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SIR EDWARD CLARKE

(HER MAJESTY'S SOLICITOR GENERAL)

PUBLIC SPEECHES

1880—1890



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TO
THE ELECTORS OF THE BOROUGH
OF PLYMOUTH,

Who have shown a great and sustained confidence in my capacity for public service, by four times returning me to Parliament as their Representative, I dedicate this selection from the Speeches made by me during the last ten years, trusting that it will serve as an expression of gratitude for their favour, and of my hope that for many years to come I may be allowed to represent them in the House of Commons.

EDWARD CLARKE.

37 Russell Square,
Feb. 4, 1890.

PREFACE.

Address to the Electors of the Borough of Southwark,

FEBRUARY 4, 1880.

GENTLEMEN,—The death of the senior member for your Borough, my old friend Mr. John Locke, who had for many years been held in deserved esteem by all classes among his constituents, affords you an opportunity of expressing your opinion upon the conduct of public affairs.

The questions before you for consideration are of national importance ; and the judgment which shall be expressed by the great constituency of Southwark will materially influence the opinion and the action of the country at large.

During the last six years a Conservative Government has directed the policy, and conducted the administration, of Great Britain, under the accumulated difficulties of foreign war, depressed commerce, failing harvests, and the most malicious and unscrupulous Opposition which the history of this country records. As a Conservative, I ask you fairly to consider the title which that Government has established to your confidence and support.

In Eastern Europe the policy of Her Majesty's Government has received the justification of complete success. The Berlin Treaty has not only for the past eighteen months secured the peace of Europe, but has dissolved the formidable triple alliance, which hindered the progress of Constitutional freedom, and menaced the independence of the smaller States. At the great council which gathered at Berlin, the representatives of Great Britain spoke in the name of a people who were anxious for honourable peace, but had shown themselves ready to bear the burdens and anxieties of war. The firm and resolute will of Lord Beaconsfield was shared and sustained by the great majority of his countrymen, and the jealousies and ambitions which had threatened Europe with the horrors of wide-spreading war disappeared before the peaceful and unselfish but unwavering policy of the people of Great Britain.

In Afghanistan the Liberal Government of 1868-74 had succeeded in disturbing and alienating the Ameer, and in providing for Russia an opportunity for unofficial war against this country, of which, in the crisis of the European difficulties, she gladly availed herself. To have remained quiescent would have been to expose our Indian Empire to the danger of an invasion, of whose time and place we should have had no warning, of whose strength we could make no estimate, and whose retreat we could not follow. The emergency was firmly met, the passes of the North-Western frontier are now in our hands ; and the chief danger which threatened the safety of our empire in India is finally dispelled.

In South Africa a war, for which the Home Government was in no way responsible, has ended in the destruction of a barbaric military organization which disturbed the peace and hindered the progress of our colonies.

The Government has been called upon to provide for large and exceptional expenditure, while the depression of commerce, and the failure of recent harvests have checked, for a time, the natural tendency of the revenue to increase. Yet they have neither imposed heavier burdens on the people, nor increased the national debt. The Liberal Government of 1868-74 had five complete years of office; of the Conservative administration only five years have yet been completed. It is fair to compare these terms. In the five years of Conservative rule the amount paid in taxation was less per head than it was in the five years of Mr. Gladstone; the Income Tax, which in the same period amounted under Mr. Gladstone to rs. 10d. in the £, in the five years of the Conservatives was only rs. 3d.; and, at the end of the five years, the Conservative Government had effected a real reduction in the debt of the country of no less than seventeen millions and a half.

It has been the fashion of late for Radical speakers to declare that domestic legislation has been neglected. The accusation comes from those who, by abetting a system of mere obstruction, have done their best to bring Parliamentary Government to inefficiency and disrepute. And the accusation is not true. During the last six sessions between twenty and thirty Acts have been passed into law by the exertions of the Ministry, which have directly and substantially contributed to the health, education, and social welfare of the people.

The administration of the law has been rendered more simple and more speedy; the prosecution of criminals has been assumed as the duty of the State instead of being left to the revenge of the victim of the crime; the right to a trial by jury has been widely extended: the unnecessary and costly imprisonment for small offences has been greatly lessened; the treatment of criminals undergoing imprisonment has been rendered uniform.

The laws relating to Public Health have been consolidated and improved; municipalities have received powers to remove unhealthy dwellings. Rivers have been protected from pollution, and Commons from enclosure; and the Factories Act of 1874, and the Factories and Workshops Act of 1878, completed a series of Acts which have given comfort to the homes of working men, and saved their children from the evils of premature toil.

The relations between employers and employed have been improved by the Acts of 1875, and the real grievance which working men suffered under the law of conspiracy, as then expounded, was removed in that year; in the same session the statute was passed under which Friendly Societies have been enabled to re-organize themselves on a safer basis than before; and the Agricultural Holdings Act secured to every tenant, who had no written contract with his landlord, compensation for what he had put upon the farm, and an ample term of notice before he could be made to quit possession.

I have not attempted to summarize the whole of the legislation of these years, but the measures I have named do, in themselves, constitute a body of social reform of which the Ministry may be proud.

Of a ministry which has thus worthily upheld the influences of Great Britain, wisely administered the national resources, and diligently applied itself to useful legislation, I avow myself a firm and earnest supporter, and I appeal to all among you who value our good name abroad and good government at home to give me your votes in this contest.

The condition of Ireland has again become a question of serious difficulty. Bad harvests have checked the steady advance in material prosperity which she has now enjoyed for many years, and to add to her misfortune an agitation has been raging among her people which must inevitably tend to drive away the capital which she so sorely needs. The first duty of the

nation is clear ; to relieve by voluntary subscription, or, if needful, by the application of public funds, the real want which is undoubtedly felt in certain parts of Ireland. The second duty is equally clear ; to uphold the authority of the law and to protect with impartial firmness, order, property, and freedom. I hope that any inequalities before the law which may exist may speedily be redressed ; that municipal institutions in Ireland may be extended ; that the measures recently passed to aid the intermediate and higher education of Irishmen may receive full development ; and that the purely administrative business of the country may be carried out by local inquiries and provisional orders, instead of the costly and tedious process of committees and bills in the Imperial Parliament. But I distrust the legislation of panic or of passion, and the statesmanship which allows a political murder or a street outrage to prompt the overthrow of a church, and the confiscation of its property ; or which offers to the starving peasants of Connaught the barren gift of a scheme by which the Imperial Government may become an improvident money-lender, to enable thriving tenants to purchase the fee-simple of the lands they farm. And I would defend the integrity of the Empire as resolutely against a domestic faction as against a foreign foe.

In the field of practical legislation there is plenty of work for Parliament to do. The codification of the Criminal Law ; the establishment of a reasonable and uniform system of valuation for rating purposes ; the amendment of the law of Bankruptcy ; the simplification of the title to land ; the removal of the rule which prevents a person charged with crime from giving evidence on his own behalf, and will not permit his wife to be called as a witness ; the abolition of the rule by which the eldest son in the case of an intestacy takes the whole of the landed property ; these are among the matters upon which I hope I might usefully assist in the work of legislation.

I am by education and by conviction a Churchman, and I believe that the maintenance of the Church of England, and her continued devotion to the work of religious education, are the surest guarantees of the happiness and true prosperity of the country. The schemes of the Liberation Society, now for party purposes discreetly suppressed, to be again brought forward if the confederacy of 1868 is again found possible, will find in me a resolute opponent.

I have never been able to persuade myself that voluntary abstinence from any luxury entitles me to prohibit other people from enjoying it, and I oppose the Permissive Bill agitation in all its forms.

I have lived many years in the South of London, and am thoroughly acquainted with the local interests of Southwark ; and during the last eighteen months I have taken every opportunity of making myself known among you. In so large a borough a personal canvass is, of course, impossible, but I ask you to read my speeches, to come, if you can, to hear me, and then to judge if I am fit to be your member. I have no ambition which is in conflict with your interests ; and if you honour me with the proud position of your representative in Parliament I will strive with all my powers to prove myself worthy of your trust.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient Servant,

EDWARD CLARKE.

HUNTINGDON LODGE, PECKHAM,

February 4, 1880.

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SPEECHES TO THE ELECTORS OF PLYMOUTH.

Speech at the Assembly Rooms, Plymouth.

JUNE 28, 1880.

[In June, 1880, Sir Edward Bates, Bart., who had been returned for Plymouth for the third time, at the General Election was unseated on petition, and Mr. Clarke became the Conservative candidate for the vacancy. He was returned by a majority of 144, the numbers being :—Mr. Edward Clarke, 2449 ; Sir George Young, Bart., 2305. The following speech was delivered at the beginning of the contest.]

MY first duty, speaking in Plymouth as a candidate for your suffrages, is to acknowledge, which I do most heartily, the generous warmth with which I have been treated in the town, and the personal kindness which my friend, Sir Edward Bates, has shown me during the past few days. I little thought when I was talking to him some weeks ago as to the prospects of the election petition—nay, I thought as little when I came into the town on Wednesday in last week to take my part in defending the seat which he had so worthily won, that within a week I should be here as a candidate before the constituency of Plymouth, and he introducing me to those who had trusted him for nine years, and I hope may learn to trust me hereafter. I am infinitely sorry that after nine years' service to this town he has been, through no fault whatever of his own, deprived of that which I know he prized as an honour, a position in which I believe he did this town good service in Parliament. Gentlemen, this is a time of trial for him, of trial which I know has

been tempered by the enthusiasm and kindness of those for whom he has striven during those years. It is a time of trial for the party to which he belongs, because it finds itself at this moment deprived of the representative in whom it would place most undeviating confidence. It is a time of trial for Plymouth itself, because the attack which has been made within the last week was not an attack that was levelled solely at my friend Sir Edward Bates, nor even levelled only at the few individuals who were mentioned by name in the course of the proceedings. The charge which was made in this town was a charge that Plymouth as a town had been corrupted and been bought. And it is a source of satisfaction to every man who values that freedom of election, without which our Parliamentary institutions would themselves become of little value, that that charge has been emphatically rejected by the judges before whose decision it was placed. I am not surprised to see in the columns of a local paper an attempt made to show the Plymouth people that the election petition was one from beginning to end, that it either stood altogether or fell altogether. Gentlemen, if that were so Plymouth would to-day have cause to be humiliated. Plymouth men would have cause to be ashamed that there had been attached to their old town the evil reputation of being a venal and corrupt borough. But it is not so, and the judges said it was not, and they, with expressions of real sympathy with the man against whom they were obliged by law to pronounce, expressed their satisfaction at the purity of election which they found had existed in the borough of Plymouth. Gentlemen, you have been told I have had a short experience of Parliamentary life. That is true. I think that my experience of Parliament has been as remarkable as that of any one who has lately been a candidate for Parliamentary honours. After eighteen months' of working in that great borough of Southwark, where there are twenty-four thousand electors, I found my opportunity of measuring the strength of the Conservative party with the strength of the Liberal party in that borough, and after the polling I found I had nearly 3500 more votes than any Conservative had polled before in that borough. I defeated both my opponents put together, and I had the great satisfaction of going to the House of Commons as Conservative member for the borough of Southwark. Gentlemen, my membership lasted seven weeks. Seven weeks from the day on which the polling had taken place which sent me to the House of Commons member for Southwark I was standing again at the Vestry Hall in Southwark to acknowledge that I had been defeated in a second contest. It was not altogether the fault of the electors of Southwark. It was the one crowning success, as I had thought it, of my life, the thing I had looked forward to

