

no political aspect ; or if any, one rather anti-Turkish than Turkish.

But there were reasons, and strong reasons, why the public should not have been left to grope out for itself the meaning of a step so serious, as the movement of a naval squadron towards a country disturbed both by revolt, and by an outbreak of murderous fanaticism.

In the year 1853, when the negotiations with Russia had assumed a gloomy and almost a hopeless aspect, the English and French fleets were sent Eastwards : not as a measure of war, but as a measure of preparation for war, and proximate to war. The proceeding marked a transition of discussion into that angry stage, which immediately precedes a blow ; and the place, to which the fleets were then sent, was Besika Bay. In the absence of information, how could the British nation avoid supposing that the same act, as that done in 1853, bore also the same meaning ?

It is evident that the Foreign Minister was sagaciously alive to this danger. On the 10th of May, he asked Sir H. Elliot for a particular statement of the reasons, which had led him to desire the presence of the squadron "at Besika Bay."* He indicated to the Admiralty Smyrna as a preferable destination.† And this he actually ordered ; but he yielded, and I believe he was quite right in yielding, to the renewed and just instances of the Ambassador.

The Government, then, were aware of the purely pacific character of this measure, and also that it was one liable to be dangerously misconstrued.

There was another reason for securing it from misinterpretation. At this very time, the Berlin Memorandum was prepared. It was announced by Lord Odo Russell to Lord Derby on May the 13th ; and, on May 15th, he sent to Lord Odo an elaborate pleading, rather than argument, against it.‡ It became known to the public that we were in diplomatic discord with Europe, and particularly with Russia. Now the transition from discussion pure and simple to discussion backed by display of force is a transition of vast and vital importance. The dispatch of the fleet to Besika Bay, could not but be interpreted, in the absence of explanation, as marking that perilous transition. And yet explanation was resolutely withheld.

* *Parl. Papers, Turkey*, No. 3, 1876, p. 130.

† *Id.* p. 131.

‡ *Id.* pp. 137, 147.