

## THE TREATY OF BRUSSELS AND OUR DUTY.

AN International Conference composed of seventeen of the Powers of the globe called for the purpose of considering measures for the suppression of the African slave-trade, recently closed its labors at the city of Brussels. It is rather remarkable and tends to illustrate the intensity of our absorption in home affairs that this Conference which sat for the greater part of a year and discussed many problems of vital importance to humanity attracted scarcely any attention on this side of the Atlantic.

It is proposed herein briefly to give some account of the influences which led up to the calling of the Conference, and the outlines of the work that it performed—a task made the more important and timely because the treaty that was framed is now before the United States Senate for ratification; and the responsibility for its life or death rests chiefly upon the action of the United States.

Notwithstanding all the efforts heretofore made by the principal civilized Powers to suppress the slave-trade, the scourge in its most frightful forms continues to afflict Africa. The testimony of travellers, missionaries, naval officers, and diplomatic and consular agents unite in establishing that on that continent, so rich in all the gifts that nature can shower upon it and so full of possibilities for the benefit of mankind in the future, the most atrocious crimes are committed every day by those engaged in the slave-traffic. From the testimony referred to, volumes of which were laid before the Conference, it appears that through intestine wars incited for the purpose of procuring victims for the trade, provinces as large as kingdoms are depopulated, many villages destroyed, and vast areas of country devastated and set back into a savage state, which previously had been under cultivation. The most moderate estimates place the number of slaves annually transported to the various slave-markets by land and sea at not less than 80,000; and to be added to this number are those who perish on the way to the sea or are killed in the attacks upon the villages and in the wars fomented to facilitate the trade, which, it is believed, reaches 400,000; or more than 1,000 lives every day in every year.

As, however, a great part of the coast line is now in the possession of civilized Powers, the trade has become concentrated more and more in the heart of the continent and along the caravan routes leading to the sea or across the great deserts, and this fact renders the adoption of new and different methods necessary for its suppression. Of the 80,000 slaves surviving out of the number captured each year, some are retained in bondage in the interior countries of Africa, while markets are found for the rest in Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, Egypt, Arabia, Turkey in Europe and in Asia, Persia and Zanzibar; and slaves are surreptitiously introduced also even into certain provinces of British India and Madagascar, notwithstanding all the vigilance exercised by the English and French authorities in the last-named countries. It is a fact that the institution of domestic slavery has been preserved and still exists in all those states, whether African, Asiatic, or European, which are subject to the Mussulman law, and in all such states the negro trader continues to find his markets.

Thus it is that in spite of all treaties heretofore made for the suppression of the trade, from the Congress of European Powers at Vienna in 1815 down to the Conference of Berlin in 1884, when the Congo Free-State was created and the slave-trade interdicted in all the territories forming the basin of the Congo; in spite of conventions between the principal Powers assimilating the trade to piracy and applying the severest penalties to those engaged in it; in spite of all means hitherto used and all remedies applied for the suppression of the abominable traffic which has sacrificed so many millions of human beings on the altar of human greed, and the horrors of which, as has been correctly said by another, "pass the limits of the imagination," it still goes on, and hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children annually perish or enter into life-long bondage in foreign lands. Travellers like Livingstone, Schweinfurth, Speke, Cameron, Burton, and Stanley; the missionaries, those men and women who brave every danger and submit to every sacrifice in the cause of religion and philanthropy and who so often have constituted the vanguard of civilization in savage lands; the diplomatic and consular agents posted in Africa whose duty it is to keep their Governments informed with regard to the social, political, and economic conditions of the country about them, have one and all within the past thirty years filled the ears of the civilized world with reports of these cruelties perpetrated upon the ignorant and helpless peoples inhabiting the interior of the African continent by men-hunters, until at last they have awakened

its conscience to the necessity of a supreme effort once for all to stamp out the scourge.

The Conference of Brussels in 1889 was the result.

There are two men in Europe whose sympathies were thoroughly enlisted in the cause and who exerted their high and far-reaching influence to produce this result. One of these men is Leopold II., King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Congo Free-State. No more philanthropic and generous man rules over the destinies of a people than he who accepted from the Conference of Berlin in 1884 the rulership of the 50,000,000 of people occupying the territory known as the Congo Free-State. His time, his health, his talents, and his private fortune have been devoted to the amelioration of the condition of the ignorant natives of that benighted land, and to the introduction among them of the arts and comforts of civilization. His government of the Congo has been to the people inhabiting the country like the breaking of the morning after an almost endless night of profound darkness. In large provinces where there was perpetual war, he has now established peace; where there was no law to protect the weak against the oppression of the strong, he has erected courts of justice which regularly perform their functions, controlled by a wise code of laws adapted to the situation of the country; where there were no means of communication with the rest of the world, he has created an efficient postal service and routes of travel; where there was no way of establishing or protecting titles in individuals to the soil they cultivated, he has ordained a well-guarded land system, with offices and records for the perpetuation of titles; where there was no police and no authority to enforce justice and to secure tranquillity, he has organized a force which accomplishes that end. Steadily and surely he has sown amongst them the seeds of civilization. Towns have sprung up along the Congo River, numerous steamboats float on its bosom, a railroad is in course of construction, commerce is beginning to flourish, and the slave-trade has been restrained as far as the limited means at his command would enable him to do it. To these ends he has given generously from his private means. For a number of years indeed he contributed \$500,000 per annum to the support of the Government which he established, and his annual allowance to the State for that purpose even now amounts to \$200,000. It was in response to his invitation that the Conference of Brussels assembled.