for twenty years, the boy's fancy, the youth's hope, the young man's ambition—the ambition of standing in the House of Commons ; but it came at a time when I was heavily burdened in different ways with work and trouble, and the work of the House of Commons during those few weeks broke me down, and I was obliged to leave London to seek absolute rest at the seaside the very day or within a day or two of the announcement of the dissolution. In my absence these mysterious rumours which float about with regard to a man were put about in all directions. Assertions were made as to my votes in the House of Commons which had not the semblance of truth. Every sort of weapon was used against me, and I came back as soon as possible, some thirty-six hours before the election on the second occasion, early enough to make a great fight and to poll 500 votes more than at the previous contest, but not early enough to save the seat, which I believe I should have done had I been well. And now, gentlemen, I have been asked by the leaders of the party here, I believe unanimously asked, to come down to you, and here I am, and with your good leave during the next week or two we will fight this contest fairly and above-board as men who mean to win, and who know they can do it if they choose. Let us condescend to nothing in the nature of smallness or personality, but determine that the result of this contest shall not only send to Parliament a man who represents your views, but shall show to the world that Plymouth men can fight an election with absolute purity. Gentlemen, on coming into the town, I find an address has been issued by my opponent, whom I desire to mention now by name with all the respect that is owing from me to one with whom I took part in political discussion a good many years ago. Sir George Young and I are friends of a good many years' standing. I am going to fight and fight him hard, and I hope to beat him. But I shall fight him as an Englishman fights, with perfect good humour, shaking hands with him before I fight and shaking hands with him after. But I must say, I think Sir George Young fancies you live a little out of the knowledge of political history. I am not clear that he thinks you know anything about politics at all, for I find a statement published throughout the town that the present Government, since it has come into power, has reversed the foreign policy of the late Administration. I was astounded when I read the statement. Gentlemen, three months ago a great issue was being fought out before the people of this country. For six years an Administration had been in power, which, like all Administrations, had in the course of those six years offended a good many people. It had lasted as long as almost any Administration during the last 70 years, and three months ago the question of whether it did or did not deserve

the confidence of the country was fought out before the constituencies. The verdict was distinctly given. There was no disputing that the great majority of the constituencies decided against the Conservative administration. Gentlemen, they had been led to make that decision by a series of the most violent attacks upon the Government of Lord Beaconsfield. That Government had been denounced before the country as one which had wantonly endeavoured to foment war and invasions throughout the world; which had embarked upon a foreign policy that was dangerous and discreditable to this country. That was the sort of thing that was spread up and down the land. Gentlemen, the Liberal Government came into office, and in the speech which had been prepared for her Gracious Majesty to utter at the beginning of the session, they caused her to say that her Government was devoting itself to the carrying out of the Berlin Treaty. The Berlin Treaty was one of the instruments that had been denounced all over the country. It was for making that Berlin Treaty, which was called a sham, that the Conservative Government was denounced, and the present Government, instead of reversing that policy, has been upholding the Berlin Treaty, and has been striving to render still more effective the convention of Cyprus, while at this moment, on their proposal, delegates are sitting at Berlin in order to carry out one of the provisions of the Berlin Treaty. So far from reversing the foreign policy of her Majesty's late Government, the Liberal Ministry which is at present in office have accepted it with almost slavish humility. The policy they so denounced they are now endeavouring to carry into effect. Gentlemen, these things are matters which do concern, and concern very deeply, the honour and interests of the country. I do not attach very much importance myself—I am not party man enough for that—to the question of whether the party I belong to is in power or out of power. There is sometimes a position out of office which is more independent and even more powerful, and it may be more honourable, than power or office itself. But there is one thing a great deal more important to this country than the question which set of men are to sit on the right or the left of the Speaker, and that is whether gentlemen are to be perfectly straightforward and honourable before the constituencies or not; if when the opinion of the constituencies is asked that opinion shall be asked fairly and honourably, and upon grounds which men can stand by when in office. But I am afraid the history of the last few months has made us almost to doubt the absolute integrity of public men. The Prime Minister has apologized to a foreign Sovereign. At the election of Midlothian he went so far as to suggest, in the course of a most violent attack upon Austria, that the Austrian flag should be hung out

of his opponent's window, in order to identify the Conservative candidate with the policy—the mischievous policy as he called it—of that foreign Power which he had denounced. Gentlemen, in that way he wins his victory at Midlothian, and he wins his victory through England, and when the victory is won and the office is obtained, and the power and the emoluments have come to his followers, what does he do? He apologizes most humbly to the foreign Sovereign, and says not a word of what he had said should have been spoken. “My dear Count Karolyi, if you will convey my apologies to your Sovereign and ask him to look over it, I shall be most thankful.” But where is the apology to Lord Dalkeith? to the electors of Midlothian? or to the electors of England? for they had given their decision on account of statements on the part of the present Prime Minister which are afterwards disavowed by him. Gentlemen, if he had but said fairly, “Well, I am very sorry; I apologize all round. It is not to be expected that I should resign the office I have; because you know the old saying, ‘That people may bear misfortune with fortitude, but never with resignation,’” but when he was called to account for this he said he would not attempt to defend the polemical language which he had been induced to use during the elections. Now, gentlemen, of all convenient theories this is the most convenient. Lord Beaconsfield and his colleagues were reviled and abused as no set of public men have been reviled and abused in England for many years. It was not sufficient to accuse them of being weak, of being incapable, of being misguided, of anything that was consistent with moral rectitude. Not a bit of it; moral character was the very thing they wanted to attack; and so we were told by Mr. John Bright that it was not only an incapable but a guilty Administration. I do not think the history of the last few months has tended to raise the tone of public life. I don't understand any distinction between the honour of a man in his private relations and the honour of a man when he stands on a public platform. If I say anything here I am as responsible for every syllable as if I were sitting at my own table, and to indulge in reckless assertions, and then to decline to defend or discuss them on the ground that they are what is called polemical language, is to invent a sort of third conscience for the use of politicians, which would enable them to make any assertion, and enable them, when they have to account for that assertion, simply to refuse to carry on the discussion. There are one or two things the Government have behaved in the same way about. You remember the South African troubles, and the great anxiety felt in England with regard to them. I am not one of those who thought that Sir Bartle Frere was altogether justified in the course he took. I must say I myself formed an opinion on that question, which

was somewhat different from that of those whom I am in the habit of meeting, and having formed that opinion I expressed it. That being so, you will remember this matter came to the question whether Sir Bartle Frere, who was censured by Lord Beaconsfield's Administration, should be at once recalled. The Ministry took a line in that quarter which offered most success ; and I venture to think it was the right line. They said, " Sir Bartle Frere has gone beyond our instructions in such a manner that he has launched us into war in Zululand. That war is raging ; it has been going on for three weeks before we hear the news, and it must go on three weeks more before any message from us can reach that place. We don't know what the state of things in Zululand will be when our message goes out. We know that in Sir Bartle Frere we have a man of sterling honour and good intentions, and one who will do his heartiest to bring things through the difficulties." The Government, therefore, said, " The best thing for us to do is to tell Sir Bartle Frere we do not approve of what he has done, but will leave upon him the responsibility of carrying these matters to a conclusion." If a captain gets his ship in an awkward place, the best thing you can do is to leave him to get it out. He is the man who will have the discredit if anything happens ; and Government, acting upon that, censured Sir Bartle Frere, but they said " We will leave upon him the responsibility of bringing this matter to a right conclusion." But thereupon our opponents made England ring from end to end. There was an outcry, and for the most part a conscientious outcry, because it was made by persons who were not party politicians. " Sir Bartle Frere has plunged us into a war, your duty is to recall him." That was declared all over the country, and the Government were censured in Parliament again and again by speakers, because they would not recall him. If there was one thing to which Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues were more pledged to than another, it was that they would at once recall Sir Bartle Frere. What is the state of things now ? Sir Bartle Frere still remains there, and remains there in an authority and position of trust, although the dangerous moment is past. There is not that absolute necessity for him at this moment that there was when Lord Beaconsfield's Government were challenged to recall him, and yet the Ministry that hounded down the Beaconsfield Administration for this very thing leaves Sir Bartle Frere in his position, because you know they are arranging about a confederation of the South African States, and it will be exceedingly desirable he should remain. Gentlemen, all who at the late election were defeated have a right to complain of these things, and to insist upon it that there has not been fair dealing, and that the people of England have not been treated with fairness in the discussion, and in the settlement of these

questions. I have told you of one part of the personal history of my political life with regard to Southwark. I turn back for a moment from the discussion of these foreign politics, because there are one or two words I want to say to you, and I am not at all sure, if I may judge from an echo outside (referring to the cheers of the crowd without the hotel), that when I finish addressing you I shall finish my work of speaking this evening; for it seems to me quite possible that some one will want speaking to somewhere else. But I wish to say that I come before you at Plymouth after the experience I have had at Southwark, and ask you to accept me as one who really is anxious to serve his country and his fellow-countrymen in the House of Commons. I told you it had been the dream of my boyhood and the hope of my youth that I should some day get into the House of Commons. I still entertain the conviction that the finest thing an Englishman can do is to be in the House of Commons and to speak in the House of Commons, to make his opinions—if he has formed any opinions upon important subjects—felt there, and so to contribute by his personal voice and vote to the settlement of the great questions which affect the interests of the people of this country. I have been told—though I observe it is a matter which touches my opponent as well as myself—that my profession is not a very good introduction to the constituency of Plymouth. But Sir George Young and myself are both on a level in that respect. But, gentlemen, there is a word or two I should like to say upon that matter upon this occasion of the first time of our meeting. If it were true that I was coming to Plymouth only to endeavour to get a seat in Parliament for the gratification of my personal or professional desires, I confess I should be ashamed to come here and ask for your suffrages. But it does so happen that I have, as I think, given some proof, and I gave it last year, that that is not my object in coming to this place. In the middle of last year a talented man of the Western Circuit, my good friend Charles Bowen, was raised to the bench, and when he was made a judge the office which he had previously occupied, and which is recognized as the regular introduction to a judgeship, was offered to me by the learned Attorney-General. Sir John Holker told me he should be very glad for me to take the office, and although to me it was a distinct promise, knowing very well that those who filled that office did after a time obtain an appointment to the bench—Lord Justice Hannan, Mr. Justice Archibald, and Mr. Justice Bowen having each filled the office, and passed through it to the Bench—after five minutes' hesitation I declined that office, because, although it opened to me as a lawyer the prospect of a judgeship, I confess my ambition was even larger than that. I do want, if it please God to give me a few years of health and strength, to

