

To conceive an effectual decision by arbitrators we must begin by conceiving two suitors ready to receive that decision; pledged to one another, agreeing with one another, that in reference to the matter before the arbitrators they would abide by that decision.

As we write negotiations are in progress, the character of which is concealed from us, and the issue of which it is impossible to foresee. All that we know of them is that they have begun badly. When at last the Government was roused by the press and the country from a lethargy which it has yet to explain, and when it grew aware that something had to be done in consequence of the unfair manœuvre that the United States had attempted, Lord Granville, on the 3rd of February, sent a despatch to General Schenck, which was described in the Queen's Speech as a 'friendly communication,' and the contents of which were understood to be as nearly colourless as the circumstances would allow. Timid to the verge of servility at a time when honour and policy would have alike dictated some boldness and precision of tone, the Government seems to have done nothing more than feebly suggest that the United States was asking too much in asking us to give the arbitrators at Geneva power to treat us as a conquered nation. As a matter of course the United States Government maintained the position it had already assumed. Lord Granville's despatch practically encouraged that Government to persevere in the course on which it had entered. We do not say that he could easily have persuaded it to draw back. The lessons of fifty years are not to be unlearned in a day. We have displayed towards the United States such miserable weakness and servility in the past, that now—or whenever we may ultimately be compelled to change our tone with them, as sooner or later it is inevitable that we must—we may have to face some disagreeable contingencies before convincing them that we are in earnest. But very ordinary sagacity should have shown the Government that indecisive remonstrances, however sweetened with sugary phrases, were absurdly out of place when we had to deal with such an extraordinary aggression as that attempted by the American Government. The course before us was to say plainly that, in signing the Washington treaty, we meant to concede the most liberal terms we could agree to, compatibly with the maintenance of our own honour, but that we never contemplated the discussion before arbitrators, nor imagined that the American Government contemplated advancing, demands of so extravagant a nature as those they have put forward. Those demands, we should have explained, constituted so serious an infringement of the understanding embodied in the treaty, that we could only regard the proceedings before the arbitrators as suspended