefore, proceeded to carry out the policy of the Allies without delay; and this was effected at London, later in the summer of 1814, by the "Treaty of the Eight Articles," which was accepted by the Prince of Orange as fixing the conditions on which the Southern and Northern Netherlands were to be united under his sovereignty.

These Treaties of Chaumont, Paris, and London gave effect to the policy of the British Cabinet, which had been privately settled some months before Napoleon fell, and built up the structure planned by Pitt in his day as a bulwark for England, and a safeguard against the outbreak of fresh wars on the favourite battlefield of Europe. The whole transaction was confirmed by the Congress of Vienna; and the Kingdom of the Netherlands took its place among the States of Europe.

By the Treaty of the Eight Articles it was provided, as one of the conditions on which the Prince of Orange was to receive his crown, that the union was to be an incorporating union, a fusion of the Northern and Southern Netherlands, and that there was to be a constitution giving complete civil and religious liberty to the subjects. The constitution, when the union was accomplished, was, indeed, eminently liberal and tolerant; but nothing was more noticeable in this fundamental law than the extensive

prerogatives which it bestowed upon the Sovereign. There were to be Ministers and a Council of State; but there was no provision that the Ministers were to be responsible for the executive acts of the Sovereign. If the doctrine of Ministerial responsibility, so well understood in Great Britain, had formed part of the constitution in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the course of events would probably have been very different, and the House of Orange might still have been reigning in the strong Barrier State set up by the Congress of Vienna.

On the other hand it may well be doubted whether the wisest of Protestant rulers, protected by the best of constitutional safeguards, could, at that stage of European history, have overcome the inevitable repugnance of the Catholic Church to the tolerant principles of the fundamental law; and with the antagonism of the clergy began those discussions between King William and his Belgian subjects which ended in the revolution of 1830. Before the constitution came into force the Belgian Bishops had protested against it, had spoken of their "surprise and grief," and had declared that religion and the liberties of the Church could not exist under it. "The proclamation of your Majesty," they said in one manifesto, "which announces liberty to all religions, and assures them protection and equal favour, has spread consternation in our souls."<sup>1</sup>

At first, however, things seemed to be going well. The King worked hard and lived simply. He grudged every hour spent on amusement. He had no time for the study of any form of literature except works on trade and international law. It was said of him that he thought the most humble writer on political economy a greater man of letters than Byron or Chateaubriand. He had seen, during his exile in England, before the fall of Napoleon, how industry and commerce were enabling

<sup>1</sup> Raepsaet, *Ouvres Complètes*, v. 301.

Great Britain to survive twenty years of war, and grow richer and stronger than ever; and he devoted himself to developing the resources of his own kingdom. To a great extent he succeeded; and the Belgian provinces shared largely in the new prosperity. Brussels grew wealthy by the manufacture of carpets, lace, and other articles of luxury. Antwerp carried on a lucrative trade with the Dutch colonies. At Ghent, cotton-spinning and weaving flourished. It was in the year after Waterloo that the King went into partnership with John Cockerill, and founded the famous ironworks of Seraing. Throughout other parts of the Walloon country, the fierce energy of the people, which in the past had so often been the cause of civil war, was usefully employed in the carpet factories of Tournai, the ironworks of Charleroi, and the coal mines which blacken the landscape for so many leagues round Mons.

Thus the King of the Netherlands, who came to the throne full of good intentions, was a benefactor of his country. Like the Emperor Joseph the Second, he wished to make the people of his Belgian provinces happy; but, like Joseph the Second, he tried to rule as a beneficent autocrat, and in a variety of ways laid himself open to attack. Still, in spite of complaints, the people were, on the whole, contented. The Belgian deputies, though frequently adverse to the King's measures, had no desire to break the union; and it was not till the Government passed financial laws which infringed the traditions of the country that there was an acute division of parties in the States General. Thereafter there was a regular Opposition. The attitude of the North now became aggressive, that of the South, defensive.<sup>1</sup>

The King's aim certainly was to make his people free and prosperous; but "Alone I did it" must be written over all. His character was a combination of sage ideas

<sup>1</sup> Nothomb, *Essai Historique et Politique sur la Revolution Belge* (4th ed.), i. 250.

and Dutch obstinacy; and one great root of bitterness between him and the clergy was the never-ending question of education. It was not that he wished to make the Southern provinces Protestant. But he was bent on raising the intellectual standard of the country; and for this purpose he founded the *Collège Philosophique* at Louvain, where the young priests were to receive a liberal education—a scheme which the Church resisted as it had resisted the *Séminaire Générale* of Joseph the Second, and with equal success.