speak before my countrymen and on behalf of my countrymen on the questions which affect your interests. Politics to me is no study of yesterday, is no fancy of a leisure hour, is no expedient for advancing in professional life. I believe in politics, have thought of them, have worked for them, and am prepared still to work for them. It may be that from time to time in the clash and jar of party which exists in the House of Commons personal interests come to the top, personal questions occupy the time, you lose sometimes a sense of the great and overmastering interest in political questions; but after all if an Englishman sits down and thinks to himself what it is to be an Englishman, what the English Parliament is, what are its responsibilities, and what are its powers, there is no task greater or nobler for an Englishman to undertake than the duty of representing a large constituency in Parliament. My creed is a very simple one. I think I may sum it up in two or three words—the honour of the empire, justice to the people, freedom for the people. I believe, if we, like men, set to work with these for our objects, we may all do great service in political life. Every voter does a service in political life when he goes and records his vote for the man whom he believes to be the best adapted to represent him. It may be the smaller service; but it helps to promote the larger service of the man who goes to the House of Commons and devotes himself to the work of the House of Commons. And what is it we have to deal with? The Treaty of Berlin did not put an end to all the difficulties of European politics. There are still a hundred difficulties on every hand, any one of which may start up this next day or next week to tax the patience and almost defy the ingenuity of statesmen. The honour of the country has to be maintained. It has to be maintained, not merely against those who would desire to pledge us too rashly to ambitious schemes, but it has to be maintained against those who would wrap themselves up in their ideas of universal peace, and would be prepared to allow England to suffer her forces to fall into decay and so disable herself from taking part in the councils of Europe. A true Englishman does not want to embark in contests with his neighbours, he doesn't want to fight, but he is always ready to fight if occasion imposes the duty, and it may be that circumstances may yet press upon the nation, as it may upon you or me, the duty any day of standing up and fighting for the rights which have been infringed. That is the case with regard to foreign countries, and we have seen within the last few years how amazing is the power of England, if only there is the strong will. When a few days ago I looked from the window of my hotel and saw that magnificent ship, the *Achilles*, lying in your Sound, she brought back to my mind the time

when the mere presence of the English fleet in the Turkish waters was sufficient to avert the greatest danger that has befallen us this present century. And although I hope we shall always scrupulously respect the rights of other nations, and shall never attempt to impose upon them our rule simply because it is our will, still I do maintain for the sake of every member of the community that the rulers of England are bound to stand firm in defence of the name and the reputation of our country, and to insist that the voice of England shall be heard, and respectfully heard. There is another point, and that is freedom—the freedom of the people. And by the freedom of the people I will tell you distinctly what I mean. I mean freedom, not only from oppression on the part of the Crown or on the part of the aristocracy, but I mean personal freedom which is not limited by the rule of the majority, wherever that majority may lie. I do not believe in personal freedom which simply means the rule of the majority. I believe in individual freedom. So long as the individual acts within those limits of order which it is necessary should be observed in every State, so long is it not the right of the State as a State, or the majority as a majority, to curb his will, or rule his inclinations or desires. Next, I say justice is another of the great things which ought to be observed in a community. You cannot have freedom which shall make people happy and contented and prosperous unless you have a firm and equal administration based on just and equal laws. Now I turn to another aspect of the professional experience I have gained. I told you before that I was not coming to ask your suffrages, because from professional ambition I might get you to help me, but I tell you that professional experience does teach one a good deal of the operations of the laws which govern the people of this country, and may, I believe, enable me to deal better on your behalf in the House of Commons with those questions which are of importance to you. To-morrow morning I believe you will see all over the town and in the newspapers the address which I have issued asking for your suffrages. I think you will see to-night that I have spoken to you only on topics we have to deal with, and I will refrain until other occasions to enter more minutely into general matters. (Cries of “Go on.”) I think you will easily understand that upon a first acquaintance one is a little reluctant to trespass upon your time. (Cries of “No.”) I am not at all sure that you are not taking a dangerous course in inviting me to go further. The time may come when you may have to put your invitation in another form, and request me to leave off. But if it be your desire that I should say more, I am bound to say this, that the amplitude of subjects one has to deal with makes it no

difficulty to speak. You know I have spoken now on one or two topics that affected the state of Europe during the time of the last Administration. But just let me turn to another class of subject, and an entirely different class of subject. I turn to it at once because it is possible there may be some here who are interested in these subjects, and whom I may not have the opportunity of addressing again. During the last six years in my belief the late Government upheld, and very wisely and steadily and firmly upheld, the honour of this country in regard to foreign affairs. But it did something else. It did pay attention to the domestic wants of the people of this country. It passed a long series of measures which were ignored, and the actual existence of which was absolutely denied by our opponents in the last contest, measures which were nevertheless of substantial value to the welfare of the people. I have never spoken to workmen on political subjects without asking the question with regard to the Acts that were passed in 1875 respecting employers and workmen. When the late Government came into power the condition of affairs between masters and workmen was difficult and dangerous. You remember the excitement there was throughout the country after the gas-stokers' strike in London, the heavy punishment inflicted upon the ringleaders, and the sense of bitterness and anger felt by many of the working-men with regard to those sentences. In 1872 the Liberal Government had a chance of dealing with the matter, and it passed an Act of Parliament. Ask the leaders of any of the great trade organizations of the country, and they will tell you that the Act of 1872 altered for the worse and not for the better the relations between the employer and the employed. It introduced new terms which were the subject of dispute and discussions in courts of law, and created difficulties instead of removing them. What was done by the Conservatives in the year 1875? Mr. Cross passed an Act of Parliament for which he received the thanks of the members of the trade organizations of this country. It set the laws affecting employers and employed upon a fair and equal footing, and since the year 1875 there has, as far as I know, been no single case in which a real grievance has been found on the part of the working-men with regard to the laws relating to them. Take another thing. I noticed somewhere to-day among the periodicals I saw coming down an assertion that the Tories were all against education. Well, it has always seemed to me one of the most ill-founded assertions ever made, for before Mr. Forster took in charge the Bill which was passed in 1870, known as the Education Act, two of the members of the Conservative party, Lord Stanley and the late Sir John Packington, again and again called the attention of the House of Commons to the

state of education, and suggested the passing of an Education Act. And in 1870, when Mr. Forster passed his Bill, if you refer to the debates of that time you will see that it was only by the assistance of the Conservative party that Mr. Forster was enabled to pass it through the House of Commons. More than that, Lord George Hamilton, amongst others, has been entrusted with the duty of dealing with the education question since 1874, and no complaint has been made that he and his coadjutors have been lacking in diligence to extend the advantages of the Act to the people. Again, the Education Act originally dealt chiefly with large towns where a School Board could be formed. But there were large portions of the country where the rural population was found to be too small and scattered to form School Boards, but with Boards of Guardians and other authorities among them who were well able to deal with school questions. It was the Conservative Government which in 1877 brought in and passed through Parliament the Act which extended the benefits of the School Board system to the country districts by giving Boards of Guardians the authority to frame rules for attendance at school. It is idle and groundless, then, to say that the Tory party have been opposed to the education of the people. I said a word just now which reminds me of another class of subjects upon which I will say what shall be my last few sentences to-night. I believe, and am glad to believe, that Plymouth is to a great extent a working-class constituency, because I come from a place—Southwark—which is almost entirely a working-class constituency. It is among the men in the docks, in the tanneries, and in the hop warehouses that I have seen the hundreds and thousands of working-men who voted for me at the election, who founded working-men's clubs immediately after my defeat, in the hope of retrieving it at a future time, and who, I am afraid, have been struck with what is disappointment to them, when, in the midst of their preparations for giving me a working-man's testimonial, that I am fighting here at Plymouth. But I think, when they come to consider it, if they find any disappointment in losing me, they will not regret that I should come and fight a great constituency like this. As I told them, I tell you, I want to have a substantial constituency. I do not want to go into Parliament as the nominee of any person, or any clique of persons. I want to get a large constituency of my fellow-countrymen to put myself before them, and ask for their confidence and sympathy. And there is one reason why I at once felt I should like to come and fight Plymouth. It is that I am perfectly satisfied this is a pure constituency. I daresay many of you know it has been my lot during the last six weeks to hear a great deal of the conduct of elections in different parts of the

country. I have heard the details of elections at a great many boroughs throughout the country, and I am bound to say that these painful details almost sickened me with political life. It is to me the greatest trial and grief to find that a constituency which is believed to send to Parliament a representative of its feeling and its thought, is really only sending to Parliament a man who has purchased voters on the market-place as if they were cattle. It has been shocking to hear from town to town of this sort of traffic having gone on at the time of an election. Gentlemen, when I came to Plymouth I found this change. I found that here in a public court that election was being investigated and examined before two judges of experience and acuteness. I found that everything was done that could be done to get at the secrets of the whole history of that election, and I found that in the full blaze of that inquiry the election at Plymouth had been a true and pure election, that a man who came forward as a candidate for the support of the Plymouth people might look forward to victory, or might look forward to defeat, and must, of course, take with a good heart such fortune as fell to him in political life, but at all events, defeated or victorious, at least this he would know, that he had had an opportunity of going straight to the mind and feeling of a great constituency, and that the principles he had put forward and the pretensions he had advanced had at least been honestly tried by the constituents with whom the decision lay.

Speech at the Dinner of the Junior Conservative Association at Saint Andrew's Hall, Plymouth.

JANUARY 4, 1881.

