

# WILLIAM EDWARD FORSTER.

*THE MAN AND HIS POLICY.*

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A PAPER

READ BEFORE THE

HACKNEY YOUNG MEN'S LIBERAL ASSOCIATION,

*FRIDAY, JUNE 2nd, 1882,*

BY

ONE OF ITS MEMBERS:

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PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY

THE NATIONAL PRESS AGENCY, LIMITED,  
13, *Whitefriars Street, Fleet Street, E.C.*

1882.

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PRICE TWOPENCE



\*.\* Some of the facts and a few of the expressions in this paper were used in an article on the same subject, which appeared in the *Yorkshireman* of January 20th, 1877.



# WILLIAM EDWARD FORSTER:

## THE MAN AND HIS POLICY.

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*A Paper read before the Hackney Young Men's Liberal Association,  
Friday, June 2nd, 1882.*

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“Where, how, and why has this man failed?” Such is the question, or rather series of questions, arising in the minds of all interested in politics whenever some statesman, eminent in the councils of his party, trusted awhile in the Cabinet, and reckoned of much service in his country’s administration, falls or descends from the high position he has won, and from the back benches utters his jeremiads and prophecies inevitable woe. Secessions are not rare in politics, and each party has its own to mourn; within a very few years both Liberal and Conservative Cabinets have had to suffer the pangs of parting from colleagues of like mind with themselves up to a certain point, but of like mind no longer. The late Earl of Derby was bereft of the services of Lord Cranborne (now Marquis of Salisbury), of Lord Carnarvon, and of General Peel, because of differences upon Parliamentary Reform; the late Earl of Beaconsfield lost two of his colleagues at the acutest crisis of the Eastern Question; and Mr. Gladstone has had to part from the Duke of Argyll—a colleague in every Whig Cabinet to which he has belonged—on the very night the Irish Land Bill was introduced to the House of Commons, and from Mr. Forster on the very day the imprisoned members were released from Kilmainham.

But the question as to failure is one which, though popular and well-nigh universal—especially among the party to which the seceder belongs—is misleading, and the answer to it, if hasty, is likely to be wrong. At the first blush, it might seem as if a man who has cut himself off from his political connections at a juncture when his



leaving them may be fatal to their Ministerial existence, would never be likely again to be selected to work with those he has so injured. But if resignation entailed a life-long penalty, if a bar were to be placed upon all future attempts to enter the Ministerial circle because of once having felt compelled to leave it, the thought may be ventured upon that the wavering politician's conscience would become a little more elastic, and his seat among his colleagues a little more secure. As the matter stands, resignation from one Cabinet is very far from being a bar to entrance to another formed from the same political party. The Earl of Carnarvon left Lord Derby, and joined Mr. Disraeli; he left Mr. Disraeli, and will join the Marquis of Salisbury. What man has done man can do: and those who imagine that because Mr. Forster, the most recent of our secessionists, has come out from among the Liberal Ministers of to-day he will not be found among the Liberal Ministers of to-morrow; who argue that because, with or without intention, he has damaged the Liberal party of the present, he will not be found among the Liberal leaders of the future, reckon without their man, and forget a certain incident in recent political history when one who did his utmost to vilify and to injure the guiding spirit of the Conservative party in 1867, became colleague in 1874, servitor in 1878, and successor in 1881 to the man with whom he had so dealt.

It is, therefore, because I believe we have by no means heard the last of Mr. Forster that I have chosen to address you upon one of the least understood men in the English Parliament. It is because so little is really known of Mr. Forster that so much has been expected, and it is because so much has been expected that his apparent failure has loomed so large. It is, I submit, Mr. Forster's ill-fortune that he entered public life with the reputation of a Radical, which he had never been; and that he has continued with the reputation of a statesman, which he has never become. In the strictest sense he is a Moderate Liberal; in the best sense, an administrator: in policy and in position he is not, and never has been, anything more.

