

Should it threaten anything of the kind, the simple omission of Parliament to re-appoint it would bring its existence to a close. At the same time, some satisfaction would be afforded to the Nationalist desire of a Parliament in College Green. The milder and less perilous expedient might at all events be tried, before recourse was had to a measure at once so tremendous and so irrevocable as the reconstruction of the United Kingdom on a federal instead of a national basis.

MR. GLADSTONE, as even his admirers must allow, has brought his country into what must be regarded, on any hypothesis, as a situation of extreme peril; and now he sits down, between two Disunionist and Agrarian agitations, to write a critique on Tennyson's poem. It was in the midst of a former crisis which he had brought on, though not one so perilous as the present, that the walls were placarded with announcements of his forthcoming essay on "Ecce Homo." Like Brougham he loves to display his versatility, and show that he is master of all subjects, and foremost in all lines. In such peril every thought of Pitt or Peel would have been engrossed by the danger of the country. That levity is a characteristic of Mr. Gladstone's mind and renders the nation unsafe in his hands, may seem a paradox, to some, perhaps, an impious paradox. It was, nevertheless, the remark of an eminently shrewd and calm observer who knew Mr. Gladstone well.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL's move developed, it seems, into an attempt to drive out of the Cabinet two of the members who were opposed to him, and put two of his creatures in their places. We cannot help still thinking that with this motive there mingled the effect of the Irish crisis upon his lordship's nerves. The violence with which he preached civil war at Belfast was, on a previous occasion, compensated by an equal degree of tameness in council. The plea of dissent from the Estimates was palpably hollow. No man in his senses would throw the Government into confusion, at a moment of great national peril, on account of a difference on a question of expenditure which seems not to have amounted to half a million. Had Lord Salisbury given way, he would have shown a want of the common spirit of an English gentleman, and have compromised principles of public life more vital than the greatest of particular issues. Where is the use of being a Marquis with half a million of dollars a year if you can be driven to eat dirt for the sake of office? Lord Salisbury must have seen, moreover, that he had to deal with an intriguer, whose ambition was not less insatiable than treacherous, and of whose plots he was sure himself to be the ultimate victim. Lord Randolph has involuntarily rendered the country an inestimable service in the hour of its sorest need. A strong and respected Government has become a necessity, the alternative to which is nothing short of national ruin; and there was only one way in which such a Government could be formed. Lord Randolph's auspicious departure has rendered possible the accession of Mr. Goschen, and Mr. Goschen has half drawn Lord Hartington with him. The name Coalition, if it implies a compromise of opinion, would be ill applied to a Government the members of which would be at one with regard to every vital principle, and perfectly unanimous in their opposition to Disunion and revolution. Lord Hartington—though, under the pressure of national peril, he has exerted himself nobly—is by nature unambitious, shrinks from the burdens of office, and would be sure, in any doubtful case, to incline to the negative side. But, apparently, he still clings to the hope of a reorganisation of the Liberal party on the basis of Union and moderation. This hope, we are persuaded, is fallacious. Every day the extreme Radicals are committing themselves more desperately, not only to Separation, but to social and agrarian revolution. Instead of seeking reconciliation, the violent and ambitious aspirants of the section show themselves bent on widening the breach and preventing the restoration of a leadership by which they would themselves be once more thrown into the background. Their last step is the establishment of a revolutionary rival to the *Scotsman*, which has long been the great organ of Scottish Liberalism, but refuses to be the organ of revolution. Revolution and opposition to revolution are the lines upon which parties must be henceforth formed, and there can be no doubt to which of those camps Lord Hartington and all who agree with him belong. The Liberal-Unionists will, by their junction with the Conservatives, modify Conservatism in a Liberal sense. Tory-Democracy, we are told in wailing tones, departs from the Cabinet with Lord Randolph Churchill. As Tory-Democracy is charlatanry and fraud, it is devoutly to be hoped that the presentiment may prove true. It is high time for the Conservative party to leave the slippery paths of hypocritical intrigue, and get back to that firm ground of principle and honour on which it stood unassailable under Peel, and by adhering to which it might have retained its ascendancy to this hour. Attempts seem to have been made in opposite quarters to