Cardinal Lavignerie is the other man whose influence was largely

felt in bringing about the sentiment which culminated in the assembling of the Conference. He gave himself to the cause of the redemption of Africa from the slave-trade with all the ardor and zeal of an apostle. In the year 1888 and the beginning of 1889 he travelled over Europe preaching a crusade against permitting its continuance any longer in Africa. At Rome, Paris, London, Berlin, Brussels, and other capitals, his eloquent appeals in behalf of his cause were listened to by large crowds of people and had a marked effect in attracting the attention of European Governments to the subject and finally in exciting their sympathy and co-operation.

The Conference opened on the 18th of November, 1889, with representatives from the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Austria, Hungary, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Holland, Portugal, Sweden and Norway, Turkey, the Independent State of the Congo, Persia, and Zanzibar. Its labors were prolonged almost without interruption for a period of eight months. The problems which confronted it and had to be discussed were often of the most delicate or complex nature. Jealousies, antagonistic interests, divergent doctrines and traditions were encountered and had to be dealt with and reconciled, and in some instances concessions had to be made; but the debates clearly show that the unmistakable spirit of the Conference was to keep always in view the fact that its superior purpose was the accomplishment of a great work of justice and humanity.

The general plan of its legislation, if such a term may be used with reference to diplomatic conventions, has application to a territory twice as large in area as the continent of Europe, containing a population of not less than 125,000,000 of people. It applies also to a large maritime zone in the Indian ocean.

The Treaty consists of 100 articles divided into seven chapters, and its provisions authorize the adoption of the most rigorous measures for the suppression of the trade in all its phases. Establishing stations in the very heart of Africa by a system of progressive occupation, it seeks to overtake and strike the scourge wherever it appears, whether at the place of capture of the negro, or while moving along the caravan routes, or in course of transportation upon the sea. It makes ample provision for the chastisement of the wrong-doers and the liberation of the victims wherever found. It declares that the murder, rape, or mutilation of the natives shall be assimilated to the same crimes perpetrated upon white people, and punished accordingly. It restricts the sale of fire-arms and ammunition which have

been hitherto most powerful auxiliaries in slave-hunting. It regulates and restrains the sale of spirits to the natives, for which they have the same appetite as the North American Indians, and which therefore has been a valuable aid to the slave-hunter in his enterprises. It establishes permanent stations of succor, information, and control in the slave-country. It defines with the utmost precision and minuteness the general principles for the repression of the trade on the sea.

One of the most difficult questions encountered was that of preventing the use of the flags of civilized Powers by slavers. The United States and France especially have at all times maintained the doctrine of the inviolability of vessels flying their respective flags from visit by foreign cruisers. The firm position of our Government upon this question has always met with the hearty approbation of our people, as it should. There is no difference of opinion in this country on the point that the immunity of its flag upon the high seas is paramount to every other consideration or purpose however benevolent, and that it is not compatible with the dignity of the United States, as a great Power, to permit this principle to be violated under any pretence whatever. Yet it is an embarrassing and mortifying fact that the small vessels engaged in the slave-trade along the African coast frequently hoist the Stars and Stripes to protect themselves from visit by the cruisers of other Powers while carrying on the nefarious traffic. It is, therefore, a cause of great satisfaction in examining the provisions of the Treaty of Brussels on this point to find that the difficulty has been skilfully avoided, and the right of visit eliminated as to those nations which do not acknowledge the principle, while at the same time means are adopted which will in a large measure restrain if not put a stop to the abuse of our flag altogether.

The Treaty contains forty-two articles on the repression of the trade on the sea and regulates by a special code the concession of flag-rights on the coast and the verification of vessel-papers. Every detail of the procedure for the application of the system is provided. Three new principles are established for the regulation of the action of cruisers. Their surveillance is restrained to a narrow maritime zone along the eastern coast of Africa; it is confined to vessels inferior to 500 tons burden; and the absolute right of asylum on board vessels of war is given to slaves.

The institution of an International Bureau is provided for, the purpose of which is to facilitate the police duties of the war-vessels in gathering all the information possible relative to the trade in the

waters of the Indian Ocean. Auxiliary bureaux may be organized for the same purpose at other points within the zone policed by the cruisers. A similar bureau is established in Europe to the end that information concerning the trade may be centralized and to which the contracting Powers may make communications on the subject of the execution of the Treaty. Provision is made also for the establishment of bureaux for the protection of liberated slaves.