Mr. Justin McCarthy, in the latest of his historical works, has observed: "The more vividly we can form an impression as to the appearance, the bearing, and the personal peculiarities of a statesman, the more likely are we to understand the part he took in public affairs, and the purposes and principles which



inspired him." Acting upon this *dictum*, I will endeavour to paint Mr. Forster, not as the savage monster of the Irish Nationalist prints, not as the martyred statesman of the Tory journals, but as the member for Bradford, the author of the Education Act, and the inspirer and the victim of an unhappy Irish policy. Once seen, the tall figure, with unkempt hair, badly-fitting clothes, and a generally straggling appearance, is not likely to be forgotten ; but it is the rugged face that most demands attention, and it is this feature that best baffles description. Caricaturists who are enabled with a stroke to set before us the clearly-cut brow of Mr. Gladstone, the bushy beard of Lord Salisbury, the never-worn eye-glass of Mr. Bright, and the ever-wanted spectacles of Sir Richard Cross, are reduced to the straits of little boys who draw horses that look like hills, and camels resembling Alpine ranges, and have to label any attempted portrait of Mr. Forster with the name of the subject. His style of oratory is as difficult to be described as his style of face ; it is easy to say that it is probably the worst of any leading politician of our time, but it is not so easy to state the secret of its power. Yet, before four thousand of his constituents in St. George's Hall, at Bradford, Mr. Forster can so speak that the area shall fairly rise at him, and the three great galleries vie with each other in their anxiety to applaud. If the highest art be that which conceals art, then is Mr. Forster one of the most artistic of orators, for he seems to study how best to appear unstudied, and his loose and rambling sentences are a puzzle to the patient reporter and a weariness of soul to the unaccustomed listener. But this very characteristic it is which has won him much esteem among our "arm-chair politicians." When we go into a country court of assize, and hear a barrister putting himself deliberately down to the level of the bucolic jury with whom he has to deal, we exclaim, "How clever !" When we visit the House of Commons and hear a politician speak in the rough and ready way which captivates the hearts of all who think a certain John Bullish steadiness of purpose and hardness of head thus betrayed, we say, "How honest !" The difference is that in the one case we remember, and in the other we forget, that it is the duty of both barrister and politician to win verdicts, and that the method of each is carefully adapted to the end in view.

The popular idea of Mr. Forster—at least, up to recent date—



has been that he is the embodiment of sturdy independence, a kind of rock round which the surges of irate Radicals may roar without effect. Probably one reason for this has been that it is commonly supposed that Mr. Forster is a Yorkshireman, and this he is not. Tall, lusty, plain-spoken, and homely, nature may have intended him as one of that hardy, honest, and hospitable race ; but it was the slow-going South, hot-bed of quiet Toryism, that gave birth to this representative of the somewhat lively Liberalism of the North. His connection with Yorkshire is solely as manufacturer and member of Parliament; but the atmosphere of Wharfedale, in which his dwelling is situate, has so permeated him that the *Daily News* of ten years since was justified, though without altogether meaning it in this sense, in describing him as "the best stage Yorkshireman, whether in the Parliamentary or any other theatre, of his day."

Born at Bradpole, in Dorset, in 1818 (nearly nine years younger, therefore, than Mr. Gladstone, and seven years than Mr. Bright), the late Chief Secretary is the son of William Forster, for more than fifty years a minister of the Society of Friends, who died on an anti-slavery mission in Tennessee, his mother being a sister of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, a name never to be forgotten when Abolition is remembered. At twenty-nine years of age he made his first appearance of any note in political matters, by visiting Ireland with some other Friends when the worst effects of the famine were still to be felt ; and he was so impressed with the misery that stalked from east to west and from north to south, that, in language of peculiar vehemence, he appealed to the people of England to do their best to relieve the sufferers, enforcing his words by shewing that this country was largely responsible for the evil by its past misgovernment of the sister isle. Of that journey, of the impressions Mr. Forster then formed, of the benevolence he at that time displayed, we have heard much—perhaps too much—during the past two years. The views of 1847 seem to have struck root in a mind which, once made up, offers an impregnable barrier to new ideas ; and the source of much of the failure that has attended his policy may be sought in the fact that, though thirty-three years had altered, and most materially altered, the opinions of English statesmen regarding Ireland, Mr. Forster's mental vision was so filled with the Ireland from which O'Connell had just passed away, that he could not see that the



Ireland with which he had to deal was that in which Parnell had just arisen.