IN RESPONSE TO THE TOAST OF THE HOUSES OF
PARLIAMENT.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—It is with very great pride and pleasure that I find myself called upon to-night to speak in the name of the Houses of Parliament. It is to the confidence of the Plymouth people, who took me to their service at a time when my political career had met with a sudden check, that I owe the honour of being now a member of the House of Commons, and although I have on many occasions returned thanks in this capacity, I have never had the pleasure or the

pride in doing so that I feel to-night. Looking around me now I see the faces of gentlemen to whose kindness and energy I owe that seat in the House of Commons which I hope to deserve and to keep for many years to come. I had in the month of February met with that success to which I had looked forward for many years, and obtained as member for Southwark a seat in the House of Commons. Then after I had enjoyed that honour not many weeks another contest came, and I was beaten. I was not beaten in fair fight, for had I not been ill and unable to speak a word in my own favour I believe I should have been again successful. As I was not able to take any part in the election things were said of me that I was not able to contradict, and the election was lost ; and I can assure you that the hardest speech I ever had to make in my life was the speech when the poll was declared, when it was my duty to say some words of courtesy to the presiding officer, and to express the goodwill I desired to express towards the inhabitants of the borough. I was, of course, terribly disappointed, for it seemed then as if years might pass before I could have another opportunity of going into the House of Commons. But, gentlemen, before long it was my duty to come to Plymouth on behalf of my friend Sir Edward Bates. He lost his seat through no fault of his own ; though I was a stranger to all but a very few among you you accepted me as a candidate, and ere long I find myself in the House once more a member for this constituency. You have made me member for Plymouth, and I assure you that I shall never leave this borough—politically—unless the electors of Plymouth tell me at the poll that they no longer desire me as their representative.

Gentlemen, we hear the Lords and Commons spoken of sometimes as if there were two separate Legislatures existing in this country. It is a great mistake. We have only one Legislature, consisting of Queen, Lords, and Commons—different parts of our Legislature united together under the happy constitution of this country. I care not whether you attack the authority of either—whether it be the authority of the Queen, or of the House of Lords, or of the House of Commons—if you attack any you equally diminish the influence and power of the Legislature itself, and directly assail the Constitution of which they form a part. Of the Queen at this moment I say nothing. But the good example she has set of a constitutional Sovereign of her people has made her not only Queen of the nation but Queen in our hearts ; and we have every reason to believe that for many years to come the monarchy of England will live in the respect and affection, as well as in the obedience, of the subjects.

With regard to the House of Lords don't pay too much atten-

tion to the petulant criticisms of disappointed Cabinet Ministers. When a Cabinet Minister fails to pass a clumsy Bill, or finds a mischievous one struck away from his hand, he wants to blame somebody, and it is a convenient thing to abuse the House of Lords. The members of that House rarely, as a rule, take any active part in public popular gatherings, and, therefore, it is safer to attack them, for there is less chance of their answering their assailants. Englishmen—and I am not speaking of Conservatives only, but of the great majority of those Englishmen who call themselves Liberals—know too well the character and value of the House of Lords to allow it to be seriously imperilled. It is not merely the authority of great traditions, though I attach immense value to that. Great traditions are the education of a great people. They are the stored up honour of a nation or a family, invaluable for the training of those who are coming on, and among the aristocracy themselves, though many do not take any very active part in political life, I am sure you will find an aptitude for public affairs and an anxious desire to serve the good of the people which might be emulated with advantage by some members of the more popular assembly. But the House of Lords is not purely aristocratic. At every decade many force their way into it from lower ranks whose abilities qualify them for that assembly; and there has never been a more remarkable instance of the way in which it gathers within its walls the greatest characters from among the people than the presence on its front Conservative bench of the Earl of Beaconsfield. Of the House of Commons I would desire to say that while of course I do not look upon the present position as so satisfactory as it was before the last general election, I know that upon both sides of that House there are a large number of men of keen and active intellects, patriotic and earnest, who do bring to our discussions a vast deal of energy and good sense, and I trust that in the coming session both sides will be ready to unite to ensure the due prosecution of public work.

With regard to foreign affairs I have very little to say. Dulcigno has been surrendered. We may take that for what it is worth; which so far as I can see is very little to anybody. The Montenegrins have got a seaport which is of no possible use to them. The Albanians have been discontented and some blood has been shed. But then, on the other side, the officers commanding the international fleets have had some pleasant dinners together, and appear to have enjoyed unrivalled opportunities for comparing the sobriety of crews of different nationalities. I am very glad to believe that the result has been perfectly satisfactory to the English officers; and although it has cost a good deal of money, still one is glad to know that no lives have been lost, and that there has, in fact, been no risk to

anybody except the Italian Admiral, who got nearly drowned by tumbling out of a boat. The "Concert of Europe" has been put away together with the other properties which are not wanted for the present entertainment. It lasted well enough so long as there was nothing to be done, but directly it came to doing something the Powers separated at once. England, indeed, proposed a kind of piratical expedition to Smyrna, but that did not come to anything. There is only one other word on foreign affairs which I should like to say. Greece has made large preparations to attack Turkey. Statesmen have no right to encourage aspirations of that kind, or to set a nation moving in such a way unless it is perfectly clear that the object can be effected, or the work successfully carried out. Greece is now overwhelmed with armaments, and will be almost equally ruined whether she goes to war or not. Probably Greece will begin the war, and at no distant period we shall find her overwhelmed by the superior force of her antagonist, when she will appeal to England for help. I hope that help will be refused. I hope that before she begins the war she will be clearly told that English statesmen will not permit her to disturb the peace of Europe and drag them into another conflict with regard to Turkey, the extent of which no one can foresee. I do not see any claim that Greece has established by the conduct of her own affairs for the sympathy of England in the attempt to invade the territory of another Power; but even if instead of mismanaging her own affairs she could show good order and good government, I should still see no reason why she should be allowed to drag the whole of Europe into a desolating war.

But, gentlemen, I now come to deal with a question which does not bear upon foreign nations or foreign mistakes, but which is a case of unsoundness at the heart. In our own country, where we might have supposed that nothing could interfere with the steady orderly conduct of government, we have seen within the past few months the Queen's government set at nought. Throughout the larger part of Ireland that government has been virtually deposed, and another government is reigning, enforcing its decrees with an authority that the government of the Queen has absolutely lost. These are very serious matters to deal with. Let us see for a little while what has taken place. About eighteen months ago or a little more the movement of the Land League was set on foot. It was founded as some of us declared on principles of dishonesty. The suggestion of the Land League to the Irish tenants was that they were going to make a strike against rent. "If you join us you will not have to pay the whole of any rent you may have covenanted to pay your landlord." It is impossible not to see that to tell a number of farm tenants that they were to keep in their own pockets the rent which

they had agreed to pay, and which they ought fairly to pay to their landlords, was to offer them a temptation which it is not at all to be wondered should prove very strong, especially when it was enforced upon public platforms by references to the national independence, the honour of the country, and the like. And thus we have seen that the cause of the Land League has progressed until it is the government of the Land League that is in power in Ireland, and not the government of the Queen. Either this afternoon or to-morrow the Cabinet will meet to consider the Queen's speech, to decide what shall be read in the name of her Majesty at the opening of Parliament. I wonder whether any member of that Cabinet will read the following passage from the Speech put into the mouth of her Majesty on the 20th of May last :—"The Peace Preservation Act expires on the 1st June. You will not be asked to renew it. My desire to avoid the evils of exceptional legislation in abridgment of liberty would not induce me to forego in any degree the performance of the first duty of every Government in providing for the security of life and property. But while determined to fulfil this sacred obligation, I am persuaded that the loyalty and good sense of my Irish subjects will justify me in relying on the provisions of the ordinary law firmly administered for the maintenance of peace and order." I wonder how these Ministers would look at each other if either one of them read that aloud. What has become of the performance of the first duty of every Government, to provide for the security of life and property? Her Majesty was well advised when she spoke these words, with the members of the Lords and Commons standing around her throne; but what has become of the firm administration of the ordinary law which was to suffice for the maintenance of peace and order. They cannot say that they were taken by surprise. They knew perfectly well what the state of things was which then existed, and to what it was likely to lead. They cannot say now that they thought that matter would stop with the refusal to pay rent, because I have here some extracts from a speech made by Mr. Forster on the following day, in which he used these words :—"If the existing law were allowed to be disobeyed in one case it would be disobeyed in many cases, if not in all. It was impossible even for those who were very anxious to reform the laws to allow them to be trampled under foot and defied. An illustration was furnished by the case of a process server, serving processes under circumstances of which he knew nothing, who had been stopped and searched and robbed of a number of processes, those for debt being ten times the number of those for rent. That showed that if the Government were to allow the recovery of rent to be defied it would soon be impossible to recover any debt at all." It is perfectly clear, there-

fore, from the words used in the Queen's Speech and from the speech of Mr. Forster that the Government knew what was their duty, and that they saw the danger.

Let us see now what the state of things in Ireland at this moment is. At the present moment if a tenant, perfectly able to pay his rent—amply supplied with money for the purpose—supplied with it through the generosity of the people of this country, who came forward to relieve the distress caused by bad harvests last year—giving help and giving seed;—if a tenant now perfectly able to pay his rent chooses to pay it, what happens then? He receives a notice that the attention of the Land League has been called to his payment of the rent. He is asked for an explanation. He generally attends the Land League Court, and apologizes, and declares that he will never pay any rent at all again without their permission. Sometimes he is let off; sometimes he is sentenced to be exiled from the country, and that sentence of the Land League Court is the only sentence throughout Ireland that is absolutely certain of being carried into effect. As a rule the farmer, under such circumstances, instead of paying his rent, prefers to keep his money in his pocket, or sometimes offers to pay only what is called Griffith's valuation. If that is not taken, he says he will pay nothing; and accordingly pays nothing. The landlord, robbed of his means of livelihood as clearly and with as much absolute dishonesty as if a man had come to him, struck him down, and taken his property from his pocket, appeals to the law for remedy; and the process server goes at the risk of his life, with a party of constabulary or soldiers, in order that he may serve the process according to law. What happens to the landlord then? Notice is given by the Land League that he is to be cut off from all the ties of social life; he is to have no assistance from any of his neighbours; no one is to work for him; the tradesmen who have supplied him with goods from day to day are forbidden at the peril of their lives to deal with him; the very carmen dare not afford him any help to move; the friends to whom he is endeared by the closest ties of association, friendship, and society, cannot venture to offer him any assistance. Instances have been known in which a little milk has been conveyed under cover of night from such friends to the besieged residence. There is no power in the country to protect him. He is cut off from all assistance and association. Bands of armed men visit his premises at night, breaking down his fences, hamstringing his cattle, or putting upon them the "Boycott mark"—the fatal, branded "B"—which, when an animal has once received, no one dare buy or tend it. But there are worse things than these. There are in Ireland men who have gone into the occupation of farms from which others have been

evicted, and, in most cases, most rightfully evicted. Armed men have gone to these houses at night, have dragged the men from their beds to the floor of the house, and there torn their backs with nails fastened into pieces of wood, which is called "carding." And this cruel torture has not been inflicted upon the backs of men only, but of women. When a man has knelt down and begged for mercy he has been made to swear obedience to the Land League, and then has had his ears slit with knives in order that as long as he lives he may be an object of contempt and detestation to his neighbours. Unhappily it does not rest here. Lord Mountmorres is shot upon the highway, young Wheeler is shot on the highway, young Boyd in the presence of many other persons, and to this day there is no witness to be heard in court in regard to either of these murders. When a murder is committed in Ireland the peasants in the neighbourhood, as they did in the case of Lord Mountmorres, trample with savage songs on the blood stains which are lying on the highway, and when as in other cases men who were at work around are called on to say who was the assassin they dare not open their lips, for their own lives would be forfeited by a word.

