

party in England, and on that account our strictures were more severe than they would have been had the question been simply local in its character. The criticism was rather party and political than personal, and it is scarcely needful to say that the *Gazette* has no foe in the SPECTATOR.

THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT.

The English Parliaments opened last week, and perhaps the absence of the Queen at the ceremony was felt more than it has been for years past. The hope had been openly and confidently expressed in circles little less than official, that Her Majesty had or would yield to the solicitations of the Earl of Beaconsfield, and open Parliament in person. And the occasion was felt to be more than ordinarily grave. Peace negotiations had been proposed between Russia and Turkey, and English interests were thought to be in peril. Whispers had gone forth that the Queen was in sympathy with the bellicose portion of the Cabinet, and would take the opportunity of shewing it. But the Speech from the Throne was read by the Lord Chancellor, to the disappointment of aristocrats and west-end tradesmen. Considering the prevalent excitement, and the oriental fancy of the Prime Minister, the Speech was a marvel of calmness and caution. It was just a repetition of what Ministers all along have been saying as to "watchful neutrality," "regard for British interests," and such like things, all of them perfectly harmless. The Tories of the country, and especially the Turkophiles among them, are disappointed. They looked for a blast of defiance, if not a declaration of war. A crumb of comfort was flung out to them by the Ministerial speeches which followed—but only a crumb. The Prime Minister delivered an oration on the occasion, which was correctly described by the Duke of Argyle, judging from telegraphic reports, as brilliant but evasive. The Marquis of Salisbury put on a war-like air, and spoke stronger words than England has been accustomed to hear from him for some time past. But after the peace-making part he played at Constantinople, he will be allowed, if not given, a little latitude for talk. The opposition in the persons of Earl Granville, the Duke of Argyle, Lord Hartington and Mr. Gladstone, had not much to say by way of criticism or complaint. There was no occasion. The Ministry is carrying out the policy of the Liberals. The war once begun, not even Mr. Gladstone himself ever advocated an unwatchful and indifferent attitude. He, and the hosts that followed him, demanded nothing more than watchful neutrality. They never said Britain should forfeit any of her interests or see her rights interfered with; they only asked to have those rights defined, and to be sure that they were not going to war for interests that existed only in the fancy. It is well that the Cabinet can now ask counsel of parliament. There is less fear of the reckless Prime Minister, and more hope that calm consideration will take place before England gives the signal for what must be a general European war.

THE WAR.

Reports are current that a two-month's armistice has been concluded, but no official confirmation has been received at Constantinople or St. Petersburg.

Advices from Constantinople show that a general panic prevailed there, and excitement is hourly increasing. It was believed the guaranteeing powers would send ships to protect them. The new instructions to the peace delegates, of which Izzed Pasha was bearer, were sent more on account of the panic than for any other cause, and these instructions, as well as conferring far fuller powers, insist above all upon the delegates doing everything possible to stop the Russian advance. The correspondent also mentions the Russian threat to march on Constantinople. The Paris correspondent says: An official announcement has been published in Constantinople stating that if negotiations fail, everything is prepared for defence to the last extremity, and advises the inhabitants to be calm.

HELL AND THE UNITED STATES.

They have got excitement in the States once again. For a long time the people have been agitated over general trade depression; Wall street morality, upon which many failures let in much light—the Bland Silver Bill, or another attempt to plunder in a wholesale and legal way. But these were dull things and couldn't last long. Now, however, there is a subject on the tapis worthy of United States attention and seems likely to be dealt with *suo more*.

In England the doctrine of eternal punishment has been discussed for some time past. There has been a great, and manifest, divergence of opinion; good and earnest men ranged on both sides, the orthodox doing a little refined persecution now and then, but, for the most part, the argument has been conducted in a calm, scholarly and courteous way. A few echoes of the far-off storm had been heard in the United States, but not much notice was taken of it, until the thunder broke upon their ears, and rattled round their doors. The great preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, whom they worship while they abuse, delivered

