

BELGIUM AND THE CONGO.

The frankness with which the relations between Belgium and the Congo State have been discussed outside Belgium itself is fully justified by the attitude of the Parliamentary party there. Since the agitation for a fairer method of government was strenuously renewed in England by Mr. E. D. Morel, the secretary of the Congo Reform Association, an emphatic protest, signed by many prominent men, has been published, while in Belgium the amended Colonial Bill has been considered by a Parliamentary Commission of seventeen members. This Commission has now produced and read for the first time twenty clauses of the Bill which will, unless considerable modifications are subsequently introduced, place the relations of the Chamber and King

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Leopold, and of King Leopold and the Congo on an altogether different footing. The Times publishes a summary of its principle clauses. The point first attacked is the power of the King to press his aims by a Royal Act, or decree, without control. By a clause of the new Bill it is laid down that the validity of a decree must arise from the countersignature of a Minister. The Minister becomes responsible for the decree he countersigns; moreover, he becomes at the same time subject to interpellation in the Chamber. The control of the Chamber is supplemented by the control of the Colonial Council to whom all decrees are to be submitted. In its report the Council must state the number and views of the minority, and the decree must be published together with the report of the Council and that of the Minister of

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the Colonies (in case of a difference of opinion between the Council and the King) before it can come into force. On the financial side the interference of the Chamber would be less immediate, since the Budget is still to be drawn up by the King, and the only items on which the Chambers will be entitled to vote will be the salary of the Minister of the Colonies and the expenses of the Central Colonial Administration in Brussels. But the Commission decided that such decrees as authorize loans, guarantees and works on the part of the colony out of extraordinary resources shall only be contracted and agreed to by law; and such decrees will have to be laid on the tables of both Chambers for thirty days. By a somewhat similar clause Parliament gets control of concessions, and further takes steps to prevent the aggragation of larger concessions by a series of grants below a

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stipulated maximum area. Thirdly, constructive proposals are made for a reorganized magistracy, and for the entire separation of judicial and administrative functions. The magistrates are to be appointed for a long period, provisionally twelve years, and are to be dismissible by the Procureur Général, not the Governor General (as proposed by the unamended Bill). As regards the spheres of the administration and the judiciary, it is insisted that the administrative authority shall have no power to interfere with the action of the judicial authority. "Public prosecutors", it is added, "are under the authority of their own hierarchical chiefs alone." Only one important matter, the relation of the Colonial Council to Parliament, has been practically left in suspense.

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It is scarcely to be expected that the new clauses will pass through the Chamber unscathed or that,

even if they were accepted in their present shape, they would immediately cure the evils against which they are directed. Since one cannot expect the sudden growth of new conditions, the most one can expect is the betterment of the old. Three evils have to be assailed, and if possible destroyed—financial abuse at home, abuse and extortion in the Congo itself, and the absence of control throughout. It does not follow, for example, that officials responsible to Parliament, or at least to a member of the home Government, will take a more generous view of their duties than officials responsible to the Governor of the colony. Much more may depend on the character and local influence of the Governor than on the anxiety of the home Government to communicate directly with

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its officials. The control of decrees is also an uncertain element largely conditioned by personal factors: a Minister who countersigns a decree of the King and is subject to subsequent interpellation would in Belgium stand in less danger with the Chamber than with the King. It is at least doubtful whether it is open to most Ministers to prefer unpopularity with the monarch to unpopularity with the Chamber, and it is clear that conditions thoroughly workable under one Ministry might lead to endless complication and intrigue under another. We do not, of course, presume to criticize the work of the Commission or pretend to a superior insight into Belgian political conditions; but it is probably beyond dispute that the share of King Leopold in Belgian politics

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is vastly more real than the share a British monarch could possibly claim under the Constitution. It follows that the responsibility of Ministers for decrees of the monarch can not by any means have the same nominal significance in Belgian politics as it has in English politics. The lesson of English constitutional development lies, if anywhere, in the fact that whenever the responsibility of Ministers is more than a defensive phrase, that as soon as King and Minister are at loggerheads or the political personality of the King overshadows that of his Minister, there is a rupture of some seriousness—a rupture of which a change of Ministry is the normal and least grave result. Belgian Parliamentarians are not yet, we imagine, so strong as to insist on Ministerial responsibility in the English sense and to face the logical outcome of resistance. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that the advice of the Commission will be followed, and that a measure of much promise and undoubted sincerity will be given the fairest trial.

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DISTANT EARTHQUAKES RECORDED.

The instruments at the principal Hamburg seismographic stations recorded distant and slight shocks on the 21st inst. They began at 15 min. 45 sec. after 9 o'clock, considerably increasing in strength at 25 min. 47 sec., the most noticeable tremor occurring at 46 min. past the hour. The scene is probably at least 5,700 miles away. The period of registration extended over two hours.

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BELGIUM AND THE CONGO.

In well informed circles in Brussels it is said that differences of opinion between the King and

the Government with regard to the taking possession of the Congo Free State are settled, and that the treaty will be laid before the Chamber of Deputies in the beginning of the week.

ENGLISH SHIP STRANDED.

The English steamer "Sabo", Captain Hollobay, manned by 36 sailors and with a cargo of cotton, stranded near Spiekeroog on her voyage from Galveston to Hamburg. The crew refused to leave the ship as she is not damaged.

A. K. JANSON, American Dentist. Graduate from Chicago College of Dental Surgery
Dresden, Prager Strasse 10, I.
Specialist in straightening teeth.

THE CROWN PRINCE OF PORTUGAL BANISHED.

A correspondent of a Madrid paper reports from Lisbon that the Crown Prince Louis Philipp protested with King Carlos over His Majesty's tyrannical policy and for that reason was banished to the Castle Villa Ricosa, which lies in a lonely district, 100 miles from Lisbon. There is great excitement throughout the country.

THE MOLTKE-HARDEN LIBEL CASE.

Proceedings have now been officially instituted against Editor Maximilian Harden for the libels against Graf v. Moltke contained in *Die Zukunft*.

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THE CATASTROPHE ON THE "JENA".

The report which M. Monis presented in the name of the Examining Committee on the catastrophe on the "Jena" came up for discussion before the Senate on Thursday. M. Cabartdameville explained the merits and the drawbacks of the B. powder, discussed the reasons of the catastrophe and advised stricter discipline and the removal of disquieting elements from the service. The Minister of Marine, M. Thomson, answered that, as regards the discipline, severe measures have been taken and would further be taken. The President of the Commission declared amid general applause, that the crews, with few exceptions, consisted of good and reliable men. General Langlois brought forward the necessity of improving the fabrication of powder, though he said French powder was by no means worse than that of other nations. M. Chautemps called attention to the varied results obtained by the Examining Committees of the Senate and the Chamber. M. Chautemps further declared it to be dangerous to entrust even a part of the manufacture of powder for the purpose of war, to private factories, and moved that the decisions of the Committee should not be adopted. M. Monis stated that the catastrophe had not been a consequence of outside causes.

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THE LIMIT.

According to an American paper, the money famine in the States is so severe that babies in Indiana are cutting their teeth on certified cheques.