Other measures alienated the people. Though the States General met alternately at The Hague and at Brussels, all the great departments had their offices in Holland. They were placed there for greater safety in the event of war; but it was a grievance that some of them were not at Brussels, Antwerp, or Ghent. Most of the officials were Dutch, which seemed to prove a wish for Hollander supremacy, though the Dutch were a minority of the population of the United Kingdom. The press attacked the Government, and was severely punished under decrees issued by the King on his personal authority. The use of Dutch as the official language was enforced against the wishes of the majority; and at last there was a universal belief that the King's policy was to sacrifice the interests of the Belgian provinces to those of Holland.

In the South two parties were sharply divided, the Catholics and the Liberals. The Catholics, led by Baron de Gerlache, supported the clergy in their opposition to religious equality and State control of education. The Liberals, led by Charles de Broukere, deputy for the province of Limbourg, were in favour of the complete toleration provided for by the constitution, and defended the King's measures for improving education. On these questions principles were opposed to principles. But as time went on the complaints of both Catholics and Liberals grew louder. Both parties resented the strict measures taken against those who attacked the Govern-

ment in the press. Bishops and other dignitaries of the Church found themselves treated as plain subjects; and journalists and barristers who liked to fish in troubled waters were placed in the dock, and punished for seditious writings.

Van Maanan, Minister of Justice, was the adviser of the Crown in these prosecutions; and, though the constitution did not provide for Ministerial responsibility, he, rather than the King, was blamed. He gave great offence by telling the States General that the Ministers were agents of the Crown, and not servants of the people. "The constitution of the Kingdom," he said with perfect truth, "recognises no other Ministerial responsibility." This made him detested throughout Belgium.

For some time before 1829, side by side with this growth of discontent, there had been a movement for a coalition of the Catholic and Liberal parties. But the general public in the Southern Netherlands took very little interest in political controversies; and the elections for the States General took place almost unnoticed. Most of the newspapers were managed by Frenchmen, who filled their columns with attacks on the Bourbons and the Jesuits, French epigrams, and Parisian witticisms. This fostered the indifference of the people to public questions. But suddenly some new papers, with Belgian editors, appeared, and proposals were made that disputes about religion should be laid aside in favour of an agitation for Ministerial responsibility, a free press, and other reforms; and at last, in July, 1828, a coalition of the Catholics and the Liberals was announced. Religious differences were to be sunk. The Catholics were to demand a free press, which they had always opposed, and to admit the right of private judgment. The Liberals were to support the Catholic claims on the subject of religious education, and the Catholics were to assist the Liberals in pressing for various changes which they desired.

At first the Vatican disapproved of the coalition ; and Cardinal Cappacini, then in Belgium as a Papal Nuncio, told the clergy that they must not commit themselves. He was, however, working privately against the Government<sup>1</sup> ; and soon the Church came openly into the field, and sermons were preached in favour of the Opposition. Van Maanan received many warnings that, though the North was peaceful, the Belgian agitation excited by the priests was dangerous ; and Baron de Gerlache remonstrated with the King, who listened in silence, but could hardly conceal his anger. His Government, he replied, was a monarchy tempered by a constitution, and not a republic with a ruler who was the deputy of the deputies of the people. It was useless, he said, to speak of Ministerial responsibility ; the attributes of the Chief of the State were defined by the fundamental law, and all theories to the contrary were factious and revolutionary. "I will maintain," he said, using the famous motto of his family, "I will maintain, by every means in my power, the constitution to which I have sworn."