In West Riding politics Mr. Forster often participated in the interval that separated 1847 and 1859, now as a Liberal, then as a Negro Emancipator, and he was more than once talked of as a candidate for Parliamentary honours ; but it was only in the latter year that he took a decided step into the national arena. At the dissolution of Parliament upon the defeat of the Derby-Disraeli Reform Bill, he contested Leeds as the colleague of Mr. (now Sir) Edward Baines, against Mr. Beecroft, the Tory representative, but was beaten by twenty-two votes. His opportunity came just two years afterwards, upon the resignation by the late Sir Titus (then Mr.) Salt of his seat for Bradford ; and, although votes were at that time very valuable, the Palmerstonian majority being less than a score, Mr. Forster was unopposed by the Conservatives, and, on February 11th, 1861, was returned to the House of Commons.

The Ministry then in power was of a very Whig type, the only sop thrown to that advanced element in Liberalism which has since revolutionised the party being the admission of Mr. Milner Gibson to the Cabinet and of Mr. Stansfeld to a subordinate office. In the year previous to Mr. Forster's entrance, Lord John (afterwards Earl) Russell had brought in a Bill reducing the franchise in counties to £10 and in boroughs to £6, but this having been withdrawn no mention was made of the question in the next Royal Speech ; and the prevailing tone of the House may be gathered from the rejection of Locke King's and Edward Baines's motions for the reduction of the franchise, and of the Bill for the abolition of Church-rates. Lord Palmerston did not desire to move, the Whigs wished to stand still, and domestic reform was left practically untouched. Home concerns were at their quietest, and it was to affairs across the Atlantic that attention was mainly directed. In December, 1860, South Carolina had declared its secession from the American Union ; before the following May nine others had followed the example of the Palmetto State ; and the fall of Sumter in the April had opened a civil war the sadness and sorrow of which were only brightened by its ultimate effect—the emancipation of the slaves.

It was, therefore, at a moment when opinion in England was divided with an intensity of bitterness upon the claims of the



South to secede and of the North to use war as a weapon to maintain the Union, that Mr. Forster first walked up the floor of the House of Commons. Coming, as has already been indicated, from an Abolitionist stock, possessed from his earliest years of the ideas that had nerved Clarkson and Sharpe, Buxton and Wilberforce through struggle to victory, the member for Bradford entered Parliament as one whose main immediate concern was the attainment of freedom for the slave. It required some amount of courage to be a Federal partisan, for the argument in favour of State rights as a justification for secession was plausible, and the assumption that Lincoln would no more dare than Davis would desire to grant emancipation was extensively held. It was not for another eighteen months that the proclamation was issued that bade slavery disappear from the States; and the short-sighted in political affairs, those who believed that the "peculiar institution" must of necessity be a permanency, and those who admired the South because it was plucky and because it was "genteel," could not perceive that the North was bound in the long run to win, and with its victory to abolish the system which, more than any other, was the cornerstone of the Confederacy, and the source of the Confederacy's wealth. To his honour, to the credit of his political discernment, be it observed, Mr. Forster was not one of these. "You will see," he said, speaking at Bradford in this year, 1861, "day by day, as this war goes on, that the North will find out that in fighting for the Union it must fight against slavery, and that it will be forced, against its own conviction, against its own wish, to take an anti-slavery position." Nearly two years later, and in the very month that the Emancipation Proclamation came into force and thus fulfilled his prophecy to the letter, Mr. Forster, again speaking at Bradford, brushed aside with indignation the figment that the South was fighting for freedom. "They are fighting for the freedom to enslave; for the freedom to tear the wife from the husband and the mother from her child; for the freedom to make it legal for a black father, if he protect his daughter from outrage, to be tortured or killed; for the freedom to make it legal for a white father to sell his own daughter in the market-place; for the freedom to make it a crime to teach boys and girls to read and write; and for the freedom to extend that system which makes labour a curse, which blasts the soil, and



which is acknowledged to be the sum of human evil—that is the freedom for which the South is fighting.”

