

not come as a claimant of office. Upon him the retort would fall harmless, that he must say what he would do were the present tenants of office displaced to replace him. He replies that he would have nothing to do with place. Office is not for him; but he can show good cause why, at all events, he and his countrymen should be delivered from the present Ministers. 'Does the present method of government please the people of this country, or does it not?' This was the single issue he raised in that wonderful fortnight. This was the one theme on which he discoursed in every key, from sarcasm to argument, from argument to indignation. On other occasions he has not been slow to show, definitely and particularly, what a British Government should have done in the circumstances of the Eastern Question as they were when Lord Salisbury quitted Constantinople. Little trace will be found in the multitudinous eloquence which streamed forth from Carlisle to Aberfeldy, and from Glasgow to Chester, of a Liberal programme for the past. Not much, though something, will be discovered of a programme for the future. In Scotland, he was no Liberal leader, but first and primarily the Liberal candidate for Midlothian. It was not for him to say how other Ministers might have escaped the blunders of Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury, or remedied the ruinous consequences. He was a witness against the men in office of the errors and misdeeds by which they had endangered his share in the national fortunes. Aspiring to the post, not of Minister, but of representative, he required the electors of Midlothian to decide whether he spoke their minds as well as his own. He invited them to say whether an apologist or an adversary of the acts of the ruling Ministers would represent them the better.

It is an old tale how the present Government has shifted the national boundaries and readjusted, as it would say, or dislocated, as its opponents believe, the balance of the empire. But the story has been published in numbers. Mr. Gladstone, by the mere act of binding the parts up together, has made them singularly explanatory of one another. British interests were the ministerial watchword. Mr. Gladstone shows how British interests have been violated in Europe and Asia by every act of English foreign policy since Lord Derby resigned the seals. In respect of Africa he goes further back, and denounces the violent annexation of the Transvaal in the face of 6,500 protesters 'out of 8,000 persons in the Republic qualified to vote.' England has thus 'undertaken to transform, by force, Republicans into subjects of a monarchy.' She has made war upon the Zulus, and 'thereby become responsible for their territory.' She is about to overwhelm the Transvaal's enemy, Secocoeni. She has 'assumed, jointly with France, the virtual government of Egypt; possibly, as we are to extend, says Sir Bartle Frere, our southern dominions in Africa till we reach the southern frontier of the Portuguese, one of these days we may extend our northern dominions in Africa till we meet the northern dominions of the Portuguese.' In the Mediterranean England has 'shabbily' appropriated Cyprus, 'a valueless encumbrance.' In Western Asia,

she has 'made herself responsible for the good government not of Asia Minor exclusively, but of the whole of that great space upon the map, including the principal parts of Arabia, which is known geographically as Turkey in Asia.' The engagement comprises a pledge to defend Armenia against Russia. To discharge these pledges British troops have their choice of evils. They must march over hundreds of miles of land and a great mountain chain, or be transported thousands of miles by sea with the task of effecting a landing on hostile territory at the end. In Central Asia England is committed to the coercion of millions of warlike barbarians in a country which the British mission 'has broken into pieces, and added to the anarchies of the Western world.' In India the financial burdens have been increased and the popular liberties diminished.

Mr. Gladstone enumerates all the fresh burdens accumulated on the back of a pre-existing obligation to 'settle the affairs of nearly a fourth of the entire human race scattered over the world.' He inquires how the added load is to be borne. He thinks it was an unfortunate decision of Germany to annex Alsace and Lorraine. But at any rate Germany reckoned upon proportionate contributions in men and money for the defence of the empire, from the new members of the empire as from the old. Asia Minor, and Egypt, and Cyprus will send no recruits to the British army, or, at all events, no money to pay them. Zululand and the Transvaal will not be outworks to guard the British dominions, but positions themselves needing protection. What is meant by these extensions of the British Empire simply is that Great Britain will have to furnish so much more money, and so many more soldiers. 'Rely upon it,' the Midlothian electors were warned on November 25, 'the strength of Great Britain and Ireland is within the United Kingdom. Whatever is to be done in defending and governing these vast colonies with their teeming millions, in protecting that unmeasured commerce, in relation to the enormous responsibilities of India, must be done by the force derived from you and your children; derived from you and your fellow electors in the land; from you and the citizens and people of this country.' The responsibilities which are the British heritage, Great Britain will not repudiate. But they are heavy enough already without 'insane' additions to the burden by 'continuing with the limited store of men and funds which these islands can supply to enlarge and extend our responsibilities and our dangers all over the surface of the earth.' Mr. Gladstone demands that 'regard be had to the relation between the work to be done and the strength we possess in order to do it.' The resources to be drawn upon are limited; the encumbrances laid upon them tend, with a Government like the present, to become unlimited. Doubtless the country, as Ministers affirm, is very strong. 'Thank God, it is!' But Mr. Gladstone's argument is that, whatever its strength, the annexations made by the Conservative Ministry are no addition to that strength, but a drawback. He asserts that none of those annexations were necessary. Had they been ever so necessary,

