

not bestowed a measure of practical decision and forecast equal to his share of other powers. Nor has fortune of late been kind to him, for she has accumulated upon him questions of the very sort with which a minister not pre-eminent in practical decision and forecast must be least qualified to deal.

Of the chapter of failures the saddest part is the State of Ireland. In dealing with this problem, desperate enough in itself, Mr. Gladstone was at a special disadvantage from having paid only one short visit to the country, and his want of knowledge was noted even by those who followed his standard and applauded his speeches. The Land Policy was not originally his own: it was pressed on him by those who had his ear. But it is his nature when he has once adopted a policy thoroughly to identify himself with it and to close his mind, not only against adverse opinions, but against the teaching of adverse events; though it seems incredible that the fatal truth should remain hidden from him when the suppliant appeals of his new Irish Secretary for the favour of the Nationalists are met with renewed outbursts of venomous hatred and foul abuse. He has brought the nation into serious peril of a dismemberment which, as the Irish Republic would be born in deadly enmity, must reduce England to a second-rate power and deprive her not only of her might but of her beneficent influence over civilization. It would be unjust, however, to cast upon Mr. Gladstone the whole or even the principal part of the blame. The principal part of the blame rests on faction, softly styled the system of party government. It was under Lord Beaconsfield that the "veiled rebellion" commenced. And what did Lord Beaconsfield do? Instead of appealing to the patriotism of Parliament and taking proper measures to meet the public peril, he welcomed the opportunity for snatching a party triumph, launched a slanderous manifesto accusing the Liberals of seeking the dismemberment of the Empire, dissolved, and flung the country into the turmoil of a general election. This act of course threw the Liberals into the arms of the Irish, whose support they received in the contest which followed, and a sinister connection was thus formed. But Lord Randolph Churchill and his crew have been constantly intriguing with the Parnellites in the House of Commons, and seconding them in obstruction, while Sir George Elliot, the Tory candidate for North Durham, made a bid, as palpable as it was infamous, for the Parnellite Vote and was not in any way disavowed by his party. Lord Salisbury has also done his utmost to cripple the Government in its struggle with rebellion. In his own ranks the Prime Minister has had to contend with the covert influence of twenty or thirty members for English or Scotch cities in which the Irish vote is large. These men have always been secretly protesting against anything which could place their seats in jeopardy and have unstrung the nerves of Government. Among the extreme Radicals there are some who hardly disguise their willingness to barter the unity of the nation for the Irish Vote. Had the House of Commons only been high-minded and patriotic enough to lay party aside for an hour and show itself resolved to maintain the union, the danger would have passed away. The preference of party to country which has almost placed England at the feet of Healy and Biggar is one of the foul spots in English history. Even Imperial Federationists have done their share of mischief by tampering in the interest of their chimera with the demand for disunion under the name of Home Rulers. That with which Mr. Gladstone is chargeable is the negative encouragement given to disunionism by his omission to declare his own unalterable loyalty to the Union; and if his silence indicates irresolution or a secret intention of giving way, it is far better for him as well as for his country that his reign should close, even though it closed in gloom. Disaster is not so grievous as dishonour.

In South Africa, and still more in Egypt, there has been vacillation with calamitous results. This hardly anybody denies, and the demand of the *Times* that the Ministry should resign, though it can hardly be serious, and will certainly not be effectual, may be taken as a strong sign of national impatience. There were good reasons against intervention in Egypt, unless the Suez Canal was in danger, and Mr. Bright, no doubt, now feels well satisfied with the course which he took. On the other hand, destiny seemed to point to a British occupation of the country, the ruler of which had become the warder of the highway to India. This much, however, was clear, that to interfere was to occupy, at least till a permanent settlement should have been effected; and the imbroglio which now seems bottomless is manifestly the consequence of having taken the first and really decisive step without distinct forecast of the inevitable consequences or resolution to embrace them. The fact, however, is that the foreign and military policy of the country has now, by the advance of democracy, passed out of the hands of the Government. The vacillations, inconsistencies, and blunderings which the nation is deploring are those of