Views such as these, when held at all twenty years back, were mainly entertained by the advanced section of the Liberal party; and thus it was that Mr. Forster, returned without opposition for what has always been reputed, but which has not always proved itself to be, a Radical borough, came to be counted as of that party. He sat below the gangway, as all but Whigs of a fossilised and almost extinct type had to do at that period; but it was observed early in his Parliamentary career that although, as a critic of the time observed, he had “real claims to be called an independent member,” and was “constantly differing from the Government,” he, whenever he could, vindicated and supported them. “This excellent member,” went on the criticism, “is a plain man in all senses of the word, and probably cares as little for the outward and visible signs of office as any one in the House; but he is evidently courted and deferred to by Ministers, both Cabinet and subordinate.” Upon the reconstruction of the Liberal Administration, necessitated by the death of Lord Palmerston, the qualities thus indicated were officially recognised, and Mr. Forster became Under-Secretary for the Colonies—a position which must more than once have been irksome to a man who had won his spurs as an Abolitionist, seeing that the chief incident of his eight months’ occupancy was that rebellion in Jamaica which Governor Eyre so ruthlessly put down.

The Liberal Ministry fell in June, 1866, upon the Russell-Gladstone Reform Bill, Mr. Forster going out with it, but it was felt that when his party returned to power he would be given an office more nearly reaching Cabinet rank. It is one among the many curious circumstances of his political career that the Secretaryship for War should have been spoken of in connection with this descendant of a Quaker house; but, fortunately for Mr. Forster’s fame—for a Liberal War Minister seldom seems successful, however much of sound work he may achieve—it was a post of lower standing, though of greater potentiality of result, that was offered to and accepted by him. As Vice-President of the Council, he pioneered through the House the Endowed Schools Act of 1869, the never-to-be-forgotten Education Act of 1870, the Ballot Bill in 1871, the Ballot Act of 1872, and the Education Act Amendment Act of 1873, a roll of service not exceeded in amount or importance



by that of any member of the then Ministry, save Mr. Gladstone himself. Of the greatest of these measures it will be necessary later to speak ; for the time it suffices that the patience, the perseverance, and the skill with which Mr. Forster steered them through the Commons abundantly proved him what I have claimed him to be—an excellent administrator.

But all was not success. In the year he achieved his greatest legislative triumph, Mr. Forster had to endure the mortification of having a vote of censure passed upon him for his education policy by a meeting of four thousand of his constituents, summoned and addressed by himself. From that period his relations with the advanced section of his former supporters were very strained, so much so that, at the dissolution of 1874, a determined effort was made to oust him from the representation of Bradford, his seat being retained only by the Tory vote. In the early portion of 1875, upon Mr. Gladstone's resignation of the leadership, he was named as a candidate in opposition to Lord Hartington, but so strong was the feeling against him among the below-the-gangway Liberals that, a few days before the decisive meeting at the Reform Club, he withdrew from the field. In the next year, when the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria were the theme of well-nigh universal execration, Mr. Forster paid a visit to the East of Europe, and, returning with all the glory of the traveller full upon him, and when the agitation was dying away, cast the coldest of cold water on the Liberal uprising against what had been known as our "traditional policy." It was not until the Beaconsfield Government had so conducted the country's concerns as to weld the Liberal party into one solid whole in opposition to it, that Forsterians and Radicals once more united, and Bradford by triumphant majorities returned Mr. Forster and Mr. Illingworth, the former leader of the local Radical revolt.