they would have been still a heavy load upon British means which, if great, are yet not greater than British duties.

Recent British foreign policy has rendered the kingdom weaker than before in proportion to its liabilities. It has also involved, Mr. Gladstone shows, dangerous encroachments on constitutional privileges and on the integrity of British finance. He charges upon it the violation of the traditional rule that 'although the law allows a duration of seven years to Parliament, yet it should not sit to transact more than the business of six Sessions.' If the present Government has departed from that custom, and is about to convoke Parliament for a seventh Session, Mr. Gladstone and the country clearly understand the reason to be that Ministers fear to challenge, by a dissolution, the nation's judgment on their policy. Mr. Gladstone grounds the custom of dissolving Parliament before its full term has run out, on the temptation a Parliament on the inevitable brink of the grave would feel to flatter 'particular groups and cliques of persons in relation to what are sometimes called harassed interests.' We confess the reason seems somewhat remote. The custom of dissolving before the seventh year is ended being notorious, the temptation to intrigue with threatened interests would seem to be as strong in the sixth Session as in the seventh. The custom nevertheless we fully believe to be indisputable. Opponents of Mr. Gladstone have adduced instances in which Parliaments have sat for seven Sessions. They have adduced none in which they have sat for more than six years. The number of Sessions is an accident. A Session may endure for a fortnight, or for twelve months. As Mr. Gladstone has replied to his critics, the essence of his argument is that it is altogether against precedent to prolong Parliament for the 'business' of more than six Sessions. Mr. Gladstone's fact is better founded than his explanation of it. There is something ungracious in withholding from the country to the last moment its right of pronouncing approval or disapproval of the manner in which its representatives have executed their trust. That by itself would ordinarily account for the convocation of a new Parliament at least a year earlier than the law requires. But in truth a Government must have been extraordinarily apathetic, or must have existed in times extraordinarily placid, which does not find it to its honour or convenience to ask of the nation an early ratification of its acts. In this natural instinct of British statesmen is to be found the motive for not exhausting the last breath of a House of Commons. It is an instinct which, with every reason for its exercise in the present instance, the existing Government does not feel at all inclined to obey. We almost wonder that its friends have not betaken themselves to arguing that the sense of the country is already clearly in its favour; that it would be mere waste of energy to put the nation to the trouble of declaring itself a moment earlier than the law compels. In the meantime the popular opinion is likely to agree with Mr. Gladstone's suggestion that Government postpones dissolution because 'in twelve months there is what is called a chapter of accident

There is 'the chance of striking some new theatrical smoke, the chance of sending up some new rockets into the sky, the chance of taking some new measures which would again carry misgiving and dismay to the hearts of the sober-minded portion of the nation—I believe at this time the great majority of the nation—but which, appealing to pride and passion, would always in this, as in every other country, find some loud-voiced minority ready to echo back its ill-omened sounds.' The country has a constitutional right to be consulted with all possible speed on its assent to, or dissent from, the measures which have removed it far away from the position in which it stood when this Parliament was elected. That is what the country would find desirable and convenient. If the common course is abandoned, and the Parliament is to sit more years than any Parliament within the memory of man, the only possible explanation can be that the deviation from the common course is found desirable and convenient, not by the country, but by its Government.