the nation itself, and of the press, which is the many-voiced organ of its fickle, irresponsible, and divided will. In the Liberal party, to whose support the Government had always to look, there has reigned throughout a perfect Babel of opinion on the Egyptian question. The present editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* takes with the utmost violence the opposite line to his predecessor of yesterday. Even the Opposition has been united in nothing but the determination to condemn, harass, and thwart the Government. This haphazard expedition to Khartoum, the issue of which everybody awaits with misgiving, is the work not of a Cabinet Council, but of the passionate interest which the nation has conceived in the character and adventures of an inspired madman. That democracy, unorganized as it is at present, is incapable of carrying on a foreign policy or of administering an Empire, is the moral of these events, and it is one which, if trouble should really arise in India, may receive calamitous illustration. In judging the conduct of the British Government at the outset of the Egyptian affair allowance must be made for the faithlessness of French diplomacy, though all statesmen might know by this time that under King, Emperor, or Republic, French diplomacy is always and alike faithless. Allowance must also be made for the sinister activity of Bismarck, who is evidently anxious to embroil England with France. Finally, allowance must be made, as the world will gradually learn, for the influence of a press largely under the influence of financiers who have very little interest in the welfare of England, but a large interest in the Egyptian debt.

Who will succeed Mr. Gladstone? Replace him, no one can. There is no other figure which fills to anything like the same degree the mind of the vast and excitable multitude on whose allegiance government has now to be based. The masses, however democratic they may be in sentiment, need a king of their imagination. That the Cabinet is divided and is held together mainly by the hand of its chief is a fact of which there may be said to have been overt proofs, in addition to our general knowledge of the men; so that, notwithstanding Mr. Chamberlain's politic adhesiveness, upon the chief's departure a crisis could hardly fail to ensue. Power might pass into the hands of the Opposition if the leaders possessed the confidence of the country, for the by-elections indicate a reaction against the revolutionary movement which extends, no doubt, to moderate Liberals. But Lord Salisbury, in spite of his power as a debater, is discredited. Sir Stafford Northcote is powerless; and Lord Randolph Churchill, of whose elevation, whether we consider his character or his qualities as a statesman, it is impossible to think without shame, has for the second time raved himself into a state of nervous prostration. Lord Hartington, from a patrician idler playing with politics as a hereditary amusement, has become a serious politician, and not only a serious politician, but an object of general confidence and respect. Even the Radicals, though he is not one of them, prefer him to the other Whigs and, when he promises them anything, feel sure that he will be at least as good as his word. Round him, more probably than round any other man, might be formed a Government which would try to find in strength of connection a substitute for the personal popularity of Mr. Gladstone. The ranks of the Whigs and moderate Liberals would close. Mr. Goschen might be expected to come in, and it is not unlikely that Lord Lansdowne might be recalled from Canada to English politics. With Mr. Gladstone, who is the object of the bitterest hatred, as well as the most intense attachment, will depart the frantic virulence of Opposition. Before very long all Conservatives who did not want place might begin to feel that serious interests were at stake, and that they had better lend a practical support to the Government of Lord Hartington than run after Tory Democracy and fall into the pit. Yet no Englishman who has attentively watched the course of English politics for some years past, and who has any means of knowing the thoughts of sagacious observers on the spot, can look without deep and sad misgiving on the failing helmsman, the gathering clouds, and the rising sea.

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### MISTASSINNI AND BEYOND.

LAKE MISTASSINNI has lately been rescued from the oblivion of the last two centuries—an oblivion quite unaccountable in view of the records of early explorations—and we are awakened to the fact that the regions between the watershed and Hudson's Bay are both interesting and valuable. It is by no means creditable to our enterprise that we have been so long content with a traditional knowledge of these vast lakes, plains and mountain ranges.

That estimable record, the "Relations des Jesuites," proves that the French of the 17th century were more enterprising. In the "Relation" for 1672 we find a very full account of the great lake and the district between it and Hudson's Bay. The editor begins by reciting that "the sea which we have on the north is the famous bay to which Hudson (sic)