Without diving into the mysteries of Bradford politics, a few words on Mr. Forster's relations with his constituents are necessitated by the fact that he has obtained much credit from his political opponents by his resistance to what has been foolishly and falsely called "the Caucus." In this matter he is supposed to have shewn some kind of transcendent pluck, but what are the facts? The Bradford Liberal Electoral Association, at the time the dispute with Mr. Forster was raging its highest, had no connection with the Birmingham organisation, for the best of all reasons, and



that was that the National Liberal Federation was not in existence. In 1874, backed by over eight thousand Liberals of the borough, the Association opposed Mr. Forster's return. The feeling aroused by this "split" did not readily subside, and it was some years before a *modus vivendi* could be found between the two sections. Discussions went on with a view of arranging a settlement, and in the course of these a rather heated correspondence passed between Mr. Forster and Mr. Illingworth. But within eighteen months of this, these gentlemen were returned as colleagues, and as candidates of the very Association the Tories had so praised Mr. Forster for defying. Why was this change? Because it had become apparent to all clear-minded Radicals that, as long as Mr. Forster could count upon the Tory vote, so long would he be returned for Bradford; and because it was equally apparent to Mr. Forster that he could not continue in Parliament as a Liberal leader if he again found the bulk of the local Liberal vote arrayed against him. It is, however, only fair to Mr. Forster to remember that, from the first moment of his return to Parliament, he has never shrunk from declaring in effect that he was Bradford's representative and not its delegate. Whether this phrase is not, in the mouths of most members who use it, a piece of cant that their constituents will some day sternly deal with, need not here be discussed. Your "independent" politician is generally, as the late Lord Derby is said once to have observed, a politician not to be depended upon; it may be accepted almost as an axiom that it is only when a Liberal member has established friendly relations with the Conservatives that he can do without "the Caucus." But Mr. Forster has in this matter been consistent; in his very first speech after being elected, he told his constituents he would not yield his own opinion in deference to that of any or all of them: but consistency of this kind can hardly be expected to be so admired by men of his own party, whose feelings are as keen and whose sentiments are as honourable as his own, as by his political opponents, whose cause he has so often and so materially assisted.

But it is not as a Liberal member doing his best to damage a Liberal organisation, but as a Liberal Minister disintegrating the Liberal party that Mr. Forster is chiefly to be considered. The effects of the education policy in so dividing us as to materially aid the Tory success of 1874 were manifest; what result the Irish



policy will have upon the next General Election has yet to be seen. This is not the occasion, neither is the allotted time sufficient, to enter minutely upon the course pursued by Mr. Forster in Ireland. While he is primarily responsible as the one upon whose advice the coercive policy was proposed, his colleagues who recommended it to Parliament, the majorities who there adopted it, and the country which approved it, must share the blame. It would be as easy as it would be unfair to turn the whole current of censure upon a fallen man ; yet it is only right that, if condemnation is to be apportioned, the conduct of the Minister who initiated the policy should be closely examined, and the reasons of his failure made manifest. The fact is that what was wanted in Ireland when Mr. Forster was given the Chief Secretaryship was not an administrator but a statesman. The land question was fast ripening for settlement, the people were better organised and more effectively represented than at any period of Irish history, and what was required of the virtual ruler of the sister country was a comprehensive view of the circumstances in which it stood, the causes which had produced them, and the remedies which could most swiftly, most safely, and most surely be applied. An opportunity was presented such as has occurred in the career of few politicians for the display of qualities of statesmanship that should win an immortal name. It is not matter for complaint that Mr. Forster did not rise to the occasion ; to one of his temperament, of his habits of thought, of his theory of the practical in politics, such an effort was impossible. It is claimed as one of Mr. Forster's virtues that he sees all round a subject ; in the process of getting round he is apt to become giddy and to lose his balance. Hence his failure.

