

second-hand spectacles, a power to learn and decipher whatever is right and good." Those are brave words, and I congratulate the students of Victoria University on the liberalism and freshness of their president. If they go out into the world to lash the dead horses of orthodoxy the fault is not with Dr. Nelles.

At last we have the correct text of Mr. Gladstone's letter to the Austrian ambassador, and it is quite evident that a great deal of the British Conservative angry talk about the humiliation which has been brought upon the Empire through the abject apology of its new Premier was quite uncalled for. The letter is divided into two main parts. To speak of the second first, it seems to me that Mr. Gladstone acted a part which only he could act. It is undeniable that his bitter denunciation of Austria was based upon information which was far from correct. That was not exactly owing to Mr. Gladstone's hastiness, but partly to the fact that Austria had made a show of doing what she finally decided not to do with regard to the settlement of the Balkan question. And when the Emperor of Austria, in answer to Mr. Gladstone, declared through his ambassador that he intended to respect the Treaty of Berlin, of course Mr. Gladstone had to express his regret at having misunderstood and misinterpreted the attitude of Austria. Perhaps on the whole the occurrence was fortunate, for the Emperor having learnt the mind of England and shaped his policy accordingly, future complications will be less likely.

But to my mind the first part of the letter is far more serious. It contains a distinct intimation that Ministers are not to be held responsible for what they may have said when in Opposition, or during election time. That is to say, politicians out of office are simply critics and fault finders; they may denounce a policy when out of power and adopt it when in power; they may promise when in opposition what they shall not be expected to fulfil when in office. This is nothing less than a doctrine of immorality. If accepted, all faith in the word of the Opposition will be destroyed, and a change of government will always be "a leap in the dark." One can but be sorry to hear such an expression from the earnest, conscientious Gladstone, for Beaconsfield has said nothing half so revolutionary and destructive of morals. Let us hope and look for an explanation.

Bradlaugh has yielded ignominiously and decided to take the oath. The Parliamentary Committee, appointed to consider the question as to whether he should have an exception made in his favour and not be required to take the usual solemn oath, decided that no exception could be made. This gave Bradlaugh a double opportunity, first, to test the popularity of atheism in the borough of Northampton, and second, to assert his own honesty of principle. But he declined the first, and was not equal to the second. Had he resigned and appealed again to the electors on the purely religious, or anti-religious question, the probability is that he would have been voted out of political life. There is not a constituency in all Great Britain where a man could be returned to Parliament on the atheistic ticket, and Bradlaugh knew it so well that a few bosom friends had no difficulty in persuading him to comply with the rule and go through what he is pleased to call "the solemn mockery." But what of the man who has committed this "solemn mockery?" What sort of manhood is it that can bring itself to enact such an outrage? Here is a man who does not believe in God at all; has no idea of God that approximates to the popular conception and expression, and therefore does not feel under any moral obligation to keep the word he may utter, and yet he swears by the God of England and the Bible to fulfil certain duties in the State. It is indeed a "solemn mockery," and one which a man who respects his own manhood would never commit. It is not necessary that Bradlaugh should be in Parliament, but it is imperative that those who represent the people should have a sound of honour and morality. Evidently Bradlaugh is wanting in this first requisite to manly life and conduct. He has openly and mockingly violated a primary law of society, which is to the effect that a man shall not swear by what he has no belief in. Atheism, brought into practical life once more, has again broken down, and again it is demonstrated that society cannot be held together by this demoralizing negation.