A few days after this interview, on December 11, 1829, a Royal message was read to the States General. Its language was more guarded than the language which the King had used in private to the Catholic leader. It was, however, equally firm, and gave great offence, which grew deeper when Van Maanan issued a circular to all persons in public employment calling on them to give, within forty-eight hours, a written assurance of their adherence to "the principles which the King has expressly declared to be the rules of his Government".

The only effect of the Royal message and this circular was to make Van Maanan more unpopular than ever, and to produce a loud call for his dismissal. The King would not yield ; and in January, 1830, he deprived six members of the States General of offices and pensions on the ground

<sup>1</sup> Terlinden, *Guillaume I et l'Église Catholique en Belgique*, ii. 371.

that they had voted against the Ministers of the Crown, and had "displayed an absolute aversion to the principles of my Government".<sup>1</sup>

At this juncture the clergy insisted on having secular as well as religious education in their hands. To this the King, taking his stand on the constitution, would not consent. There can be no doubt that he honestly wished to erect an intellectual barrier between his Kingdom and France by guiding the Belgians into a course different from that into which Charles the Tenth was guiding the French, and to prevent the spread in his own dominions of that dark mediævalism which was making clerical rule in the Papal States such a curse to the inhabitants of Central Italy. But this could not be accomplished if the clergy were left free to educate the youth of the country as they pleased.

When the year 1829 closed, though as yet there was no public movement in the Belgian provinces for a separation from Holland, a few ambitious men were in secret communication with Paris, where schemes had been devised to reverse the European settlement of 1815, and recover the Low Countries, the highway to the Rhine, for France.

For some time the members of the *Corps Diplomatique* in the Netherlands had been alarmed at the growing discord between King William and his Belgian subjects. The Sardinian Minister of Foreign Affairs, soon after the Philosophical College at Louvain was opened, instructed his envoy at Brussels to remonstrate, and warned the Dutch Minister, Mijnheer Heldevier, that the Catholic opposition to the King's measures might lead to a revolt. The opinion, however, of the Comte de Mier, the Austrian Ambassador, was that everything depended on what happened in France. "So long," he said, "as France is tranquil, this country, in spite of all discontent, will not move."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Juste, *Revolution Belge*, i. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Terlinden, ii. 430.

But France, though prosperous after recovering from the effects of the long war, was now on the brink of an explosion. The Three Days of July were drawing nigh.

Ever since, in May, 1825, Charles the Tenth was crowned at Rheims, the *camarilla* of Jesuits and ultraroyalists who surrounded him, the *parti-prêtre*, had been gaining ground. In the first week of August, 1829, Prince Jules de Polignac, who had been for some years French Ambassador in London, was recalled to Paris, and appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new Cabinet which then came into office. In the Archives of our Foreign Office there are numerous letters from Lord Stuart de Rothesay, the British Ambassador in Paris, to Lord Aberdeen, which speak of the dread felt at the return of Polignac.<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Wellington said that the fanaticism of Polignac was incredible, that there never was a more bitter enemy to England, and that he never lost sight of the notion of a revival of the Roman Catholic religion in Europe. "He invariably," Wellington said, "reverted to the views of Louis the Fourteenth, respecting the Rhine being the proper boundary of France; and it was almost wholly at his instigation that De Potter<sup>2</sup> and the other malcontents in Flanders organised their rebellion, though it did not break out till he and all that he belonged to had fallen victims to their own Revolution of the Three Days—a just retribution upon him at least."

The Three Days' Revolution of July, 1830, which, after overwhelming the elder branch of the Bourbons, was followed by the rising in Brussels, was, of course, caused by the domestic measures of Charles the Tenth. But long before that event, in the autumn of 1829, Polignac had brought forward plans which threatened to re-open the secular struggle for supremacy in the Low Countries by breaking up that kingdom of the Netherlands which had been created, chiefly through the influence of Great Britain, in the hope of maintaining the general peace.

<sup>1</sup> F.O. 146 (France), 102, 103, 104.

<sup>2</sup> Louis de Potter.