Exaggerated anticipations had been formed of Mr. Forster's ability to rule Ireland. His visit in 1847 on a mission of benevolence was held to be proof of a conciliatory disposition ; his genius for managing men in the House of Commons was thought to indicate a power of manipulating the varied forces in Ireland to the purposes of good government. But it was forgotten that a certain hardness often accompanies charity, and that flexibility to Conservative foes in Parliament is not incompatible with a rugged bearing to Radical friends outside. It was further failed to be remembered that, during his whole career, it was only once, and that on the slavery question—the only one in which he ever ap-



peared to scorn compromise and to stand unswervingly upon principle—that Mr. Forster had shewn that statesmanlike insight which lifts its possessor to an eminence whence he can speak as a prophet and a leader of men. The talent for compromise had been mistaken for something higher, something rarer, something much more to be admired. Politician but no prophet, administrator but no statesman, Mr. Forster went to Ireland only to shatter—temporarily though it may be—a reputation laboriously won.

Now, what grounds were there for thinking Mr. Forster a statesman? He had sat in the House of Commons for twenty years, but so had many mediocrities; he had been a member of a Liberal Cabinet, but so had been more than one mere administrator; he had been sponsor to the Education Act—and that was all. In so saying, there is no desire to minimise the importance of that measure; it was a great and noble enactment, and one that will never be forgotten by a grateful country. But its authorship is slender foundation for all the expectations formed of Mr. Forster; the mode of its passage through the Commons should have been in itself sufficient to minimise those expectations, to a considerable degree. Mr. Forster's chief fault in attempting the rôle of a statesman is that he thinks the term synonymous with politician; management of the House of Commons is to him the whole art of governing the country; to pass a Bill by calling in his enemies to defeat his friends is the highest effort in tactics. The reason for all this is that Mr. Forster possesses a fatal facility for striking an average—an average of what he believes to be the general political opinion of the moment—an average that, once struck, is never departed from. His mind cannot be made up twice upon one subject; he learns little and he forgets nothing: he is as a thermometer that shews the lowest point to which the temperature has fallen—once fixed, the sun may be higher, the heat become greater, the whole world swelter under its effects, but the indicator never moves; it has been once right, and that suffices.

There is no doubt that the average opinion of the House of Commons in 1870 was that which Mr. Forster embodied in his Act; but when that opinion changed, when the twenty-fifth clause was found to be a failure, Mr. Forster clung to his old belief with touching tenacity, and would hardly acknowledge the possibility of his having committed an error of judgment even when the Liberal



party had been rent in twain by his efforts, and the Tories had admitted the impracticability of retaining the clause as it stood. It was the same with the Eastern Question. Mr. Forster returned from Bulgaria just as public opinion was cooling after the outburst of righteous indignation against the Turkish atrocities; he gauged accurately enough the average thought of the moment in favour of allowing Lord Derby to do his best to avert war, and he spoke accordingly. True, he did not grasp the question thoroughly; he denied the possibility of Bulgaria governing herself without the presence of a foreign army, and committed himself to the mildest possible approval of the only man who throughout that crisis had a definite policy. Mr. Forster's fears have been proved fallacious; Mr. Gladstone's policy has secured success—but then the present Prime Minister is a statesman. The difference between the political insight of the two men (and I use Mr. Gladstone only because an illustration will convey an argument better than any number of words) was shewn again and again throughout the whole course of this question. Mr. Forster moved an amendment from which in the hour of greatest danger (persuaded thereunto by some telegrams from Sir Henry Layard, only to be characterised by the strongest epithet) he ran away; Mr. Gladstone was sufficiently courageous to vote in the small minority which opposed the Six Millions. Again and again Mr. Forster took his usual course—the average opinion did not appear to him to be against the Beaconsfield Government, and he would not risk his reputation for Parliamentary shrewdness by running counter to it; again and again Mr. Gladstone, caring less for the opinion of a chance Tory majority than for the cause of right and the honour of England, used his voice and his vote against a policy that only his efforts—unsupported by some around him upon whom he had a right to count, but heartily adopted by the Liberals of the country—prevented from driving England into war. Instances might be multiplied to shew that Mr. Forster's power of striking an average is a possession which too often leads him astray; but let these suffice as examples of the mistakes a Liberal may commit when posing as a man of pre-eminent caution, and actually proving a most effective Conservative ally.

