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The Guildhall Banquet to-day will be an affair of much more than civic importance. It



is the culminating incident in a pageant which affords to large classes of the people of London a great deal of innocent pleasure, and maintains, in the most picturesque way, the time-honoured tradition of the connection between the Corporation of the City and the great authorities of State. This year the Government will be even more largely represented than on ordinary occasions. But, without disparagement either to the LORD MAYOR as the host, or to the numerous distinguished guests, it must be said that expectation is concentrated on the presence of the PRIME MINISTER. It is not his countrymen alone who await with interest the announcements it may be in his power to make. There is no European capital in which anxiety is not felt regarding the utterances of the SECRETARY OF STATE for FOREIGN AFFAIRS. For it is not solely or mainly as Head of the Administration that Lord SALISBURY will be welcomed when he rises to respond for her MAJESTY'S Ministers. There may be matters of some pith and substance to deliver concerning the intentions of the Cabinet with respect to domestic policy, but the Eastern Question is the absorbing topic, and it is most probable that Lord SALISBURY will avail himself of such a favourable opportunity to speak clearly on a subject which has engrossed so much of his thoughts. He will not, of course, be forgetful of the obligations imposed by regard for diplomatic comity. Nothing need be said that will be superfluously painful to the SULTAN, whose position at present invites commiseration quite as much as outspoken warning. Nor can information reasonably be looked for regarding the precise course of negotiations which involve so many confidences and such delicate handling of difficult—not to say, intractable—material. Yet when all allowance is made for necessary reticence, the country will still count upon hearing from responsible lips language corresponding to the gravity of the crisis. Absolute confidence is felt in Lord SALISBURY'S vigilance and foresight. No words of his can add strength to the conviction that, at a period of singular strain, the interests of Great Britain, and of peace, rest in safe hands. The point is whether he will be in a position to say anything that can dispel the prevailing concern. The tidings which come day after day from Constantinople and Asia Minor forbid the belief that the forces operating within the Ottoman Empire can speedily—if at all—end in restored tranquillity. The service which Lord SALISBURY can render is to give full and worthy expression to-night to that deep solicitude with which the development of affairs is watched, and, by his declarations, to assist and encourage all who, in other lands, sincerely desire to reconcile the accomplishment of the indispensable reforms in Turkey with the least possible disturbance of existing conditions in the East. Appearances at Stamboul are not propitious. A Ministry which was not zealous for the improvement of the methods of administration has been replaced by a Ministry which is said to be even more wedded to the worst traditions of the Porte; and meanwhile, from the provinces, the reports of tumultuous risings, and sanguinary attempts at repression, continue with sickening iteration. The Grosvenor House Committee is, perhaps, premature or ill-advised in urging the collective intervention of the Powers. But the dullest eyes may see that matters cannot be allowed to run their present course from disorder and outrage to anarchy and collapse.

There is no reason for assuming that military or naval force must be employed to bring about a cessation of the chronic troubles. But it is, assuredly, a time at which the efficiency of our Army and Fleet should be a matter of more than ordinary urgency. Nations are not governed by philosophy, and though a season of the most profound tranquillity ought not to foster a spirit of reckless neglect, all experience tells us that the Military Reformer finds a ready hearing only when the outlook is overcast. The Duke of DEVONSHIRE paid a visit yesterday to one of the great steel works for which Sheffield is famous, and the locality, quite apart from the political atmosphere, suggested to him some valuable remarks on the much-debated question of the organisation for national defence. As he reminded his hearers, a special function has been associated with his office. He is President of a Committee of the Cabinet to which is entrusted the consideration of questions relating to joint action between the Army and the Navy. The expediency of co-ordinating in some way the activity in these two equally essential—yet necessarily distinct—Departments requires no demonstration. To safeguard the Empire in the event of hostilities is a matter which involves the co-operation of our forces by land and by sea. The general scheme of operations, in view of

the various conceivable contingencies, must be determined beforehand, and can, of necessity, be settled only by close concert between the experts of the two Services. Lord WOLSELEY gave generous and emphatic expression to his belief in the need of a strong Navy, when he declared the other day that, if reductions in either branch were unavoidable, he would be in favour of diminishing the Military strength. But no degree of efficiency in either of the two will be of avail unless there is an effectual machinery for common counsel and control. The device which was adopted by the late Government, and approved by their successors, is to constitute a Committee of the Cabinet, of which the Duke of DEVONSHIRE is to be President. As yet it appears to exist chiefly in general idea; and it is much to be desired that no time should be lost in maturing an Institution which has been judged—after prolonged and minute inquiry—to be essential to the proper conduct of the National Defence. As to the principles upon which it will act, the Duke of DEVONSHIRE was able to give at least one bit of information which was sure of approval in such a place as Sheffield. The provision of material of war would assuredly be one of the objects of the joint care, and the PRESIDENT of the COUNCIL pronounced himself strongly in favour of relying as much as possible on private enterprise, and reducing Government establishments to the narrowest range. The general rule is to be commended, yet it would be no less unsafe to trust absolutely to Sheffield or Newcastle, than to expand Woolwich to a bulk which would leave no room for the competition of private firms.

It is one of the privileges—it can hardly be called a solace—of Statesmen who are out of office to have no policy [to expound, or any difficulties of current diplomacy to elucidate. Mr. G. W. E. RUSSELL seldom speaks so much to the satisfaction of his political friends as when he has no special message to deliver. Yesterday he was the guest of the Manchester Reform Club. No longer could he venture to rouse the enthusiasm of Liberal workers by rattling diatribes against the parson, the squire, and the brewer. As yet, also, it is judged premature, nay hazardous, for the Party of the Newcastle Programme to lay themselves out for the support of the too credulous publican. Therefore, in dearth of more stimulating topics, Mr. GEORGE RUSSELL fell back on retrospect. Lord ROSEBERRY has had a good deal to endure at the hands of his candid and exacting colleagues, but the last drop in the cup of bitterness must be such apologetic obituaries as the fertile vein of his sometime subordinate provided for him yesterday. Whatever other people may say, and Mr. GEORGE RUSSELL is far too modest a man to put his opinion against that of his betters, he, for one, believes that Lord ROSEBERRY has some good points. The testimonial ought to be appreciated at The Durdans. Nor—here Mr. RUSSELL devotes himself to the pleasing duty of historical vindication—is it at all correct to assert that Lord ROSEBERRY “forced himself into the first place.” Not at all. It was his misfortune, not his fault, that, being what he was, he was called upon to succeed a great Statesman like Mr. GLADSTONE. Indeed, it was in a way creditable to Lord ROSEBERRY that, being a Peer, he managed to hold his ground at all. But, alas! the world is captious and uncharitable. The only reward that Lord ROSEBERRY has reaped from his patriotic willingness to be Prime Minister, and his conscientious efforts to succeed in the post, is that “since March, 1894”—it is always reassuring to have precise dates—“hardly a good word has been said for him in quarters professedly Liberal.” But Lord ROSEBERRY will be able to bear up. Mr. RUSSELL'S eulogy will atone for a good deal of detraction.