The measures adopted in the Treaty for putting an end to the slave-trade impose heavy obligations upon the Governments having possessions bordering on the infested zone. This is especially the case with the Congo Free-State which is required to keep a strong military police. Under Article IV. of the General Act of the Conference of Berlin, import duties are interdicted for a period of twenty years to the Powers having territory in the basin of the Congo. Recognizing the multiplied demands upon the financial resources of these territories, the ratifying Powers of the Treaty of Berlin attached to the Treaty of Brussels a declaration authorizing the countries within the basin of the Congo to levy import duties on merchandise not to exceed ten per cent on their value at the port of importation for a term of fifteen years. A separate declaration between the United States and the Congo Free-State covers the same subject, this separate declaration being rendered necessary by reason of the United States not being one of the ratifying Powers of the Berlin Treaty.

So far as the United States is concerned, it is not called upon under the terms of the Treaty to take any active part in the repressive measures provided for, further than to guard its own flag from abuse by slavers in the manner regulated by the Treaty; to lend its cooperation by appropriate legislation to the prevention of the introduction of fire-arms and ammunition into the interdicted region, save under the conditions stipulated in the Treaty; and to provide for the punishment of any of its own citizens who may be caught participating in the slave-trade.

Such are the general features of the Treaty of Brussels. It embodies the results of long and patient labor. It seeks to accomplish the relief of nearly 200,000,000 people from the worst cruelties that the imagination can picture and to place another continent on the path of civilization. It is a work which should command the universal sympathy and co-operation of all countries. No loftier cause than that of the extirpation of the African slave-trade could actuate the motives of nations, and no remembrance of the nineteenth century

would be more agreeable than that it marked the period in history when by the united action of the civilized Powers of the world this terrible scourge finally ceased to exist. Religion, charity, justice, humanity,—these are the foundation stones upon which the Treaty of Brussels rests. Will it fall?

Daniel Webster, while Secretary of State, in an instruction written in 1842 to Lewis Cass, our Minister to France, in discussing the position of this country on the slave-trade said:

“Let it be forever remembered that in this great work of humanity and justice the United States took the lead themselves. This Government declared the slave-trade unlawful; and in this declaration it has been followed by the great Powers of Europe. This Government declared the slave-trade to be piracy, and in this, too, its example has been followed by other States. This Government—this young Government, springing up in this New World within half a century, founded on the broadest principles of civil liberty and sustained by the moral sense and intelligence of the people—has gone in advance of all other Nations in summoning the civilized world to a common effort to put down and destroy a nefarious traffic, reproachful to human nature. It has not deemed that it suffers any derogation from its character or its dignity, if in seeking to fulfil this sacred duty it act, as far as is necessary, on fair and equal terms of concert with other Powers, having in view the same praiseworthy object. Such were its sentiments when it entered into the solemn stipulations of the Treaty of Ghent; such were its sentiments when it requested England to concur with us in declaring the slave-trade to be piracy; and such are the sentiments which it has maintained on all other proper occasions.”

If views similar to those expressed by Mr. Webster prevail to-day in the Senate, the ratification of the Treaty by the United States will be assured. The ratification by the Governments of all the signatory Powers is necessary to its going into operation. Nearly all of them have already ratified it, and the question of its ratification by the United States is now pending in the Senate.

LAMBERT TREE.

## OTHER HERESY TRIALS AND THE BRIGGS CASE.

HERESY trials seem to be an anachronism in our age and country which allow the largest religious liberty consistent with public order and peace. On the continent of Europe they have ceased, at least in the Protestant churches. The theological professors in German, Swiss, and Dutch universities are not sworn to a creed or profession of faith; they are not responsible to an ecclesiastical tribunal, and they enjoy the widest latitude of investigation. But in this country, the theological seminaries are the creatures of churches; the teachers are appointed and supported by churches or by their representative boards, on the basis of a creed which they have to subscribe to.

It is a singular fact that theological and political freedom do not progress at equal pace. England, with greater political freedom, is more orthodox than the continent; Scotland is more orthodox than England; America is more orthodox than Europe; the West and the South are more orthodox than the East, in our country. The strictest Roman Catholics are not found in Italy and France, but in Ireland and in the United States. So the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, and the Lutherans of this country are less liberal and progressive than their fellow-religionists in the Old World.

Heresy trials will, therefore, from time to time take place in those churches which hold and require subscription to a strict orthodox creed. They occur whenever a public teacher sets forth views which are inconsistent with such a creed and yet have sufficient vitality and power to command a respectable following and to disturb the peace of the denomination. They stir up all the bad blood of theological passions which are the deepest and strongest, and sometimes they result in division and schism. Heretics are no longer tortured, imprisoned, and roasted as in the Middle Ages; but they are deposed and expelled from their denominations if found guilty, with the liberty to join any other denomination willing to receive them, or to found a new sect of their own. But they are usually acquitted and restored, and in this case the result of a heresy trial is larger liberty and progress. This has been the experience of several heresy trials in the Presbyterian Church.