prevent the junction. Mr. Gladstone did not shrink from trying, through an emissary, to cajole the man over whose defeat in the election by a man of doubtful character he uttered a shriek of delight. On the other hand, Tory place-hunters protested against a partition of the political spoils, forgetful apparently of the fact that their party has not a majority, and without the Unionists, could not retain the spoils for an hour. They are like sailors fighting for the rum when the ship is on the rocks. Mr. Chamberlain appears to have opened negotiations with the Gladstonites, the course of which it will be interesting to watch. In holding out the olive branch he proclaims agreement on ninety-nine questions out of a hundred. The hundredth question, however, is of such magnitude that at present it swallows up the ninety-nine.

If any one wants to know the difference between the aristocracy of the peerage and the aristocracy of nature, let him compare the conduct of the patrician, Lord Randolph Churchill, with that of the Quaker manufacturer, John Bright. John Bright left the Gladstone Cabinet on the question of the Expedition to Egypt. But he contented himself with a simple statement of the grounds of his conscientious secession. He betrayed no resentment or selfish feeling of any kind. He uttered not a word against the colleagues whom he left, nor did he do or say anything to embarrass the Government. Only his private friends knew how strong his feelings on the question at issue were. The real tendency of artificial rank, in most cases, is not to implant a higher sense of honour, but to make the possessor fancy that he can do questionable things with impunity.

AGAINST the current of modern science, scepticism and Radicalism, there runs a backstream of spiritualism, romance, and chivalry. Of this Newman is the theologian, Ruskin is the art writer, and Mr. Shorthouse is the novelist. "Sir Percival" (London and New York: Macmillan and Company) has been, not without plausibility, interpreted as an allegory. *Constantia* being Christian spiritualism, while scepticism and socialism are embodied in the witch *Virginia*, *Sir Percival* being the young knight who has to choose between the services of the two. The only weak point in this theory is that *Virginia*, though she professes scepticism and socialism, is made to show that she has the root of Christianity in her by sacrificing her life in attendance on a woman dying of an infectious disease. All the rest, and especially the finding of the Holy Grail by *Percival* when he meets a chivalrous and martyr death in attempting to rescue the Bishop from the heathen savages, easily resolves itself into allegorical representation. It goes without saying that there cannot be much of a story. Delineation of spiritual character and aspiration is the writer's aim, and in this the author of "John Inglesant" does not fail to show his peculiar power. The style suits the subject, and has its points of resemblance both to that of Mr. Ruskin and to that of Sir Thomas Browne. Like some other novelists of the day Mr. Shorthouse is, as we venture to think, over-much given to word-painting. The word-painter cannot appeal, like the painter with brush and colours, to our sense, and when we are called upon ourselves to construct a mental picture out of a number of details, the draft upon our imagination is severe, and is apt not to be honoured.

"KING Solomon's Mines," "Kidnapped," "The Treasure Island," and "The Phantom City" all belong to the same new departure, being tales not of character, but of adventure and highly sensational. They have a strong affinity to each other; indeed, almost the same incidents are reproduced. The old pirate's enigmatic plan of the island in which his treasure is hidden is clearly a reproduction of the enigmatic chart in "Solomon's Mines," and both are repeated in the Indian's report of his sight of "The Phantom City." Both, we may add, have their manifest prototype in the leading incident of Edgar Poe's "Gold Bug." Edgar Poe is in fact the real father of what seems an entirely new departure in novel writing. Nor have any of the offspring equalled the teeming imagination of their sire, who may claim Gaboriau also as one of his literary progeny. The hidden treasure in "Monte Christo" and the deciphering of the old Cardinal's will, which leads to its discovery, are also close counterparts of the main incident in "King Solomon's Mines" and "The Treasure Island." "The Phantom City" is little more than "King Solomon's Mines" played over again with variations. The isolated and mysterious people, the good prince, and his victorious struggle against sanguinary superstition with the strangers for his allies are the same in both. "Kidnapped" has special claims of its own as a picture of the state of Scotland after the Highland rising of '45, and has in that respect been greatly praised. Otherwise we should say that "King Solomon's Mines" was still the best of the group.