A pamphlet on "The Need of Protection" has been published by Alex. McEwen, London, England, in which the Free Trade statements and arguments put out by Mr. Mongredien, and highly eulogised by Mr. John Bright, are boldly attacked. The writer tries to make it plain that Protection will have to be resorted to again, and that soon, in Great Britain. If his figures are to be trusted, and there is no apparent reason to doubt them, England is becoming rapidly impoverished. During the prosperous years of 1871, '72, '73 and '74, British exports exceeded the imports by £28,000,000; but during the following four years, that is, 1875, '76, '77 and '78, the imports exceeded the exports by the enormous figure of £231,000,000. The imports of food to Great Britain in 1870 were £97,000,000; in 1879, £270,000,000. These are astounding figures, and should make British economists consider again the financial condition of the country. It is quite easy to declare that the principles of Free Trade are "as true as the axioms of mathematical science" as the *Times* did the other day, but adversity often knocks the bottom out of the most exact sciences.

Mr. McEwen's ideas as to what England might do in this matter are so tersely put that I give them in his own words:—

"I have taken the bold step of putting forward views so utterly opposed to general opinion in this country, mainly in the hope that it will be shown to be a matter, like every other in which the welfare of our country is concerned, worthy of earnest discussion. I contend that free trade is by no means a policy settled necessarily for all time by a parliamentary majority in 1846, but open like any other policy to modification if the circumstances of the nation, brought about by the changes of time and the hostile action of other nations, should make it desirable that it should be modified.

"But I will take a still bolder step, and venture to suggest a policy which would remedy, at least to some extent, the evils we now clearly see threatening us.

"Regarding the ruin of our agriculture as our main difficulty, I would place an import duty upon all grain; on wheat and barley, of 10s. a quarter; on flour, 3s. per cwt.; on Indian corn, oats, beans, 5s. per quarter. On every article of food grown or growable in this country I would put a proportionate import duty.

"Of the revenue obtained from these duties one-half would probably come out of the foreigners' pocket and one half from our consumers at home; but, assuming the worst case, that the foreigner would contribute nothing, our consumers the whole, I would compensate the latter by taking off the duties on other necessities of life consumed by the same classes who would be mainly taxed by the food import duties. I would apply the revenue, probably 20,000,000/, to the removal of duty upon malt and all restrictions upon free trade in beer at home, and take the duty entirely off tea and coffee. This would give back about 14,000,000/. I would also take the income tax off all incomes under 500l. a year realised incomes, and under 1,000l. a year on industrial incomes.

"Any further surplus revenue would be entirely devoted to relieve the classes on whom the food import duty would fall most heavily, and the result would be practically that the cost of living would not be enhanced to any person in the country, even on the assumption that the foreign grower would not contribute any part of the duties imposed.

"As there would be a tendency under such a protection of our home food manufacture to increase rentals and to give the landlord the major part of the benefit, I would counteract this by a modification, so much to be desired on all grounds, of the laws of landlord and tenant, and by a provision special taxation upon rental, so as to let the benefit to the land be largely shared by the State.

"In order to stimulate home cultivation I would give greater facilities to farmers for loans for the purposes of high cultivation, machinery, artificial manuring, etc., and apply at least a million a year of the surplus revenues to premiums for high rates of produce per acre, proportionately to the previous yield of the lands.

"A Minister and department of Agriculture and Food Supply would be one of the most important in the Constitution of the State.

"As regards our other manufactures, I would simply enact for the present, that on all goods from any foreign countries the same duty be placed as the country from which it comes places upon the same goods from us.

"In case of export bounties being given by any foreign government on goods which we ourselves manufacture, I would add the amount of these bounties to the duty imposed on the goods.

"Raw materials of manufacture, cotton, wool, silk, hemp, etc., I would leave free of duty of course, but all manufactures of these would be subject to considerable duties.

"From these duties I would look for but little revenue, except perhaps from silk manufactures, from which enough might be obtained to enable us to remove the income tax."

Failing the above scheme Mr. McEwen advocates bringing all the Colonies into an Imperial customs-union, with fair protective tariffs against the rest of the world. By this he expects Britain would secure real free trade amongst 300,000,000, of British subjects, which would make a prosperous and independent Empire. Perhaps Mr. McEwen will have an interview with Sir Alexander Galt, and they can agree upon subjects for dreams.

EDITOR.