The nation owes that infraction of its common privilege of judging each new stage in a ministerial policy to the exceptional novelty of the policy the present Cabinet has pursued. To the same cause both Parliament and the nation at large owe the growing habit of this Government of withholding necessary information on its measures until too late for any advantage to be gained from the facts for purposes of criticism. The Government, as Mr. Gladstone said in the Edinburgh Corn Exchange, never makes disclosures at the time they are wanted, and at the time that is regular. It appears to have but one rule for choice of opportunity, and that is, 'Convenience to itself.' In finance especially it is never convenient for a Government like the present to state its wants and its liabilities in regular course. Those liabilities have been incurred without the authority even of Parliament, much less of the nation. If the bill were sent in while the measure for which it is being incurred was still proceeding and incomplete, the power by which it has been ordered might be withdrawn. Ministers themselves know so little of the circumstances of the schemes into which they rush, that they can no more estimate the cost at a given time than a City of Glasgow Bank shareholder could have estimated his responsibilities.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he made a candid apology for his hand-to-mouth system of financial estimates, would have to avow that neither he nor his colleagues know any better than the public what an enterprise signifies, and what is the natural end. It is impossible to lay down the lines of a systematic regular Budget when the undertakings of which it is to defray the expenses are absolutely indefinite. But it is one reason more for repudiating a policy like that the Government has pursued for the last two years that, as one of its necessary consequences, the country is obliged to be perpetually paying sums on account. Never was the nation's ledger more scrupulously kept than when it was in Mr. Gladstone's charge.

His soul abhors a practice by which 'we never have a real annual account.' The annual Budget is a paper Budget, which is supplemented by bi-monthly or tri-monthly Budgets. 'Mismanagement of finance is bad; but what is even worse than mismanagement of finance is the destruction or disregard of the sound and healthy rules which the wisdom of a long series of finance ministers, of an excellent finance department, and many Parliaments, have gradually and laboriously built up to prevent abuse, to secure popular control, to work the public debt of the country, and to take care that the people shall not be unduly burdened.'

In the Edinburgh Corn Exchange Mr. Gladstone contrasted Conservative expenditure with Liberal expenditure. He showed that since Lord Derby quitted office, and the foreign policy became 'spirited,' the Government has so disordered the national finance that there is 'an admitted deficiency—admitted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself—of six millions of money.' It has incurred liabilities, for which it has not provided, to the extent of six millions sterling. But it has also added to the taxation close upon another six millions beyond the taxation under a Liberal Government. As Mr. Gladstone epigrammatically put it, 'Ministers have imposed near six millions of taxes in order to produce six millions of deficiency.' Sir Stafford Northcote pleads for the increase in expenditure that the taxation has not been increased in proportion. Mr. Gladstone replied that it aggravates the sin of extravagance that the prodigal has provided no means of discharging his debt. In answer to the charge of increased taxation, Sir Stafford ridicules the notion that the greater amount the taxpayer has to give is worth regarding. The one thing to consider is whether the burden has been increased. That each penny in the income tax produces a hundred thousand pounds more than when the Conservative Government came into office, is proof to Sir Stafford Northcote that he and his colleagues have not checked the accumulation of national riches. The taxpayers are paying on their rateable addition, if that, to the State in comparison with the growth in the kingdom's wealth. Mr. Gladstone retorts that, if the penny income tax has grown at the rate of £16,000 a year in the six years of Lord Beaconsfield's rule, it grew at an annual rate of £34,000 in the thirty-one preceding years of Liberal and really Conservative administration. 'It is idle for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to say he has not stopped the growth of the wealth of the country. In six years he has disposed of half of it. Give him another six years at the dissolution, and depend upon it he will go far to dispose of the other half.' Sir Stafford Northcote had attempted at the Guildhall to shelter himself behind the weather in accounts for financial deficits which he could not deny. Mr. Gladstone would not suffer the financier he sets up in order to knock down—the pupil 'he was going to call' a 'chicken-hearted Chancellor of the Exchequer,' and who does not appreciate the virtue of financial cheeseparing—to urge in his excuse that the seasons have fought again

Anglo-Turkish Convention, and an appropriation of Cyprus, are communicated to the country only when the arrangements have become practically irreversible.