The restoration of the Bourbons was associated in the minds of the French people with invasions by foreign armies, with the fall of Paris twice, with the loss of Belgium, Holland, and the Rhine frontier. How, then, was France to be reconciled to the Bourbons? That was the question which met the Ministers of Louis XVIII and Charles X at every turn. The natural answer was—by a spirited foreign policy; and a spirited foreign policy meant, to most Frenchmen, a march through Belgium to the Rhine.

During the war between Russia and Turkey which began in 1828, soon after the collapse of the short-lived triple alliance of Great Britain, France, and Russia, plans for a move towards the Rhine had been discussed in France.

Early in January, 1829, Lord Palmerston had a conversation at Paris with General Sebastiani, who maintained quite openly that an extension of territory towards the Rhine was necessary to France. "It is," he said, "essential and indispensable to France to get back to the Rhine as a frontier. Landau and Sarre-Louis are necessary to her. . . . So long as the policy of England is opposed to these resumptums, so long will it be impossible for a cordial alliance to exist between England and France."<sup>1</sup> After Polignac became Prime Minister, the policy of the French Government assumed a very definite shape. In September, 1829, he laid before the Council of State a long memoir setting forth an elaborate plan for the reconstruction of a large part of Europe, which was to take place after the defeat of Turkey. "In every combination," he said, "connected with the fall of the Ottoman Empire the one object that must be kept in view is the breaking of England's dominion of the seas." To gain this object he looked first of all, like Napoleon, to Belgium and the acquisition of Antwerp. But there were to be

<sup>1</sup> Ashley, *Life of Lord Palmerston*, i, 189.

re-adjustments of territory in other parts of Europe. Almost the whole map was to be re-drawn. Austria was to obtain Bosnia, Herzegovina, Serbia, and Turkish Dalmatia. Russia was to have Wallachia, Moldavia, and a large increase of territory in Asia. Prussia was to have part of Hanover, and also of Saxony. Holland was to be compensated for the loss of Belgium by receiving part of Hanover. Polignac's chief aim in proposing this vast scheme was to secure the assent of Europe to the extension of France to the left bank of the Rhine.<sup>1</sup> "The possession of Belgium," he said, "is necessary for France, in order to cover plans against an invasion." At the first meeting of the Council to discuss this subject, "the Dauphin objected that England would never consent to let Antwerp fall into the hands of France, and proposed that, instead of Belgium, the Rhine provinces should be annexed". But Polignac replied, "We must have Antwerp. Either we consent to be saddled forever with the treaties of 1815, or we must make up our minds to incur the hostility of England. In alliance with Russia, Prussia, Bavaria, and the great part of the rest of Germany, we can force England."

At this meeting no decision was reached; and Polignac prepared another memoir "on the relative value of Belgium as compared with the Rhine provinces". "The possession of Belgium," he argued, "would strengthen France as a naval power, so that she could take the lead in a maritime alliance against England, while to insist on taking the Rhenish provinces would be an act of hostility against Prussia." In the end Polignac's plan was adopted. An attempt was to be made to obtain the assent of England by offering her the Dutch colonies; but there was to be a secret understanding between France, Russia, Austria, and Prussia, which would leave England isolated. The whole project was to be sent to the French ambassa-

<sup>1</sup> Louis Blanc, *History of Ten Years*, i. 74; *Memoirs of Baron Stockmar*, i. 136; Simpson, *Rise of Louis Napoleon*, p. 54.

dor at St. Petersburg, with instructions to inform the Russian Government that the essential point was that Russia must guarantee to France the possession of Belgium. If, however, peace was made between Russia and Turkey before these instructions reached him, the ambassador was not to act upon them. And that was what happened. On September 18, a telegraphic despatch, sent from the semaphore station at Lille to Paris, announced that peace had been signed at Adrianople on August 29.<sup>1</sup>

While at Paris Polignac and his colleagues were weaving their plot for destroying the settlement of 1815, their agents in Belgium had been preparing the way. A pamphlet of this period, written by Baron de Richemont, openly proposes the annexation of Belgium by France, on the ground that the Kingdom of the Netherlands had been established by Great Britain solely for her own purposes, and that the Belgians themselves wished to be re-united to the French people. There was, indeed, a certain faction in favour of separation from Holland with the view of joining France. But it was discredited by the suspicion that it was working in the interest of France alone; and Baron de Richemont's assertions were answered in the Belgian press, both by Catholics and Liberals. All Europe, they said, and not Great Britain alone, had wished to prevent Antwerp and Ostend remaining in possession of France; and the destruction of the Kingdom of the Netherlands would be a menace not only to England, but also to the peace of Europe.

