

The congregations were just assembled in England, and the "village clock of Nivelles was striking eleven," when the first gun from the French centre was fired, and the mortal agony began, which for nine hours writhed and raged, and after fits of silence roared out again; and it was not till after sunset on that long Midsummer day that the tide of battle fairly turned, and across the fields and along the southern roads there poured the wreck of a mighty army—a great danger was dispelled, and Europe breathed freely once more.

That day was a landmark in history. We revert to it in no spirit of pride or self-glorification; nor need we exaggerate its importance. If it arrested that system of insolent aggression and wanton invasion which had rendered one country the torment and terror of its neighbours, it must be confessed that it did not at once introduce a European millennium. It left Poland dismembered; it left the Austrians in Italy; in restoring their former rulers, it provided but poorly for France, Naples, and Spain; and in their internal condition it left most countries just as they had been—not much freer, wiser, or more happy: Rome still encumbered with the Pope, the Greeks down-trampled by the Turks, the Mediterranean still infested by Algerine corsairs, the serfs of Muscovy still in bondage, the American plantations, the British West Indies, the Dutch possessions in the East, all cultivated by slaves, and both France and her antagonist groaning beneath national debts which threatened to keep them in the dust for ever.

Nor at home had we much cause for pride. Half the parishes of England had no parish school; many had no clergymen in actual residence; and whilst the people grew up ignorant and untaught, every crime was capital. If a man broke into a house, he was hanged; so was he, if he stole a sheep, or burned a hay-rick, or forged a cheque: for a hundred offences the short and simple remedy was hanging. But although these and many other anomalies long remained, the advantage of the victory given to the Allies on the 18th of June was, that it set free the minds of men. The most effectual restraint on thought is not a censor of the press, or severe penalties against freedom of speech: the greatest restraint on thought, and, consequently, the most powerful obstacle to progress, is the spell of a fixed idea; and for the best part of a generation the fixed and well-founded idea of Europe was French invasion. With French armies on the frontier, or a French navy in the offing, to speak of internal improvements was preposterous; and if any philanthropist in England, or elsewhere, ventured to suggest a change, he was instantly met by his frightful phantom. "What is the use of amending the poor law? where is the sense of revising the criminal code, when the enemy may be here to-morrow?" But by dissipating this danger—by relieving the old world from the constant dread of a universal military depotism—the victory at Waterloo disengaged the minds of men, and the last forty years have been one long harvest, in which we have been reaping the plentiful fruits of free thought and frank discussion. In our own country it has come to this: you have only to show that a thing is a grievance, and you will get it abolished. You have only to convince the community that your proposal is right and reasonable, and you will get it adopted. And so in civil life, we have done away with invidious distinctions, and the Dissenter is as much a citizen as the Churchman. There is scarcely a parish without its school, and there are few young persons who cannot read. Law is more and more conformed to equity, and its administration is unspeakably facilitated and expedited, and by merciful mitigations and wise adjustments the criminal code has become a more effectual preservation to society and preventive of evil. The sea is open; trade is free; and—such is the magic of science, such is the march of intellect—for a few pence the labourer can procure luxuries which not long ago were monopolised by the wealthy; and over "the cup which cheers but not inebrates" he reads his daily paper, and reads the doings of a world in which he