It does honour to the Scottish people that it approved as Mr. Gladstone's advocacy of a moral and just foreign policy, and exposition of the cost, actual and to come, at which an unjust foreign policy is being carried out. No more enthusiastic cheers salute Mr. Gladstone's statements than his generous claim that, when the Ottoman Empire shall be finally dissolved, its 'succession shall pass, not to Russia, not to Austria, not to England, under the terms of the Anglo-Turkish Convention, or whatever else it may be called, but to the peoples of those countries.' A foreign policy which would permit the mutilation of the fortunes of a self-emancipated state, to soothe the imaginations and fears of some accession of influence thereby to a rival of England unworthy of this country. It is the policy which cut down the dimensions of Greece. The restless intrigues of the Hellenic king ever since have been the national rejoinder to such narrow-minded selfishness.

To judge by the conversation of prosperous Londoners, it might be supposed that Englishmen accepted as an entire nation Lord Beaconsfield's new motto for Great Britain, 'Imperium et libertas,' in the construction Mr. Gladstone put upon it at West Calder: 'Liberty for ourselves; empire over the rest of mankind.' Happily, prosperous Londoners do not give the tone to the political sentiments of the nation. Lord Beaconsfield's adaptation of the Roman boast is not the latitude of Guildhall better than did Lord Salisbury's allegation of an inviolable British usage of seizing in every great European war a portion of foreign vantage ground to suit the latitude of Manchester. That is the doctrine, as Mr. Gladstone said of it with no more than necessary severity, of 'a political brigand.' So the nation at large has rejected it. At the same time we are afraid to assume too readily the applause which greeted Mr. Gladstone's exposition of a purer doctrine implies that the audiences which gave it are henceforth proof against dexterously baited allurements of a greedy and violent policy. A few years ago it would have seemed inconceivable that a majority of the House of Commons, made up of Liberal as well as of Conservative members, should have sanctioned, even after the event, the appropriation of Cyprus and the Afghan war. Yet, if anything could arm the nation against its propensity to look at one side only of a question, and that the side turned towards itself, it would be a simple and honest yet manly profession of faith on the theme of foreign policy like Mr. Gladstone's at West Calder. The nation had been frightened by the dogma of absolute non-intervention. It fell an easy prey to the blandishments of politicians who talked of an energetic policy, and of traditional British policy.

Mr. Gladstone does not preach non-intervention in the affairs of Europe; but he lays down principles of intervention which limit the circumstances in which Great Britain would apply abroad the principle which it applies at home. Mr. Gladstone enunciated at West Calder six ]

Gladstone. The principles of British policy followed by Lord Salisbury may justify themselves by their success; but it is apparent that they do not conform to the traditional and the historical policy of British foreign ministers since the first Reform Act. In its foreign policy, at all events, 'the Tory Government has created a greater number of innovations, has broken away from a greater number of precedents, and has set a greater number of new-fangled examples' than any Government which has existed in Mr. Gladstone's time. The Government does not deny that it has deviated from the practice of several series of predecessors, Conservative as well as Liberal; it glories in its innovations as happy restorations of an old and bygone policy. Mr. Gladstone had, like previous Liberal speakers, to show that the innovations had failed in fact. It was not necessary to argue in favour of an opposite policy. If the new Conservative or Tory policy has failed, as he demonstrates it has failed, that which it attempted to supersede necessarily remains in possession of the field. In criticising Tory finance the same course had to be pursued. Sir Stafford Northcote's finance is a new thing in the annals of the Exchequer. That is to say, if old and historical, it is so in the sense in which Lord Salisbury's foreign policy is old and historical. As Lord Salisbury's foreign policy is an adaptation of Lord Castlereagh's foreign policy, Sir Stafford Northcote's finance is the finance of Nicholas Vansittart. In foreign policy Mr. Gladstone could point to Turkey demoralised, cut to pieces, and even terrorised by its allies, to blundering crimes against other people's freedom in Africa, to Continental jealousies and sneers aroused by the shabby spoliation of Cyprus, to anarchy let loose by ourselves against ourselves in Afghanistan. He could ask without much doubt what the answer must be, whether that be 'the method of government which pleases the people of this country.' In finance he could point to accounts never made up because the capital account of the nation is never now closed. He could show that more is taken from the nation in proportion to the national wealth, and that whatever is spent is invested in speculations which are always making new calls. It was no necessary to promise Scotch electors Financial reforms. He did not engage that a Liberal finance Minister would renew the offer of 1874 of 'No income tax *v.* income tax.' All he could promise, and all there was any need to promise, was that there should be no more of Sir Stafford Northcote's experiments in concealed deficits.