There is one step more, bad as this is, which is still worse, because it defeats the principles of common justice. Witnesses dare not speak, for their lives would be forfeited. The judges get threatening letters; but, thank God, our judges are not to be moved by acts like these. But what about the jurors? They are watched and threatened, and every man who goes into a jury-box in Ireland to act upon the trial of any offence connected with the Land League does so at the risk of his life. Not long ago some jurors, unwilling to lay perjury upon their souls, and unwilling to run the risk of giving a true verdict, decided to absent themselves from the court. They were ordered by the Land League to attend and "do their duty;" and they did "do their duty" by dismissing free by their verdict a man against whom the evidence was too clear for discussion. The fact is that in Ireland we have a garrison instead of a Government. There is no Government; while the Government talk of enforcing the ordinary laws of the country, what are they thinking of doing?—why of sending flying columns through the country. If our Ministers had had anything of the courage or vigour which they ought to have had in enforcing law and order, they would not be talking now of treating Ireland as if it were the Transvaal or Basutoland. Gentlemen, I confess the action of the Government reminds me of the story of an American doctor, who did not know very much about diseases, and when called in, for example, to a patient with a fever, would give him pills which would send him into fits, saying, "I don't know very

much about fevers, but I'm very good at fits." Well, I don't fancy the present Ministry are very good at government, but they are certainly good at civil war, for that is precisely what they have brought about in Ireland. They have done nothing. For some time there has been in progress what has been called a trial, but a trial of a peculiar character, in which the persons most concerned do not seem to take the slightest interest, and the forms of which have been so arranged by the Irish Attorney-General that the defendants are not called upon to be in court at all, but may, if they choose, amuse themselves in England while they are being tried in Dublin for sedition and high treason, for it has been nothing else—just as if the question at issue were merely a quarrel between two local boards as to a disputed right of way. However, it is perfectly clear that there are some people on their trial, and those are the members of her Majesty's Government. If the Attorney-General had been instructed to draw up an indictment against the Government, whom he to some extent represents, I do not think he could have made it more complete than he has done in his speech, in which he calls attention to the fact that every month, from March to November, Land League meetings have been held, and that language directly instigating to sedition and rebellion has been used at these meetings—conclusively demonstrating the folly and incapacity which allowed this to continue from March to November without making a serious attempt to stop it. The fact is, gentlemen, we have to deal with a serious problem in Ireland. We have allowed freedom to be strangled. Trial by jury is an admirable institution, as long as jurymen are able to act up to their oaths; but the moment witnesses are cowed and jurymen fear to give just verdicts, it is not only valueless, but worse than valueless. The nation is not capable of free institutions which does not know how to use them, nor capable of freedom when it does not know how to keep what it has got. Gentlemen, I do not, of course, know what may be the programme the Government may put forth; but I will venture to say two or three things with regard to the immediate future. During the time Parliament is not sitting the sole and undivided responsibility of a matter is with the Government; but the moment Parliament assembles the responsibility is to some extent transferred to the House of Commons. I do hope and trust that both sides of the House will feel deeply impressed with the conviction that it is their imperative duty to restore peace and order in Ireland. In the first place we know that any proposals which the Government may have to make will probably be met with obstruction and delay on the part of the Irish members. How that opposition is to be carried out it is not for me to say, but if there is any such attempt on the part of

the Irish members to obstruct remedial legislation for Ireland, I hope there will be a most cordial agreement between the supporters of the Government and the Conservative party that it shall not be successful. I am very anxious not to interfere with freedom of speech in the House of Commons. I look upon freedom of speech as of immense value to the country. I should be very reluctant to see any steps taken by which a minority should be silenced by a majority, but, at the same time, freedom of speech—like trial by jury—ceases to be a good and becomes a mischief directly it finds no check in the conscience, and ceases to answer the end for which that freedom was given. I shall be very glad, therefore, if the House may be able to agree upon some exceptional measure, for the session only, which may defeat that policy of obstruction which will otherwise cause the loss of so much valuable time.

There is another and a very important topic, though not so important as the restoration of order, and that is the question of dealing with the Irish land laws themselves. Upon that point we have heard one curious rumour. It was rumoured a little while ago that the Government proposed to bring in a Coercion Bill and a Land Bill at the same time, and to carry them on together step by step, so that the progress of the one Bill should be made to depend upon the progress of the other. Now, gentlemen, the first duty of Parliament is to restore order and good government in Ireland; and if there should be any proposal which would make the passing of a Coercion Bill depend upon the acceptance of the proposals of the Government with regard to the land laws, I hope the Conservative party will firmly and determinedly say, "We will not have this. We will not be called upon to make terms with rebellion. We will give you all the time you require. We will, as carefully and fairly as we can, consider the land question when you have restored law and order; but we will not temporise with the people who have brought this disgrace and danger upon the nation, and we will not permit you to force land bill proposals upon us by declaring that unless they are accepted you will still leave Ireland in disorder." But, gentlemen, I mention that as a rumour. I hope sincerely that that rumour is not true. I hope that in the course of the next few weeks Government may, with the cordial assistance of the House of Commons, take steps to restore peace and order to Ireland—and I think then they will be able, again with the cordial assistance of all parties in the House of Commons, to proceed to the consideration of questions affecting Irish land. I need hardly say I am not going to enter upon that question now; but there is one other thing that I think ought to be remembered carefully in this case. It is easy enough at a time of political excitement to transfer

property from one class to another. Various causes may at any particular time break down the resistance of a particular class. It is quite possible that the intentions of the Land League—their avowed intentions and hopes in which they have been, I believe, conscientiously encouraged by Cabinet Ministers—it is quite possible those intentions will be realized. As they have destroyed the property of the landlords to a great extent, they may find it easier to wrest a great portion of that property from them; but it should always be remembered that, though the circumstances of different classes are very different, principles are always alike. Freedom of contract and the firm enforcement of contracts fairly made, is a principle of far more value to this country than the satisfaction of discontent at any particular time, because departure from sound principle in one direction will always lead you into other difficulties. I am aware there are various suggestions favoured by those who are in Ireland, and who know a great deal of Ireland, for the alteration of Irish Land Laws. I believe those suggestions will have the careful consideration of the Conservative party; and I believe those suggestions will be dealt with a great deal more fairly and satisfactorily if the Government will first do what it declared last year by her Majesty's speech, to be "the first duty of every Government"—that is, to restore the reign of peace and order. Now, gentlemen, I have spoken in this way, and, as I think you will have observed, have hardly mentioned the party divisions in the House of Commons; and I will tell you why I have done so. I think the present crisis is a great deal too grave for us to make it a serious question of party advantage. It is quite possible if the Conservative party at this moment took up the rôle of agitation—that rôle which was played with so much effect last year by our opponents—that the effect would be such an uprising of public opinion that we might succeed in driving from office the Government which has misused its trust. But, gentlemen, although we might do that, I believe the party advantage in that case would be a public mischief, just in the same way as the party advantage, gained by the campaign of last autumn, has already worked an important public mischief. It would be a public mischief for this reason. If now in the House of Commons an assault were made upon the Government, upon the whole Government, which was successful, no Conservative Administration could accept office. There is too large a majority against us. A general election would again disturb and excite the country, and there would be serious danger in another general election taking place before order was restored in Ireland. You would have the same use made of the occasion as was made in Midlothian and at Liverpool. You would again have English statesmen

coquetting for party purposes with that party which is aiming at the disintegration of the Empire. And there is one other reason why I should be anxious not to see the success of a great party amendment, and a consequent appeal to the country; and that reason is that I think the House of Commons has been so much discredited by the revelations of electoral corruption that I trust there will never again be a general election in this country until the House of Commons has passed some severe rules to prevent the corruption of constituencies which we have seen so much of. Do not be alarmed for the future of the Conservative party. The success and the future of that party does not depend upon scrambling back into office by any sort of means as soon as possible after it has been defeated. The strength of the party lies in its working primarily for the advantage of the country, and I do trust the Conservative party—angry as they may be at the unmerited defeat which fell upon them in March last, and angry as they have a right to be at the mis-government which has since been inflicted upon the country—I do hope they will be patient and self-denying, and that they will not expect the leaders of their party at once to do anything merely with the view of going back into office. Let them remember that, after all, to every one of us the interest of the country is the highest interest which we are bound to study—and though the present Government should continue in power for a few months, aye, and for a few years, that mischief—and mischief I believe it would be—would be cheaply purchased by the Conservative party so using the strength they have, and so working steadily with those on the Liberal side of the House who are anxious to do their duty by the country, as will enable them to restore peace and order in those dominions where it has been so sadly disturbed.

There are only a few words more I wish to say. I have told you with regard to the question of obstruction, that I for one should have no objection to a Sessional Order being passed to meet the great emergency—that is, the dealing with a measure for repressing the disorder. But there is a more serious subject with regard to the business of the House of Commons, upon which I gave notice I should make a proposition upon Parliament again meeting. It has been complained on all sides that the House of Commons is overburdened with work. There is great legislative activity among its members. Each department of the Government is desirous of passing a few Bills that they have prepared. There are also a good number of debates on foreign affairs, and unhappily an hour or two of every afternoon when the House meets is wasted by a number of ridiculous questions which serve the object of bringing members' names before their constituencies, but very seldom

serve any other object at all. Now the House is clearly overburdened with work. There is a certain class of measures which it seems hardly possible for the House to deal with in one session. For instance, the Bankruptcy Laws and the Criminal Law Consolidation Bill are measures which take up a large amount of time, and it does seem to me that there is no reason why the House should go on treating every session as if it were a separate Parliament. If a good Bankruptcy Act can be brought in this session and read a second time it might then, between this session and the next, be before the country for consideration, and when Parliament met for the next session the Bill might be taken up in committee and carried on to legislation; whereas now if a Bankruptcy Bill is brought in a great deal of time and attention must be spent upon it, and unless it can be squeezed through all its different stages the whole time and work which the House has spent upon it will be lost, and will all have to be gone over again next session. That is a larger and more permanent proposal than that with regard to Irish obstruction, and I have given a notice of motion on the subject which I shall press, and which, I think, would enable the House to deal with more of the legislative work before it. Let me just, in the last few words I have to say, thank my friend the chairman and those who have worked with him this evening for bringing together the great gathering we have in this hall. I am very glad to think that the fight which took place last July did not die entirely away, but that the energy shown then has found permanent expression in this great Association, which has been, by the energy of my friend, Mr. Stevens, and his friends, set on foot. I am glad to see in him and those around me, the younger members of the Conservative party in this borough, who worked very hard for me in July, and who, I hope, will be ready to work for me again when the time comes. I notice that our opponents in this town are jealous of the existence of this Association, which has brought this great gathering together. I don't wonder at it. They don't understand us, or else they would perfectly well know what the meaning of a Junior Conservative Association is. They don't understand us, for they will persist in talking of us as though we were persons who had no interest in political life at all, except that which consisted in getting place or power, or something or other out of politics. Well, I wish they understood the nature of their fellow countrymen a little better; but they will learn that in Plymouth there are many men who take to politics not for what we may get out of politics, but because we are interested in the country we belong to; we have studied its history, we are interested in its future and we believe that for its welfare we should stand steadily by the institutions which are the delight of our people

and the envy of every other nation of the world. I hope great things from the success of this Association in Plymouth. I hope it not for myself, though I look forward with great confidence to the support I may derive from it ; but I hope great things from it for Plymouth, because I am quite sure the Association which gathers together the members of the Conservative party will enable us to show that the great principles we represent are principles we hold fast because we believe them to be essential to the welfare of the nation, and principles which, in season and out of season, we shall never be weary of laying before our fellow-countrymen.