It was reported that the French Jesuits had sent 80,000 francs to Flanders to be used in rousing the people against the Government. Nevertheless, there was as yet no thought of a revolution. Reforms, "painfully and slowly acquired," says De Potter, were all that the responsible leaders of the Belgian Opposition wished for.<sup>2</sup> "We are

<sup>1</sup> Stuart de Rothesay to Aberdeen, Sept. 19, 1829. F.O. 146 (France), 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Souvenirs Personnels*, i. 59.

far from the culpable wish for a separation of North and South," an Opposition paper, the *Catholique des Pays-Bas*, declares; and in one pamphlet I find Count Felix de Mérode explaining the constitutional character of the Opposition.

Suddenly, towards the end of July, 1830, the conflict of parties in France came to a crisis.

A new page of French history had just been turned with the success of the expedition to North Africa, and, preparatory to entering Belgium (Polignac still clung to that part of his great plan) two military camps had been formed at St. Omer and Lunéville, when, just three weeks after the capture of Algiers, Charles X signed the notorious ordinances which destroyed the liberty of the press, changed the electoral law, and dissolved the newly elected Chambers of Deputies. The Three Days' Revolution followed. With the National Guard disaffected, part of the regular army in Africa, and part on the Belgian frontier, the Government had no force in Paris strong enough to quell the mob; and by the middle of August, Charles X was an exile in England, and Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans, was on the throne of France.<sup>1</sup>

In Holland, the Revolution of July was applauded; and there seems to have been no uneasiness about what might be its effects on Belgium. The King of France (this was said at the Court of the Netherlands) was a crowned

<sup>1</sup> In July, 1830, Prince Polignac was acting as Minister of War as well as Foreign Affairs. The Comte de Circourt, who was employed in the Foreign Office at that time, told Mr. Henry Reeve that Polignac was at the bottom of the Belgian Revolution. "Polignac had for some time been intriguing to detach Belgium from the King of Holland's dominions—chiefly from a desire to release a Catholic population from their Protestant connection, but in part, also, from a notion that a military demonstration on the side of Belgium would be popular in France, and would disarm the Opposition, so that the movement which took place at Brussels after the Revolution of July, and was attributed to the example of that democratic explosion, had, in fact, been prepared by Polignac himself. This is strange enough; but what is still more strange is that the very means taken to promote this lawless object proved to be the ruin of Charles X and his Minister" (*Memoirs of Henry Reeve*, ii. 110). See also an article on the Comte de Circourt in the *Edinburgh Review* for October, 1881.

Jesuit, who deserved his fate ; and since the people had driven him out with cries of "Down with the Priests," it could not be supposed that the French revolutionaries and the Belgian Catholics had anything in common.<sup>1</sup> But for some years Brussels had been a favourite meeting-place for political refugees from every country. Carbonari from Italy, Polish exiles, Russians, Germans, Spaniards, irreconcilable Bonapartists, Jacobins—all found shelter there ; and the Belgian capital was not only the refuge of genuine patriots who had fled from persecution, but also the haunt of many undesirable characters, needy outcasts, the *mauvais sujets* of various nations, who were ready for any enterprise in the hope of mending their broken fortunes. When these dangerous aliens heard the news from France they gathered in the streets and cafés, and urged the mob to imitate Paris, erect barricades, and revolt against the Government. Most of the veteran Jacobins, Barrère amongst others, who had been living in Brussels since the restoration of the Bourbons, had returned to Paris. But it was noticed that every day young Frenchmen who had fought in the July days were flocking into Brussels, where they walked about wearing tri-colour cockades, singing the "Marseillaise," and declaring that France was ready to help any country which was discontented with its rulers.