In the region of domestic legislation Mr. Gladstone had a different kind of work to perform. There, to a certain extent, the Conservative Ministry has placed itself beyond criticism. Its domestic policy cannot be convicted of temerity, any more than the snakes of Iceland can be classified. A Liberal orator, in discussing the prospects of legislation, has to go outside his defences. He acts with the conscious risk of finding the gates closed behind him by timorous friends, who will not join in the sally. Terrors of this kind are no terrors to one constituted like Mr. Gladstone. His logical mind loves even to go beyond the point at which legislation is likely to stop. He is not afraid t

more glaring anomalies, make a legislative programme for the Liberal party, of which no particular can be safely left long untouched, but which implies nothing like a political or social revolution. Mr. Gladstone warned his hearers, with evident good faith, that he had no authority to speak for the Liberal party. But they will not have found it hard to conjecture on which side the influence is sure to be cast in the legislative determination of pressing questions. On the subject of liquor traffic reform, he is in favour of 'the principle,' at least, of 'local option.' He would accompany any such law with provisions for compensating persons whose trade it would destroy, and 'who have grown up, not by their fault, but by our fault, under the shadow of laws' which it may be then proposed to abrogate. In legislation respecting the land, he warms British farmers against being deluded into trusting in 'quack remedies,' such as any form of Protection. The Liberal party countenance nothing of the sort; but it would reform the law hypothec for the benefit of Scotch farmers. Certainly it would not connive at the introduction of a Bill for the purpose, with the apparent acquiescence of the Government, knowing that the Government Scotch votes for the measure were to be overridden by the Government's English and Irish votes against it. Mr. Gladstone appears to think the Legislature might interpose between landlord and tenant throughout the kingdom for the protection of the latter against unfairly restrictive covenants in leases, and the former against the tenant's injustice to the land in the last few years of the term. Whether he would mean such a measure to be compulsory or discretionary, he did not state. He disapproves of the law of intestacy which disinherits younger children. He disapproves even more of the law of entail and settlement. That law, by curtailing the liberty of the owner, tends, he believes, greatly to curtail the liberty of the farmer. It curtails, as injuriously, the natural authority and responsibility of the father. His deliberate declaration at Dalkeith was that 'not only to liberate agriculture, but upon other and higher grounds he is for doing away with this law of settlement and entail.'

Local government Mr. Gladstone coupled, at Dalkeith, with the land laws as 'a subject which ought to occupy the thoughts of every man who desires to be a legislator.' He advocates the bestowal of a proper scheme of local government on the counties, both as their right and as a necessity for Parliaments staggering under a load of local legislation which ought to be transacted locally. Without denying that the ratepayers might be lawfully relieved out of the Imperial exchequer, he is indignant that the State subsidy should have been given before a rightful authority had been constituted for its application. The Cabinet over which he presided saw 'in the power to relieve the ratepayers from the Consolidated Fund a strong leverage placed in the hands of the Executive Government to induce the local interests to come freely into the changes that must be made in order to establish a sound system of county government, and to give people in the counties the free and thorough control over



put formally before the country. The country shall know that it is electing representatives who will have to decide that great issue. 'That Church, venerated on so many grounds, shall not be destroyed without the fairest trial and the fullest consideration.'