*Annual Address to the Electors of Plymouth
at the Assembly Rooms.*

JANUARY 2, 1882.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,—I am very glad to find myself this evening in the presence of the electors of one of the most important wards of Plymouth, entering upon the task I have proposed to myself to accomplish during the present week—that of speaking to my constituents at large with regard to the more important matters of political concern. There are special reasons why I should desire to meet as many as possible of the electors of Plymouth at this time. You are aware that during the past year, in consequence of an Act of Parliament that was passed in the year 1878, Plymouth has acquired almost a new constituency. At the election at which I was returned as member the number of electors on the roll was somewhere about 5500. At the present time, and for any election which may take place within the current year the number is about 14,000. It is obvious to all that that immense increase of the constituency imposes upon the representative of this borough an immediate and peremptory duty. I felt it was my first duty on so many new electors coming upon the roll to take an opportunity, if possible, of presenting myself personally before them in their different wards and expounding to them at some length my opinions upon the principal political topics of the day. I do not come here for the purpose of making a series of partisan speeches, but I come for the purpose of meeting those who are now for the first time in possession of the franchise, as well as of gladly meeting those who in July, 1880, confided to me the honour of being their representative, and of speaking with some

detail with regard to political questions, not only with respect to those which affect the political fortunes of the party to which I belong, but also of those larger political questions which I hope may be discussed to a certain extent irrespective of party considerations. The great expansion of the electorate here, of course, is a very important matter. It must necessarily have one or two important consequences in political matters in Plymouth. In the first place it will almost inevitably put an end to a personal canvass on the part of the candidate. I am not altogether sorry for that. I am not so much opposed to a personal canvass by the candidate as some others are. It seems to me that when a man comes to a constituency, and asks to be entrusted with the great responsibility and the great honour of speaking and voting in its name in the House of Commons, it is his duty, as far as possible, to make, not only his opinions, but his personality, known to those whose votes he is anxious to obtain. And I see no reason why, if men cannot come to attend public meetings, they should not meet the candidate at their own homes, so that they may have an opportunity of asking questions with regard to matters in their minds. But it is obvious that that involves a great deal of labour; and it is also obvious that a short interview of a few minutes could not give any great amount of information to the electors with regard to the candidate's opinion; and it is also obvious—although I think there is no fear of misuse being made of the opportunity at Plymouth—that it affords the opportunity for illegitimate influences upon the voters. And, therefore, although I myself found a personal canvass by no means an unpleasant task—although my experience of ten days' work here was that no un-courteous word was said to me, and no request was made to me for any sort of favour by any man in the constituency—although that was my experience, I shall not be sorry to have to offer one's self to the constituency at public meetings rather than in visits at the houses of the voters. There is one especial advantage about that. When a candidate is going from place to place asking for votes, he is asked by an elector his opinion on some particular subject, and that opinion hastily and informally given, may be a subject of misunderstanding hereafter. It is a better thing that the candidate should be seen upon a public platform, and that in a public room in the presence of a body of the electors and in the presence of the representatives of the Press, he should be called upon to state distinctly his opinion upon the topics of the day. To-night I propose to confine myself to one particular topic, and you will easily guess what that is. The year 1881 will, I think, for a long time be a year of sorrowful memories in this country. There were three considerable events which happened in that year, and each of those events is one

which I think the country may well look at with great regret and apprehension. One of the three events was the death of the great leader of the Conservative party. I need not repeat again to-night phrases in which I have most inadequately endeavoured to express in this town, the feelings with which I regarded that great man; the great veneration and respect I had for his opinion while alive, and my strong feeling with regard to the duty of the Conservative party, its absolute duty, to study the example which he set its leaders, and to follow as nearly as may be the lines which he laid down in the course of his illustrious career. His memory is gradually passing beyond the reach of that petty and partisan spite which followed him while he was still among us. Men of all parties are beginning to recognize the highest patriotism, the industry, the devotion to his country's interest that were always displayed by that great statesman. His death I take to be one of the three great events, and the second great event was the surrender of the Transvaal. 1881 will, I believe, ever be associated by Englishmen with the recollection of Majuba Hill and the most ignominious surrender which followed upon that disaster. I am not now going to speak at length of that transaction, partly because I may have an opportunity of dealing with it more effectually in connection with one of the topics I shall deal with on another evening, and partly because, disastrous and disgraceful as it is, it was excelled in importance in my opinion by the third great disaster of the year 1881, which was the passing of the Irish Land Act. Gentlemen, we may recover from the loss of the best, the greatest party leader. A party leader who passes away as Lord Beaconsfield passed away leaves behind him, in those who were associated with him in the enterprises and responsibilities of his life, men who, to a certain extent, have inherited the traditions of that life; and I hope in time a man will be found to step to the front to lead the Conservative party in the same way as Lord Beaconsfield led it. We can survive the loss of a great statesman, for, thank God, England has many men of courage, and intellect, and capacity who are prepared to devote themselves with all patriotism to the service of the State. We can survive, although it is a bitter and hard thing to look back upon, a military defeat. We have not been used to it. Englishmen have not been in the habit of suffering defeat, and then surrendering the object for which the battle had been fought, and it will be a long time before we escape the rankling of the memories of that war in the Transvaal. But we can survive it. There is one thing far worse than the loss of a great statesman and the suffering of defeat in the field, and that is the breaking up of the principles of our own home Government, the weakening of our power of the government of people in our own countries,

the disorder and disintegration of the Empire itself ; for that is a change, the results of which as yet no mind can measure. The course which we adopted last year with regard to the government of the sister country of Ireland I believe will produce more serious effects, more disastrous, more far-reaching effects than even the loss of Lord Beaconsfield, or the surrender of the Transvaal, and it is upon the question of Ireland I wish to speak to you to-night. And I hope and believe I shall satisfy you before I have finished that I am not speaking here, nor have I spoken elsewhere, simply in a spirit of party hostility, but that I am speaking in support of principles which are essential to the welfare of the whole community—speaking with regard to matters to which we all, to whatever party we belong, should give our most careful attention, and upon which, when we have made up our minds, we should be prepared to act with the greatest vigour, the most sustained determination. On the 27th of March, 1880, Mr. Bright made a speech at Birmingham, and he then said “So long as the Tory party and Administration are in power there will be no settled contentment in Ireland.” The 27th of March, 1880, is now nearly two years ago. For nearly two years the party to which Mr. Bright belongs, and the Ministry of which he forms a member, have had practically the absolute control of legislation with regard to Ireland. They came into power in April, 1880, not only with a majority over the Conservative party, but with a majority of, I think, fifty or fifty-five votes over the Conservatives and representatives of Ireland as well. So far as the House of Commons is concerned they have had almost unchallenged sway in the progress of their legislation for the pacification of Ireland ; though, as far as the House of Lords was concerned it is true they were beaten by their own followers at the end of the year 1880 over a Bill which they proposed. The Compensation for Disturbance Bill was defeated in the House of Lords by a majority so large that if all the Conservative peers had stayed away, there would have been a sufficient majority of Liberal peers to have defeated the Government’s proposals. But now, after nearly two years’ experience of what this Government can do in Ireland, what is it we have in that country? We have a state of things very much worse than at the time those words were spoken. When the Conservative Government went out of office the state of Ireland was certainly by no means satisfactory, but it had its aspects and promises of improvement. Mr. Gladstone, in the month of March, 1880, described the state of Ireland as being more satisfactory than at any time for many years past. Mr. Forster, in the House of Commons, justifying his Government for not having continued the Peace Preservation Acts they found in force, stated that one of the reasons they did not continue them was that when they

came into office they found outrages in Ireland were diminishing. That was nearly two years ago. And what is the state of things now? Take up the newspapers of any day and you will find a column with regard to Ireland, which carries with it the most important lessons to all Englishmen, giving warning that not only have we not succeeded in establishing peace and contentment, but that Ireland is now in a very much worse condition than it was two years ago. At first juries were divided upon the trial of agrarian cases and would not consent to give a verdict against the prisoner. The difficulty with the jury was the first step. The second step was that the witnesses were afraid to go into the witness-box to give their evidence lest their lives should pay the penalty of that evidence. And now day by day crimes and barbarous cruelties are committed on the highways in Ireland, are not concealed, but are committed in the presence of witnesses, and those eye-witnesses are afraid to give evidence in a court of justice regarding the outrage they have seen committed. Only to-day, in the *Times* newspaper, you will find an account of the murder of a young woman in Ireland. A man goes into a house, shoots at the mother, shoots at both the daughters, and kills one of them. The reason, the *Times* states, is believed to be because the family have given some information. There is another in the same paper to-day of a man being desperately wounded outside one of the towns in Ireland; he has been set upon outside the town, beaten, and his hands cut with a knife, and he lies in a dangerous condition, his offence being that he had paid his rent. In another place a soldier of the Scots Greys has the temerity to walk alone along the roads in Ireland; he is seized, stripped naked, bound to a tree, and found the next morning in such a state that he is still in hospital suffering from the effects of what has taken place. In the *Western Morning News* of to-day—for I am speaking only of the events of to-day—you will find an account of a man whose hair was cut off, and whose ears were clipped because he was believed to have made himself in some way disagreeable, I suppose with regard to the payment of rent, to the people in whose neighbourhood he lived. You will find in the same paper also to-day an account of twenty-five sheep having their tails and ears cut off, and a notice being given to the farmer that the same thing will be done so long as he continues to occupy the farm he holds. These are some instances which are contained in the paper that is published this morning. We find, a few days ago, a man was arrested by the police upon whom were found papers containing sentences of death against five persons who had had the temerity to pay the rents they owed, and sentences against two young women that their hair was to be cut off to the scalp as a punishment for their having given information. These

