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THE NEUTRALITY OF BELGIUM.

As the armed interference by Germany with the neutrality of Belgium was the main cause of the present war, so far as Great Britain is concerned, it is interesting to refer to the treaties affecting the situation.

Belgium was at one time part of the Low Countries (the Netherlands). In 1814 it was united to Holland, forming the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This condition did not last long, and naturally so, for the Belgians are largely a Latin race, Roman Catholic in religion, whilst the Dutch are Teutonic and largely Protestant. They separated in 1830, this being arranged by the Treaty of London of November 15, 1831.

By Art. 7 of that treaty it was provided that "Belgium, within the limits assigned by articles 1, 2 and 4, shall form a State independent and perpetually neutral. It shall be bound to observe the same neutrality towards all other States."

By another article of the treaty the Courts of Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia and Russia guaranteed to His Majesty the King of the Belgians the execution of all the preceding articles.

This treaty was in due time ratified by all the Powers; the King of Holland, however, not giving his ratification until forced so to do by England and France. This episode resulted in a new treaty, also signed in London, dated April 19, 1839, which abrogated the treaty of 1831; but, in effect, repeated article 7 of the previous treaty.

On the same day a new treaty was made between Holland and Belgium, which was identical with that of 1831, with the exception, of course, that the article containing the guarantee of the Great Powers was omitted. This was made an annex to the new treaty between the Powers, which, therefore, adopted it. The operative clause of the treaty of 1839 was as follows:—