It appears that De Potter, who had been twice prosecuted for sedition, and was now openly in favour of a revolution, believed that French troops would be at once sent into Belgium ; and M. Gendebien, a leader of the Opposition who was always bent on re-union to France, wrote to Paris asking if the Rhine frontier was really desired, and went so far as to promise complete success if the Belgian provinces were invaded. He was, however, privately informed by an agent of the French Government that, even if the Belgians revolted, it was

<sup>1</sup> De Gerlache, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, ii. 246.

most unlikely that France would intervene unless the Prussians entered Belgium to assist the King of the Netherlands.

This was the situation on August 15, when some members of the Opposition held a secret meeting. They thought that a popular rising was possible, and that, if it came, they should be prepared to lead it. They had, however, been so impressed by the personal popularity of the Royal Family during their last visit to Brussels that it was decided to adjourn for a month. But events moved faster than they expected.

Ten days later came that momentous evening of August 25, 1830, when the *Muette de Portici*, which had been produced in Paris two years before, was performed for the first time in Brussels at the *Théâtre de la Monnaie*. The story of what happened has been often told; how the wrongs of Masaniello's sister, the dumb girl Fenella, the spectacle of resistance to authority, and the songs of freedom roused the emotions of the audience to such a pitch that they rushed out of the theatre shouting "Liberty! Liberty," and caused the disturbance which led to the rioting and destruction of property in which the mob indulged throughout the night.

I found a few years ago amongst the Dutch Archives at The Hague a confidential report by Mijnheer van Gontrant, who was Director of Police at Brussels in 1830. It appears from this document, which was evidently written to show that the Director of Police had done his duty like a hero, that French agitators were the chief promoters of the riot. Young men from Paris, well dressed, and with plenty of money, went about inviting all and sundry to enter the taverns and drink with them. Beer and wine flowed like water; and these generous strangers had a great deal to say about the glory of France, and the power of the French people to assist their neighbours.

The troops and the police were useless; but next

morning Count Felix de Mérode and other well-known men took matters into their own hands, organised patrols of citizens, and restored order to some extent. But the mob had tasted blood; the alien population, many of whom were desperate adventurers, continued their incitements to rebellion; and the situation became highly dangerous. The French tricolour flags disappeared, and were replaced by the red, black, and yellow banners of Brabant. The royal arms were torn down; and the rioters no longer shouted "Vive la France," but "Vive la Belgique". It was now too late to avert a catastrophe. Had this riot at Brussels, the work of a few foreigners, who stirred up the rabble of the city, been vigorously dealt with the moment it began, followed by a calm and full enquiry into the complaints of the Belgian provinces, the solid Kingdom of the Netherlands would probably have remained intact. If so, it is most unlikely that there would have been in later years a mysterious Bismarck-Benedetti intrigue, or an affair of Luxembourg. There might have been no Franco-Prussian war of 1870, and no annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. The peace of Western Europe might well have been preserved till now; and Belgium and France would thus have escaped the devastation and ruin of the last few years. But on that fatal night the mob had been allowed to gain the upper hand; and a mere street uproar became the prelude to a revolution full of danger to the peace of Europe.

A deputation sent from Brussels to The Hague laid the grievances of the Belgian provinces before the King, demanding the dismissal of Van Maanan, and the introduction of Ministerial responsibility. The King promised to consider what they said, but insisted that his troops must enter Brussels. "I should be the laughing stock of all Europe," he said, "if, with a pistol at my head, I yielded to the threats of a few disturbers of the general peace."