serious acts of cruelty which have taken place in Ireland during the past few months have had their full effect. They were intended to prevent the payment of rent in Ireland, and they have in most parts of Ireland, I think I may say, prevented it. There was a case not very long ago where a number of tenants were called upon to pay their rents. Notice was given them that if any man paid his rent he would be shot. A man named Brennan, an independent sort of man, I suppose, a farmer of considerable holding in that part of the country, defied the warning and paid his rent. He was found dead on the highway, shot as they had threatened to shoot him, and from that day, and no wonder, paying rent has been put a stop to in that part of the country. Now, if we were hearing of this state of things taking place among any of the subject races under one of the other European nations, what should we say of it? How the papers would be filled. How special correspondents would be sent out. Tales of horror would be told in all their detail, the energy of consuls and vice-consuls, and ambassadors would be called into play to report and to remonstrate with the Government which allowed so infamous a state of things; and here we, who almost went to war with Russia some years ago because of her treatment of Poland; we, who have been remonstrating and complaining of the treatment by Turkey of the subject races in Armenia, over which she has the smallest possible control, here are we suffering this state of things among our own people within twenty-four hours' journey of the seat of Government, in a place we have governed for centuries, where we have all the resources the power of this nation can give, and where we have at this moment nearly fifty thousand troops and eleven thousand constabulary to help us to keep order. Now, without using hard language about it at all, is not this a state of things over which Englishmen should very carefully think? We cannot afford to let this state of things remain. Observe the many and the great mischiefs coming in its train. It is not merely that our people seem to be losing the capacity of government, seem to be forgetting what government really means; it is not merely we are getting raised up in our midst a sort of private warfare—associations in order to fight with a strength of one purse the strength of the purse enlisted on the side of disorder and rebellion—but it must be remembered that with our force, with the size of our army, it is a most serious thing for us that fifty thousand of our troops should be occupied with the task of keeping down their own fellow-subjects who are anxious to rebel. It weakens the voice of England in the councils of the world. It will weaken, and perhaps paralyze the arm of England if she has to try and stretch it out in the assertion of her rights and for the protection of her interests. It is not merely because it

demoralizes us at home, but because it weakens us abroad, and so imperils our Empire that it is of importance we should, to whatever political party we belong, try and examine into the causes of this strange and unlooked-for phenomenon. What are the causes? My next observation may be, and is, a party observation in a certain sense; but I make it because I believe it to be strictly true. The great cause of this disorder is, that the Liberal party have used Ireland for political and party purposes; that the Liberals have from time to time allowed themselves, under stress of party necessity, to use language with regard to Ireland, to let fall phrases as to that country, which have sprung up in disorder and rebellion. And I think I can show you in a very short time what the history of the conduct of the Government has been with regard to that country. It has excited this agitation, it has tolerated this agitation, it has employed and used this agitation. The result which comes upon us now, this result of disorder and shame, is only the result of men having treated the condition of Ireland with party objects, and not from the point of view of national interests and national policy. Do you remember what took place before the late general election. This warfare against rents in Ireland, this outbreak against the English power in Ireland, is not a new thing. It began before the late general election, and there were indications in the year 1879 of the action which Mr. Parnell and his associates were going to take in Ireland. It has been said by the supporters of the Government that they are justified in certain strong action they have taken in Ireland lately because there was a sudden outbreak on the part of the Land League, a sudden defiance of the English power, and a declaration that no rent should be paid. The speeches delivered by Mr. Parnell—one in 1879 and another early in the year 1880—show conclusively this, that when this Government came into power it had received distinct warning on both points—first that the Land League was prepared to advise the cessation of payment of rents altogether, and next that its ultimate object was the severance of Ireland from the Government of this country. What was the action of the Government in view of this state of things, and how far did the Liberal party, when out of office, enter their protests against these most mischievous doctrines? Why, you know of the election which took place just before the time of the first Southwark election, in 1880, when Lord Ramsay stood for Liverpool, he tried to get the seat by purchasing the Irish vote, by saying he would vote in favour of an inquiry into Home Rule. Lord Ramsay was denounced at once for encouraging a mischievous and treasonable agitation which was then being excited in Ireland, and to save his character, and, as far as he could, to secure his return, he appealed to that

honourable referee of respectability of the Liberal party, Lord Hartington, who, you know, fills to them the position of the honest countryman who loses his own money with a smile, and so satisfies you that it is all fair and above board. Lord Ramsay appealed to this common referee to give him a letter of recommendation, and Lord Hartington wrote a letter to influence the opinions of the electors of Liverpool, in which he said that although he could not have given that pledge himself, he did not see why they should refuse to support Lord Ramsay because he had given it. And you will remember in Mr. Gladstone's campaign that most mischievous utterance with regard to the Clerkenwell explosion, which he has since tried to explain away again and again, but which did point out with the authority of the man who was the coming Prime Minister of England, that it was an outrage perpetrated in this country by the Fenian organization which led to one of the greatest changes effected in Ireland during the past half century. So far, then, up to March, 1880. In April of that year the Liberal Government came into power, and they found that the Peace Preservation Acts were in existence and in force. They were warned as to the position in which Ireland stood. They had the opinions of between seventy and eighty of the magistrates of Ireland handed to them, recommending them to continue those Acts. And they had more than that. They had that warning which was jeered at at that time, but which now reads almost in prophetic words—the warning of Lord Beaconsfield—in which he pointed out that there was in Ireland a party which aimed at the disintegration of the Empire. He pointed out that this danger would affect the position of England with regard to the world at large, weakening her authority and influence in its councils; and he went on to say that the ultimate issue of that which was then taking place in Ireland would be worse than pestilence and famine. And when those words were published, the light-hearted orators of the Liberal party went up and down the different towns of this country jesting and laughing at Lord Beaconsfield because he put an agrarian agitation in comparison with pestilence and famine. But is it not worse than pestilence and famine, as it goes now? Pestilence, under God's mercy, the skill of medicine might meet; famine, there would be no people in the world, there has never been a people, so ready as this people to pour out its abundance for the relief of a famine-stricken population. But worse, indeed, than pestilence and famine is that agitation which now, in its latest and most mischievous aspects, is destroying the very life of Ireland, and is placing a most serious difficulty in the way of all English government here at home. Well, they had that warning, but they allowed the Peace Preservation Acts to expire. Those

Acts were not Acts of severity ; they were Acts which had been reduced in severity in 1875 by the Conservative Government. But they were allowed to lapse, and from that period the agitation which now saw its friends and its patrons in the seats of power, assumed new vigour and new boldness ; and month by month it has increased in energy until outrages, which had been comparatively few in number up to the beginning of the year, rose to a total of 560 in the month of November, and to over 800 in the month of December, 1880. During that time what had been done? What had the Government done to meet or to check this state of things? They had allowed the only Acts which gave them the power to deal with it to lapse. The only other thing they did was to introduce that Bill which was defeated by a majority of their own supporters in the house of Lords, a Bill which, by anticipation, their own Chief Secretary for Ireland had denounced. In May, 1880, mention was made in the House of Commons of a Bill to suspend evictions. Mr. Foster, speaking of it in the House of Commons, spoke of it inadvertently as a Bill to suspend the payment of rent, when he was interrupted by Mr. O'Connor, who said, "No ; to suspend evictions." Mr. Foster, quite rightly, turned upon him and said, "Well, it would come to the same thing." Of course, he knew it would come to the same thing. If you suspended eviction, which was the penalty for the non-payment of rent, what chance was there of getting any rent at all? And yet that Government, whose Chief Secretary had seen the effect which was being produced by that measure, brought in towards the latter part of the session a Bill to suspend evictions in Ireland. Could ever there have been any step taken which could more encourage the party that had already declared itself against rents, and was desirous of fighting against the payment of rent in every form. Obviously they took that as an encouragement, and they had a more serious encouragement than that when Mr. Gladstone uttered that most unhappy phrase that a sentence of eviction was a sentence of death. Mr. Gladstone knew better than that if he took the trouble to think before the phrase was used. He knew that in nine-tenths of what were called evictions in Ireland the tenant was put in his caretaker during the six months which, by the law of Ireland, he had for the purpose of redeeming the holding. When the landlord obtained an ejectment against him it was the law that if within six months the tenant could pay up the rent he was entitled to continue his occupation. And yet Mr. Gladstone uttered that phrase, and those words have been the text of the sermons of rebellion in half the towns of Ireland. They have got the Prime Minister of England as the authority for the statement that sentence of eviction is a sentence of death. Well, time

went on, and in December, 1880, the number of outrages assumed such fearful proportions that it became necessary to do something. They therefore prosecuted the principal Land Leaguers; but the trial ended, as everybody knew it would end, in the discharge of the jury because they could not agree upon a verdict. There never was a chance of getting a conviction in that case, nor, perhaps, was it ever expected. But the Government had by that time recognised that the aims and objects adopted by the Land League were illegal objects. In these circumstances they called Parliament together, and made speeches in which they recognised the miserable state of things in Ireland, and urged that some immediate remedy should be placed in their hands. And the House concurred. It passed two bills which were supported not only by followers of the Government but by most of the Tory party in the House of Commons who voted for them. But I voted for them with my own expression, from my place in the House, of the great reluctance with which I did so. The Arms Bill one could vote for with an easy conscience, for it was clearly a right thing to give the Government power of searching for arms and seizing arms in districts where they could only be possessed and used for mischievous and treasonable purposes. But with regard to the other bill I must tell you candidly that I had very serious hesitation in voting for it. It was a bill which allowed the imprisonment of any reasonably suspected person. I can quite understand that in times of imminent public danger it is necessary to give the Government almost any power it asks for. Ministers came down and said they could not protect the peace of Ireland unless they had this power given into their hands, and so, under protest in my place in the House of Commons, I voted in favour of that Act. But having got these powers, what did the Government do with them? Why, they kept them in abeyance for months, and they kept them in abeyance in order to pass that Land Bill which they thought they could not pass unless there was the impetus and influence of rebellion threatening the country. Now, that is a serious charge to be made against the Government, and it ought not to be made without serious thought and good authority. And I refer to it specially to-night because I read in the paper the other day a letter written to Mr. Page Hopps by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, in which occurs this very courteous sentence:—"At the present time the Tories are going up and down the country, and, with their accustomed habit of misrepresentation, are denouncing me for statements which I never made, and with more reason because I have declared my hatred of their favourite policy of coercion, and my unwillingness to resort to it while it could possibly be avoided,