This is a clear and distinct statement. Mr. Gladstone might perhaps have shaken himself still more free from the entanglements of the question. If anything had been needed to show how partial the agitation against the Scotch Church has been, how little it has moved the Liberal party as a whole, the facility with which it has been dropped during Mr. Gladstone's stay in Scotland were enough to prove this. Compare Disestablishment meetings with their few hundreds, and the same speakers appearing on every platform trying in vain to stir some popular enthusiasm, with the crowded and enthusiastic meetings which have everywhere greeted the expositions of the common Liberal ideas of Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform from the lips of the great Liberal orator. The contrast is instructive. Undoubtedly, the unanimity with which Mr. Gladstone has been hailed as the eloquent spokesman of Liberalism would have been broken if he had taken the side of these well-known agitators. No Liberal can contest his general position that Disestablishment in Scotland *may* become a public question. The Church in Scotland, as in England, but specially so in Scotland, as recognised in the very terms of its original foundation, rests upon 'the inclinations of the people.' So long as it is 'agreeable' to those inclinations it will survive, and ought to survive. Let it fail to secure this support, by its own weakness or narrowness, or lack of national adaptation, and no party, no power on earth, can perpetuate it. But it is an essential condition of this very appeal to popular support, that all fair means be taken to ascertain the popular voice—that the Church shall not be condemned at the bidding of any faction or combination of factions, but only by the deliberate vote of the constituencies. It does not shrink from this test. Nay, it is the very test which prominent Church Liberals have claimed to be applied to it. And after Mr. Gladstone's statements at Dalkeith, they are entitled to hold that he is at one with them in the assertion of this claim. What they have chiefly resented in the past is, that there seemed to be an attempt on the part of certain professing Liberals 'to smuggle the Church of Scotland out of existence.' They have now Mr. Gladstone's own assurance that any attempt of this kind would not only be an *illiberal*, but a 'wicked' policy.

Mr. Gladstone in Scotland was not writing a Queen's Speech, nor compiling a Ministerial programme. He did not pretend to specify the various subjects which a Liberal Administration would esteem itself under an obligation to attempt to legislate upon. The few he instanced were those in which he individually, or the classes he was addressing, are more particularly interested. Even on those few it does not follow that he reflects the view of the whole Liberal party, or that the whole Liberal party would engage to legislate on the ~~—~~ *ct lines he has drawn.* In one respect we should be sorry to think

that he did reflect it. The tone of his remarks on the difficulty the majority experiences in a three-cornered constituency in obtaining an 'expression—a clear and effective expression—of its interests,' implies as settled a hostility to the three-cornered system of representation as is felt by Mr. Bright. There are other questions in which the entire Liberal party might not be willing to accept Mr. Gladstone's particular solution, or to echo the particular charges he brings against the present condition of things. Many good Liberals, for example, might approve of the Indian Army Bill, upon which Mr. Gladstone pours out the vials of his wrath. In the Liberal party, and in the country at large, there are many varieties of opinion on all subjects of practical legislation. As Mr. Gladstone said at Galashiels, 'some of us are anxious for one measure, some of us for another, and some of us for all.' It ought to be give and take. The one point which stands out clear and definite above all differences of opinion among moderate politicians at the present moment is that the country has important legislative wants which require speedily to be satisfied. The precise mode in which they are to be satisfied will reveal itself when the occasion comes. But, for it ever to come, the country must not be distracted by the necessity of watching incendiary fires its rulers have kindled in three quarters of the globe. It must insist upon leisure being given it from 'the concerns of the people of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the rest of the world,' to attend to its own concerns. An empire like that of Great Britain has its imperial duties and cares; but it will never fulfil and bear them wisely and bravely unless it keep well in hand the conduct of its own affairs. Foreign affairs must not hinder it from satisfying, as Mr. Gladstone told the people of Perthshire, 'the reasonable wants and wishes of the British nation for the improvement of its laws and institutions.'

The weight of the blow aimed by Mr. Gladstone from the Scotch Border, Lowlands, and Highlands at the Conservative fortress in Downing Street comes from the force with which he has demonstrated that the Ministry's Imperial policy has weakened the Empire. The strength of the position occupied by Mr. Gladstone in the name, not indeed of the Liberal party, but of Liberalism, is that he has shown how the Liberal virtues of legislative activity and financial honesty consolidate the Empire exactly in the same proportion in which they secure the happiness and prosperity of the British nation. If there is any Liberal who can find cause to complain of the completeness of the Liberal retort in Scotland upon the Conservative campaign in Lancashire, it is Mr. Gladstone himself. It was always hard to imagine a Liberal Cabinet from which his name should be omitted. It is now inconceivable. When the Conservative Government dies, as it is doomed to die, his arrow will be found in its heart. He will find it more difficult than ever to excuse himself to the nation from the duty of supplying the place his onslaught has made vacant.

*December 18.*