

MR. GLADSTONE'S SPEECH AT EDINBURGH.

Oh this Atlantic cable! it spoils us in many ways for a dispassionate judgment upon men and things; we receive necessarily condensed, sometimes garbled, reports of some great oratorical effort and we straightway rush into raptures or fall into the lowest doldrums; when in due course the full record of the said speech arrives, and we are able to examine it with its contexts, lo! the entire *Chateaux d'Espagne* which we have so industriously built up, fade like a mirage. So is it with Mr. Gladstone's recent speech at Edinburgh.

There is little necessity for travelling over an already trodden path, but it may be worth while to ponder the heavy indictment brought against the Beaconsfield Ministry—"never in the recollection of a lifetime, have I known such a tangled net of difficulty offered for the unravelling"—and this reflection led Mr. Gladstone to contrast the inheritance left by himself to his successors in office, peace at home and abroad, a surplus of six millions sterling, and an army in which had been founded for the first time a real military reserve—with the heritage of difficulty, debt, and danger which the Conservatives were leaving.

In a passage of glowing eloquence he described the manifold and multitudinous duties which devolved upon England by reason of her assumption of the care of one-fourth of the globe. Was not this enough for Lord Beaconsfield? It had satisfied Pitt, Canning, Grey, Peel, Palmerston and Russell; but to the stupendous and anxious cares of ruling this great, wonderful, and world-wide Empire, Lord Beaconsfield had added a number of gratuitous, dangerous, impossible, and impracticable engagements contracted in all parts of the world. He had annexed the Transvaal, made war with the Zulus, appropriated Cyprus, assumed jointly with France the virtual control of Egypt, made England responsible for the good government of Turkey in Asia, undertaken to defend her Armenian frontier against Russia, and after breaking Afghanistan into pieces, destroying whatever there was of peace and order there was in the country, had added its anarchies to the other cares, and accepted responsibilities for its population.

The question Mr. Gladstone pressed on the consideration of his audience was whether this was prudent—whether, remembering that the strength and solidity of the Empire lay within the narrow limits of Great Britain and Ireland, it was wise needlessly to undertake responsibilities that might strain the resources of the nation.

A part of the speech was given up to the important local question of "faggot" votes. The practice of which Mr. Gladstone complains is not, indeed, confined to Midlothian, but the faggot-making in the Lothians appears to be of a peculiarly interesting and wholesale character. It is pleasing to learn, on Mr. Gladstone's authority, that this "extraordinary manoeuvre" will "utterly, certainly and miserably fail of its purpose."

With reference to the prospects of a dissolution being postponed, it is only too likely, that if the Government should decide on retaining power for several months more, they do so in the hope, as Mr. Gladstone says, that they may secure "the chance of striking some new theatrical stroke, of sending up some new rocket into the sky." It is only a few days since we had a report of an occupation of Herat by England in concert with Persia, and it is easy to see the hostility which would certainly spring up with Russia if such a report should prove to be well founded. The report has some importance in connection with Mr. Gladstone's alarm as to some "new theatrical stroke." There is serious danger of the Government taking some wild measure which, to quote Mr. Gladstone's words, "would carry misgiving and dismay to the hearts of the sober-minded portion of the nation." Nothing could be more close and comprehensive than Mr. Gladstone's review of the foreign policy of the Beaconsfield Government.

Mr. Gladstone's words were weighty, and he spoke with the air of a "sober-minded" man filled with nervousness and apprehension, and he does not stand alone in this feeling of uneasiness and even alarm at the "tangled net" which men call the Eastern Question.

The enthusiasm with which Mr. Gladstone was received in the Scottish capital is very remarkable; it took more of the character of a triumphal march than the visit of a candidate for their parliamentary suffrages, his success was taken for granted, for the proceedings at the meeting in the Music Hall commenced with "See the conquering hero comes." The crowd which welcomed him in the streets is only described, speaking of it at any given point, as being scarcely less dense than that assembled elsewhere. The meeting, with Professor Blackie on the platform, and the shaking hands of the two foremost Greek scholars of the time, was observed with rapture by the meeting, and the assertion, emphatically made by Mr. Gladstone, that if Sir Robert Peel were alive to-day, he would be found contending "with us" against the principles of the Beaconsfield Government, was received with enthusiasm. Indeed, if the reception of Mr. Gladstone at Edinburgh may be accepted as an index of the temper of the people, it may be regarded as the forerunner of a national declaration which will pronounce the doom of the present Government.