a discourse on "The Background of Mystery." In common with all serious, thoughtful men, he has been brooding over this difficult subject for years past. The brilliant, earnest sermons of Canon Farrar came to his hand, and, probably, decided him to speak his thoughts on the matter. There was not much decision in his words, and not much that was startlingly new. Canon Farrar possesses scholarly attainments, Ward Beecher does not, and so could speak with more firmness and authority. But Beecher has a profoundly philosophical mind—a clear, keen insight—and a heart big enough, and good enough, to interpret many things before which the logical faculties stand bewildered. He is a modest man withal, and the most he could venture to say was, there is a background of mystery to all this, the whole truth has not been unfolded, mists hang over it, we must wait until they break and lift, and meantime there seems some reason for hope that endless torture is for no one man. No more was needed. Smaller men had spoken before, and the States lived on. But that Beecher should venture to say in America, and to Americans, that there is a "background of mystery" to *anything* was more than could be borne. It not only threatened to take away a dear doctrine, which has given several beautiful words to the Anglo-Saxon tongue, as improved in the United States, but it seemed to insinuate that the people there, like the rest of the world, had to look at some things through a smoked glass. Awhile ago Prof. Huxley went to the States to lecture on Evolution, Biology, Protoplasm, &c., but he was behind the American age altogether—out of date in fact. And now since America has discovered Cook, who has explained all about the Trinity, and Theodore Parker, setting up the one and putting down the other, to talk of a "background of mystery" is to add insult to injury.

Of course, it is said that Beecher and those who agree with him, have put away hell from their theology as a matter of personal convenience—for clear of that danger—they may hold Christianity in a comfortable way, and suit themselves as to all matters of morals. There is nothing new in the charge. It is what the Orthodox Church has always said of those who would not accept her dogmas and submit to her discipline. We can easily recall the brilliant, but shallow, discourse of Massillon on "Doubts upon Religion," in which he declared that doubts sprang from licentiousness, and unbelief was convenient for sinning. The Church of Rome hurled that scoff at Luther and his followers. It says the same of Protestants to-day. Scarce a reform has ever taken place in the Church, as to doctrine or discipline, but the same foolish charge has been made. Trinitarians have said it of Unitarians, and the Plymouth Brethren of all the world.

And there is some amount of "sweet reasonableness" in it. If men cherish doubts on this or that part of doctrinal teaching as an excuse for their sins, then their falseness and treachery should be made manifest. If Mr. Beecher, and his brothers in that faith, are afraid of hell from a deep and dreadful sense of deserving it, and are trying to kill the doctrine to get ease for the conscience, and to pluck all inconvenient thorns from the path of the transgressor—then the American press and pulpit do well to denounce them, and to show the whence and the whither of their teachings. They say the doctrine of eternal punishment for sin is necessary to enforce morality in the land, but for that doctrine men and women would sin freely, not fearing the consequences in the great hereafter. Then—Great God!—what a place America would have been but for this teaching? For as long as the nation has been a nation this doctrine has been taught by the press and from the pulpit—that sinners repenting and believing will be forgiven—no matter what the past has been. A handful of this incense flung on the black heap of a life's crimes will disinfect the whole and the sinner pass safe into heaven. But if they die impenitent the punishment is eternal, it is everlasting—if not a literal fire—it was that not so long ago—an inward remorse that shall last and deepen and grow more desperate for ever and for ever. It is banishment from God—a life without his life—breath and motion apart from Him—a place, a state of woe where hope can never enter, but every thought is torment in the mind, and every feeling a fiery torture in the heart. All the faculties shall live, but only live to suffer. Memory shall be as a worm at the vitals. All the being shall be on fire, but shall not burn.

The Americans are a Church-going people—they read the papers; and although New York has refused to keep alive a "daily religious," every paper almost puts alongside its garbage some sound theology and ethics. But what has this great and terrible doctrine done? What has it done in the States? Has it given even the semblance of honest dealing to trade? Are the Wall street bankers and stock brokers kept in awe of hell? Which do Chicago corn, and other, dealers dread most, eternal punishment, or a fall in the markets? What is the condition of things as to morality in New York? Let the curious ask the doctors—or the Ministers could tell them quite as well.

Certainly, the argument would tell as forcibly in other places—Rome has armed herself with this mighty instrument of torture. The result, as to morals, may be seen in any Catholic country. England has been orthodox on this point, and has no right to cast a stone at any of the nations of the earth. The fear of endless hell seems to have wrought small good in the land. If a tree is known by its fruits, then the question