It was a mind so constituted, a mind receptive to a certain degree and at a certain time, but never reopening when once closed, that in 1880 was brought to bear upon the Irish difficulty.



Mr. Forster had seen something of the country thirty-three years before ; he practically saw nothing of it again. During the whole term of his office, Dublin Castle bounded his vision ; he did not consult a single Irish member upon an Irish topic ; he took the opinions of the permanent officials as if they were truth infallible ; he hesitated until he saw that the average opinion of the English people was in favour of some form of coercion, and then he struck. What mattered it that the blow, given in the dark and upon information proved to be imperfect, failed in its aim ? What was it that, while the "village ruffians" were little touched, the gaols were filled with political prisoners ? The thermometer had once stood at coercion point and there the indicator would remain, despite the fact that Tories and Liberals alike cried out against the Act, and the continued detention of the Parliamentary "suspects" was well nigh an impossibility. Mr. Forster had had a great opportunity and he had lost it ; he had had to deal with a political crisis which might have been met in a constitutional manner, and he had driven the opposing forces underground ; he had thrust hundreds into gaol, and their brethren had joined secret societies ; he had ruled Ireland as he willed, and while yet she groaned under his system his successor was assassinated. Where was the statesmanship of all this ? The answer has been traced in letters of fire by "Captain Moonlight," whose exploits began, continued, and flourished in their greatest height under the coercion régime.

Mr. Forster has been spoken of by some as a Whig, but this is a misnomer. Mr. Gladstone years since pointed out that "a man not born a Liberal may become a Liberal ; but to be a Whig he must be a born Whig." Like Mr. Goschen, who has also been sometimes similarly and mistakenly dubbed, Mr. Forster is one of those moderate politicians who pride themselves on a well-balanced mind—so well-balanced that they sometimes seem unfitted for the every-day work of practical politics. Statesmen have to choose a broad path ; Parliamentary tight-rope walking is no part of their business. But it is needful to remember that it is not alone statesmen that compose a Cabinet ; it is as important to bear in mind that it is not alone Radicals that form the Liberal party. Mr. Goschen has not joined the present Administration because he is opposed to an extension of the suffrage ; why Mr. Forster has left it has been sufficiently explained ; but it is not rash to prophesy



that both will be found in Liberal Cabinets of the future. Temporary differences will disappear with the circumstances that have forced them into notice ; and it is neither according to the policy nor to the principles of Liberalism that a man shall be ostracised because of one difference of opinion, or because of one development of policy, even though the one may have been a mistake and the other a failure. We pride ourselves on the breadth of our principles ; we must not seek to belie them by narrowing our boundaries. Mr. Forster may not be a statesman—I do not believe he is ; he may not be a Radical—I am sure he is not ; but one thing I do believe and of one thing I am sure, and that is that facts are stubborn things, and that Mr. Forster is a fact. And, however much may be deplored those extraordinary scenes in the House, when damage to the Government rather than defence of personal character seemed the object sought by the ex-Cabinet Minister, yet as long as our party requires among its leaders men of experience, of proved powers of administration, and of general fidelity to progressive principles, so long will there be room amid the foremost Liberal ranks for Mr. Forster. The differences of to-day will die away, but the man will remain : let us see to it that we make the best use of him. Profiting by the lessons of the past, estimating him at his true value, not asking from him more than his career has shewn him capable of, do not let us repeat the mistake committed by the Conservatives concerning Lord Derby, and drive him into the opposite camp. As long as we are governed by party—and we cannot hope for a better or fairer all-round system—so long must we exercise forbearance, and not expect too much. The decline of Liberalism will be at hand when we are afraid to freely criticise any of our leaders ; it will be equally near when, because we criticise and are forced occasionally to condemn, we are so narrow of mind and harsh of soul as to expel from among us any whose views do not exactly tally with our own.