Of course a great orator and statesman who has filled the highest offices in the State would be certain to have a multitude of friends and admirers in every

city. Such a man cannot pass into obscurity. It would be impossible for Mr. Gladstone to go into any populous place in the Empire and not gather around him a host of sincere and enthusiastic admirers. Yet it is scarcely to be believed that his reception in Edinburgh at this time has not a meaning more significant than mere personal admiration.

Nor would it be the first time that Edinburgh had played an important part in the undoing of ministries. It was from Edinburgh that Lord John Russell's letter on the Corn Laws was addressed, in which he announced "To the Electors of the City of London" his conversion on that question; and it was Edinburgh which had the honour of being represented by Macaulay, whose matchless eloquence won the respect of the constituency even when they differed from him in opinion. At the election in May 1839, the Liberal party was pictured in the following words, which have not lost their force to this day:—

"It seems to me that when I look back on our history, I can discern a great party which has, through many generations, preserved its identity; a party often depressed, never extinguished; a party which, though guilty of many errors and some crimes, has the glory of having established our civil and religious liberties on a firm foundation. I look with pride on all that the Liberal party has done for the cause of honour, freedom and human happiness. At their head I see men who have inherited the spirit and the virtues, as well as the blood, of old champions and martyrs of freedom. To this party I propose to attach myself. I will to the last maintain inviolate my fidelity to principles which, though they may be borne down for a time by clamour, are yet strong with the strength and immortal with the immortality of truth, and which, however they may be misunderstood or misrepresented, will assuredly find justice from a better age."

COMMUNISM IN DISGUISE.

An article entitled "Technical Education," in last week's SPECTATOR starts with the proposition that "it is generally admitted that it is the duty of the State to provide for the comfort, the intelligence and the virtue of its subjects" and further assumes that any method of fulfilling this duty which ignores a system of public education must fail. This assumption, and the article based upon it, seem to me a very good text from which to draw public attention to the Communistic character of public education, among other popular movements, as it is now generally understood and defined. In the first place, however, let me remark that a State could not possibly *provide* for the intelligence and virtue of its subjects, and it is by no means generally admitted, but is on the contrary strongly disputed, that it is any part of the duty of a State to *promote* the comfort, the intelligence and the virtue of its subjects, it being held by many that the sole function of the State is to protect directly the persons and property of its citizens. Indeed, so soon as a State oversteps this limit it either leans to the paternal or the Communistic State, according as it more nearly approaches a pure despotism or a pure democracy. For instance, if the Czar decrees popular education, he does so as the father of his children; if we institute popular education, the majority impose a burden on themselves and the minority for the common good, which is in its nature a Communistic act, as I shall presently show. And here it may be well to explain what is the nature of public education and of Communism. A complete system of public education, with which I am at present dealing, is that which affords every citizen at least the opportunity of obtaining a certain amount, either partially or wholly at the public expense. From this follows the inevitable corollary that the richer must pay either wholly or partially for the education of their poorer fellow-citizens. Communism, in turn, is that form of government by the people which denies the individual right to the control of property, and not as is often very absolutely supposed, a general re-shuffle now and then of the property of the community. Or we may say that in a Communistic State no individual possesses any control over the fruits of his own effort, though he may enjoy more or less of them subject to the will of the State or Community. If we now, bearing in mind these definitions of public education and of Communism, examine the one by the aid of the other we shall see that they are intimately allied one with the other, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that public education is intimately bound up with at least a certain measure of Communism, though we might be entirely Communistic without education.

To make this clearer, let us contrast education in a state which confines its functions to what we may call its simple police duties of protection to person and property, with education in a state on the road to Communism. In the first case, if a citizen desires education he has to buy it just as he does any other necessity or luxury of life, and that which he buys is strictly proportioned to the price he is able or willing to pay. The result of this is, that the majority being possessed of little or no means buy no education, and in that as in other directions pay the penalty of their inferiority to their stronger fellow citizens. In this case it is evident that the citizens are not compelled to sacrifice a portion of the fruits of their efforts for the education either of their own or their fellow citizens' children.

In the case of the second state which, as I said, may be described as more or less Communistic, it is quite otherwise. Here the majority decide that it is for the benefit of the majority that all shall be afforded the opportunity of acquiring an education. But as the majority cannot or will not afford even a