

tually proposed by the British Government, but the proposal which was made by the British Government for a commission to settle the fisheries dispute was practically an invitation to Mr. Fish to propose the reference of the 'Alabama' claims to the same body of diplomatists. Thus it may be asserted with substantial truth that Mr. Gladstone's Government is responsible for having re-opened the 'Alabama' controversy. The folly of such a course of action was extreme. The Government thus displayed an anxiety to conciliate the favour of the United States, that was certain to re-act on the American Government in such a way as to produce claims of a more extortionate kind than any previously put forward. As Lord Derby justly observed in the debate in the House of Lords on the 22nd of March last: 'A mission so sent out, with such unusual pomp and ceremony, was bound, under the penalty of making itself ridiculous, to conclude a treaty of some sort. It could not come back *re infecta*, and obviously, when the other party to the negotiation is aware of that fact, you are not likely to make an advantageous bargain. So we have gone on from concession to concession.' Moreover, it might have been remembered that the rejection of the Reverdy Johnson treaty had been accompanied by the development of Mr. Sumner's views in the famous speech that first imputed to England a liability to pay the cost of some years of the civil war. True, this was the theory of a comparatively irresponsible though, on account of his connexion with an important committee of the Senate, an influential politician, but the Government here ought to have been awake to the danger that the new claim might sooner or later be taken up by the United States Government. The encroaching spirit, which that Government had already shown, should have taught British statesmen of common prudence that our only policy in reference to the 'Alabama' claims was to stand on the defensive, prepared to make concessions up to the advanced limits already defined, but to go no further. Unluckily, however, Lord Granville,—or Mr. Gladstone, whom we suspect to have been the author of the idea,—fancied a time had come at which it would be possible to negotiate a treaty with the Americans which would please them without absolutely empowering them to sell up the British empire. To almost anything short of this he appears to have been ready to agree. During the Washington conferences Lord Granville stood behind the commissioners, ordering them by telegraph to concede and to submit, whenever they showed signs of resisting some demand rather

more startling than usual. From first to last their proceedings seem to have been little more than a registration of the terms on which the American Government was willing to receive the submission of this country. If the Government of Mr. Gladstone had cared to maintain any decent show of insisting that the negotiations should be conducted on a system of reciprocity, they would have firmly persevered in requiring that arrangements should be made for obtaining an arbitration on our claims in respect of Fenian raids on Canada. Whatever complaints the Americans can make against us, for having shown unfriendly negligence in letting the 'Alabama' escape, we might bring complaints against them of an unfriendliness tenfold greater, shown in repeatedly permitting the organisation within their territory of regular military expeditions designed to make war upon the Queen's dominions. But the Fenian raid claims were given up by our Government for no better reason than because the American people were said to be resolved never to listen to these claims. The American people seem to be regarded by Mr. Gladstone's Government with mingled emotions of fear, and anxiety to please, which combine to render its claims tremulous in their diffidence; its concessions servile in their eagerness.

The commissioners, urged forward by the Foreign Office, hastened when the conferences opened to accumulate their peace offerings in a heap at the feet of the American negotiators. At the outset of their proceedings, they imparted a wholly new character to the treaty under preparation, by inserting, in accordance with Lord Granville's instructions, an apology for the escape of the 'Alabama.' Of course the theory of the treaty was that a future arbitration had to decide whether that escape carried with it any reproach to this country or not; but without the apology, say the defenders of the treaty, the American people would never have accepted it. It is odd that this excuse should be considered sufficient, because the treaty which we are thus supposed to have purchased by means of the apology, is in itself a concession—an enormous concession to the United States. We derive no advantage from it ourselves—none, at all events worth speaking of—except the hope that the United States may, under its influence, ultimately surrender an unjust claim against us. However, the apology was destined to be soon eclipsed by the three rules. American theories concerning the 'Alabama' had by this time matured so far that the United States Government was no longer content to submit the 'Alabama'

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