Orders were sent from The Hague to put down the

rising by force ; and Dutch troops marched into Brussels on September 23. After three days of desperate street fighting, during which the Belgians were commanded by a Spanish soldier of fortune, they left. On the retirement of the Royal army, which, there is reason to believe, was caused by a wish to avoid further bloodshed and save the city from destruction, the revolution spread in all directions. The whole country rose. Paid agitators went about amongst the people ; men of high standing joined the party of revolt ; the Bishops pulled the strings behind the scenes ; parish priests excited their congregations to rebel ; and fuel was added to the fire by the violent language of the press. At Bruges, where many of the people lived in abject poverty, the mob followed the example of Brussels, and there was serious rioting. At Liège, where there was a strong desire for reunion to France, the townsmen assembled in the market place, helped themselves to arms, and marched into Brabant. At Louvain the populace rose, attacked the barracks, and brutally murdered the commanding officer. The people of Luxembourg, too, joined in the fray. Amongst the spoils acquired by Prussia at the close of the Napoleonic wars were the hereditary estates of the Orange-Nassau family in Germany. For centuries, during the Burgundian, Spanish, Austrian, and French periods, Luxembourg had been, as much as Flanders or Brabant, a part of Belgium. But the Congress of Vienna gave this province, essentially Belgian, not only by territorial connexion, but in sentiment and affection, to the King of the Netherlands, as compensation for the Orange-Nassau estate taken by Prussia. He held it as his personal property, with the title of Grand Duke of Luxembourg. This new Grand Duchy was at the same time made a State of the Germanic Confederation, and a Prussian garrison was placed in the citadel of the town of Luxembourg. The province was, however, administered as a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, sent

deputies to the States General, and now took a very prominent part in the revolution, which spread so rapidly that in a few weeks the King had lost all the fortresses of the Southern Netherlands except Venloo, Stevenswart, Maestricht, and Antwerp, and a majority of the people were obeying a Provisional Government which had assumed authority on the last day of the fighting in Brussels, and had proclaimed the independence of the Belgian people.

At first the citizens of Antwerp, most of whom were rich merchants or industrious workmen, had no sympathy with the rising at Brussels. But on October 26, there was an exchange of shots between the garrison and a party of Belgian insurgents, who demanded the surrender of the citadel. Next day the commander of the citadel opened fire on the town, which was bombarded for several hours. Some members of the Provisional Government came from Brussels, and arranged an armistice. The Dutch remained in possession of the citadel; but the bombardment of the city, during which many civilians were killed and a number of buildings were destroyed by fire, put an end to the last hopes of a reconciliation between the Belgian provinces and the House of Orange.

When it was seen that the settlement of the Netherlands made by the Congress of Vienna was in peril, King William had instructed Baron Falck, his ambassador at the Court of St. James', to ask for intervention on his behalf. The British Government replied that troops could not be sent; that a conference of the five great Powers would discuss the whole question; and that the policy of Great Britain would be to prevent the Belgian revolution leading to a breach of the general peace. This famous Conference held its first meeting at the Foreign Office in London on November 4, 1830.

The question of the Netherlands was, indeed, once more troubling the repose of Europe. King William, as a

Prince of the Germanic Confederation, was calling on the Diet of Frankfort to suppress the revolt of Luxembourg, and help him to defend his interests in the other Belgian provinces. The Austrian army, though Metternich, with troubles of his own nearer home, did not wish to intervene, had been reinforced, and was ready to take the field. The Cabinet of Berlin was alarmed. Most of the warriors and statesmen and men of letters who had guided Prussia and the German States during the ascendancy of Napoleon were now off the scene or just about to leave it. Scharnhorst, the organiser of the Prussian army, had fallen early in the war of 1813. Blücher had died four years after Waterloo. Hardenberg was dead. Stein, old and worn-out, was spending the last months of his life in Westphalia. Kant, Herder, Schiller, Fichte, were all gone. Niebuhr was to die in January, 1831; and in the autumn of that year Hegel was to be buried beside the tomb of Fichte. Goethe, almost the last survivor of the Weimar circle, was still alive, but on the brink of the grave. But Frederick William III, after reigning for thirty-three years, was still upon the throne of Prussia. His appetite had not been fully satisfied at the Congress of Vienna; but he had obtained, along with other gains, the Rhine provinces with a frontier running side by side with the frontiers of Holland, Belgium, and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and also with that of France between Luxembourg and Rhenish Bavaria. Prussia, therefore, more than any other State of the Germanic Confederation, had an interest in the future of the Netherlands, and in the question of French policy towards the Belgian revolt. The family ties, moreover, which united the Hohenzollerns to the House of Orange had lately been strengthened by the marriage of Prince Albrecht, Frederick William's youngest son, to the Princess Marianne, only daughter of the King of the Netherlands, which took place at The Hague on September 14, when the Belgian provinces were fast breaking into open rebellion. This

marriage gave King William some reason for believing that, even if Prussia did not intervene by force of arms, her diplomatic influence would be used on his side at the Conference of London.

The Emperor Nicholas I, however, was the most determined foe of Belgian independence. The Hereditary Prince of Orange, after his engagement to the Princess Charlotte of Wales was broken off, had married the Grand Duchess Paulowna of Russia. Thus a family alliance bound the dynasty of St. Petersburg to the House of Orange; and the Emperor had mobilised large forces for a campaign in the Netherlands, when suddenly the hands of Russia were tied by an event which had a powerful influence on the fate of Belgium.

When the flame of the July revolution, after spreading from Paris to Brussels, started on its tour through Europe, it crossed the Rhine, began to burn, as Heine puts it, the crimson trappings of a few German thrones, and was speedily quenched by the fire-engines of the police. Heine lamented the slavish torpor of his countrymen, and went to France. But further to the East the habit of submission was not so confirmed as in the German States; and when the flame reached Warsaw it burst into a conflagration so fierce that soon the whole of Russian Poland was on fire. For some time a rising had been anticipated; and the news from Paris and Brussels, together with a rumour that the Polish army was to be sent into Belgium to crush the revolution there, made the mouldering embers of disaffection blaze. On November 29, the people of Warsaw and the Polish soldiers rose, and drove out their oppressors. This diverted the attention of the Emperor from the Netherlands to Poland, where he was fully occupied for the next twelve months in destroying the last shreds of Polish freedom. The dry bones of the Holy Alliance had begun to move; but the revolt of Russian Poland, by embarrassing the most powerful member of the autocratic league,

increased the influence of Great Britain at the Conference of London, and helped Lord Palmerston, who became Foreign Minister on the fall of the Wellington Government, and Prince Talleyrand, who had been sent to England as French ambassador on the accession of Louis Philippe, in their efforts to find a peaceful solution of the Belgian problem. There were frequent differences of opinion in the Conference; but the five Powers, under the skilful management of Palmerston and Talleyrand, continued to act, ostensibly at least, in concert.

This brings us to the end of the year 1830. To go further, even if time allowed, would be to plunge into the arena where the diplomatic tournament of the London Conference went on, with occasional pauses, for nine long years, in the midst of endless difficulties about the terms on which the South was to be separated from the North, about the election of a King of the Belgians, about the Belgian claim to the left bank of the Scheldt, above all things, about Luxembourg and Limbourg. Twice at least, there was danger of a general European war—first when the Dutch entered Brabant, defeated the Belgians, and were induced to retire only by the arrival of an army sent from France to oppose them, and again when the citadel of Antwerp was besieged and taken by the French, while the ports of Holland were blockaded by the British Navy. The negotiations were so complicated that even Prince Metternich confessed that the course taken by the Belgian question passed his comprehension. "I can no longer," he writes, "make anything out of it; my mind refuses to work upon it; and if my duty did not forbid my doing so, I would abandon it to the winds rather than have anything to do with it. It has come to affect me with inexpressible disgust."

The end came with the Treaties of April 19, 1839, when Belgium at last entered the family of independent States, made perpetually neutral under the guarantee of the five great Powers. Perpetual or compulsory neutral-

ity, which is hardly consistent with complete independence, was proposed, Professor Treitsche says, by Count Bülow, the plenipotentiary of Prussia at the Conference of London. It was imposed on the Belgians against their wishes. They signed the Treaties of 1839 unwillingly for several reasons, particularly because of the Articles which deprived them of large parts of Luxembourg and Limbourg, against which King Leopold I and the inhabitants of these provinces protested to the last. They had grave misgivings on the subject of perpetual neutrality. But history will always tell, and Great Britain and France have good reason to remember with peculiar gratitude, how unflinchingly, on that critical evening in August, 1914, the Cabinet of Brussels refused to commit the flagrant violation of international law demanded by the Imperial Government of Germany, and at what a price they fulfilled the obligations of a neutral State.