and without, at least, accompanying it by remedial legislation which alone could remove the cause and origin of disorder." Now, I read that sentence as to the accustomed habit of misrepresentation of the Tory party. You know, one doesn't expect courtesy or manners from Mr. Chamberlain. And so when he says the Tories have an accustomed habit of misrepresentation one can pass it by, only regretting that a man who occupies the conspicuous position he does in public life should be obviously wanting in the ordinary courtesies by which public as well as private life ought to be guided. But when Mr. Chamberlain denounces the Tories for quoting statements he never made, it makes it essential that one who is a Tory, as I am, and who intends to quote Mr. Chamberlain, should give in Mr. Chamberlain's own words the statements that he has made. On the 25th of October last year he made a speech at Liverpool in which he was meeting the charge then made, and which I make now, that the Government having the Coercion Bill passed, and powers of repression committed to their hand, refrained from using the powers they had only persuaded the House to grant by representing that there was an immediate necessity for their use, and refrained from using them in order to promote their party purposes. Mr. Chamberlain, then is reported to have said at Liverpool, "To stifle agitation at that time would have been to have prevented reform; would have been also to have brought ruin upon thousands and tens of thousands of innocent people who are now protected by the Land Act. If the Land League had then been suppressed, the tenants of Ireland would have had no organization to fall back upon." Now, whatever Mr. Chamberlain's other deficiencies may be, he understands the use of the English language, and there is no meaning attributable to those two sentences but this, that they refrained from suppressing the Land League at that time and "stifling the agitation," because they were desirous that reform should not be prevented. "To stifle agitation at that time would have been to prevent reform." Why? Was it that Mr. Chamberlain's Ministry was not in earnest about reform, and that Mr. Chamberlain and one of his colleagues in the Cabinet found it necessary to threaten their other colleagues with the result of this disorder in Ireland in order to spur them up to measures of reform? I think there may be something in that. Was it that they thought the House of Commons would not accept those measures of reform unless they saw that there was disorder and rebellion threatening the very existence of civilized society in Ireland? It may have been that. But whichever it was; whether Mr. Chamberlain wanted the weapon of disorder in Ireland to stir up the unwilling spirits in his own Cabinet, or whether the Cabinet at large wanted it for the purpose of en-

forcing their plans upon the House of Commons, either way they perpetrated a fraud upon the House of Commons. This power which was given them to meet an immediate and overwhelming necessity was practically unused for months. The leaders of the agitation went on making their mischievous speeches at meetings in Ireland as well as in the House of Commons itself. But they were not touched. Things were allowed to go on, only a few obscure persons whose names nobody had ever heard of being arrested here and there, I suppose by way of practising upon the Act, just to see how it would work. It was not until the Land Act had been passed, and Mr. Parnell made the mistake of denouncing Mr. Gladstone personally, that Mr. Parnell was put into prison. He had in his speeches stated most frankly the objects of his agitation, and the way in which he proposed to work it. On the 25th of September he made a speech in Dublin which one would have thought any Government would have been bound to take immediate cognizance of. For he said, "Believe me, the spirit which is alive in Ireland to-day, the spirit of old as exhibited by the silent martyrs in Kilmainham and other gaols, the spirit which is exhibited by Michael Davitt far off in Portland prison, willing to suffer five more long years of penal servitude provided you on your side do your duty; the spirit which has been shown in every quarter and corner of Ireland, that spirit will never die until it sweeps that detested alien rule, with its buckshot and bayonets, clear away over the Channel whence it came, never to return." That speech was made in Dublin on the 25th of September. But even that did not rouse the Government, and it was not until Mr. Parnell had the inconceivable folly to reply to a speech which Mr. Gladstone made at Leeds that he was shut up in gaol. Gentlemen, the blow fell too late. I have no doubt myself that if, when that Act was first passed, and power was given to the Government, they had struck at once at the known and avowed leaders of this most treasonous agitation, the suddenness of the blow might have broken the power of the Land League. But they allowed months to go by, from March to October, during the whole of which time the leaders, whose liberty was in danger, were providing themselves with successors and substitutes who could carry on their work if they were removed or obliged to fly. Although the Land League has now been declared to be an illegal assembly—it was not one whit more illegal in October, 1881, than in October, 1880—what do we find? Why, that things have gone too far. The spirit of resistance and the spirit of rebellion have penetrated too deeply among the people to be affected by the arrests of some of the leaders of the agitation, and the last thing the Government has done has been to appoint five resident magis-

trates in different parts of the disturbed portions of the country, with almost absolute powers. These magistrates, among their other duties, have to report if it is necessary to increase the military or police force; and so, after two years of this precious Cabinet trying to frame plans for the pacification of Ireland, we find them appointing magistrates to report to them if they want any more soldiers or any more police. Gentlemen, it is a melancholy state of things; but, let us try if we cannot get any lesson out of it. I have said that I thought the passing of the Irish Land Bill was the gravest misfortune of the year 1881, because it breaks with all the traditions of our national habits, and is the first direct interference by the State with freedom of contract. It is a ridiculous and inefficacious sort of law. What will become of the Land Act I do not know. There are, I believe, 50,000 applications for fixing rents. The Commissioners have been at work for three months and have dealt with 505 cases, of which 300 are appealed against. At what rate we are to deal with Ireland in this fashion it is impossible to say; but my objection to the Act is not because the process is a clumsy one, or that it injures a particular class of people. It does a great deal more than that, for it strikes a blow against the principle of freedom of action as between man and man, and is, therefore, calculated to do a great deal of mischief to other sets of people besides landlords. The mischief and evils of the Land Act have been pointed out most clearly by a man who is to be honoured in a day or two by a banquet to be given him by the Liberals of Liverpool I mean Lord Derby. Lord Derby, I am very glad to say, has finally broken with the Conservative party. I think it must be a source of great satisfaction to any one who remembers the course he took when he was Foreign Secretary under Lord Beaconsfield, that no Tory Ministry is likely to be hampered in future by so inconvenient and so untrustworthy a colleague as Lord Derby proved himself to be. But his lordship has written an article in the *Nineteenth Century* on the Irish Land Act. In that article he points out that the economic results of the Irish Land Act must in every respect be mischievous. What Ireland wants is the presence of landlords who can do good in the place by the employment of labour. But what is happening there to-day? Landlords are leaving Ireland, driven out because they feel they have no security in that country. Ireland chiefly wants industrial capital, which shall be brought there to find its home there, and to give occupation to its people. And Lord Derby points out that the inevitable result of what has taken place in Ireland is to drive capital away from the soil, and he also points out that the effect of this Act will be to increase absenteeism, to diminish the capital which is available for the industrial occupation of the

people of Ireland, and to withdraw from Ireland those people who alone could prevent our having hereafter to engage in a struggle to put down a subject people; and he winds up that article by warning Englishmen that they are brought face to face with a problem which has perplexed continental nations—the problem of keeping down by force a subject race which has determined if possible to throw off its allegiance to the sovereign of the country.

There is one other matter in which I believe the Liberals will feel as strongly as I do, and that is with reference to the Act which is now in force under which persons are arrested on reasonable suspicion. There are now nearly four hundred people in Ireland who have been arrested upon a complaint to which no name has been attached, and which is not vouched for by any person whom they could trace or challenge; and they are sent to prison upon the warrant of the Lord-Lieutenant, a warrant which cannot be examined or attacked in any court, and at the option of the Lord-Lieutenant these people may be either let out of prison to-morrow or kept there until next September. I believe this is one of the things Mr. Gladstone calls the “resources of civilization.” It strikes me, however, as being the most grotesque phrase that was ever applied to misrepresent one of the resources of barbarism and despotism. Arbitrary imprisonment is a resource of despotism, and of despotism only; and a free people, if they have any capacity for statesmanship at all, although they may have at a moment of great national peril to resort to arbitrary imprisonment, just as they may have to resort to the use of arms, yet a free people, jealous of their freedom, are bound to take the earliest possible opportunity of reconsidering the step they have taken, and of endeavouring to bring the people back within the current of the ordinary law. Any sort of trial would be preferable to imprisonment upon the mere edict of an official connected with the Government of the time, and it seems to me that the gravest question before the country at the present time is how are we to deal with the state of things, or how the Government is to be allowed to deal with the state of things, that exists in Ireland. About four hundred people are in prison, and they may be there until next September. I doubt if they will be. I doubt very much whether the Government will venture to meet Parliament whilst members of Parliament are still imprisoned under that sort of authority. But suppose they do, and suppose they keep these men in prison until September, what will happen? In September, if the Act is not renewed, why from Kilmainham, Armagh, and those other places of confinement must come forth triumphal processions. The funds collected throughout Ireland will be lavished in demonstrations of honour upon these men; you will find in

every part of Ireland a hero to be worshipped by his friends and neighbours, one who will be to them the visible representative not only of the spirit of rebellion against English rule, but of a protest against what they will call the arbitrary and despotic character of the British Government. That is if you wait until September. But, suppose you let them out stealthily, one by one, or by twos and threes, so as to prevent this demonstration, you get the same result by sending out these men who have it all their own way in denouncing the Government, because there is no sort of answer to their complaint, no sort of evidence that they have been guilty of any crime. Suppose Government comes to the House of Commons, and asks for a prolongation of this Act, I, for one, will vote and speak steadily against it, whatever the result may be. A Government which has so misused the power which was given into its hands last February, and has not in the time which has elapsed since then contrived some mode of governing more congenial to the minds of the people used to constitutional freedom, that Government does not deserve, and cannot safely be trusted with such a weapon. It is not, after all, a party question. I hope and believe I should feel just as strongly if it were proposed to continue that power in the hands of men of our own side. I should not, of course, have so much anxiety, because these people have misused, and deliberately misused, the power given them upon the representation that they wanted it for immediate action, and I do not believe it would have been so misused by anyone belonging to the Tory party. But, whichever party it is which is governing, it is a great deal too serious a thing for Englishmen to get into the habit of playing with edged tools. This power of arbitrary imprisonment is an extreme power which freedom-loving people should reserve for use only in those exigencies when the rights of classes and of people must be sacrificed to preserve the freedom of the State. I hope we may look forward to a better state of things. I hope Government will have taken warning by what has passed during this autumn; I hope they will have taken warning by the current of Conservative successes which has altered the majority of the Government in the House, which has diminished by no less than eighteen the majority the Government could have counted upon at the beginning of this Parliament. We have won a balance of nine seats, eleven against two, and that makes a difference of eighteen upon a division. I am not anxious to see this Government at this moment ejected from office, because I believe the Government may be reconstructed in a way which will leave the members of it who are responsible for the existing state of things in Ireland responsible also for dealing with the disorder which they have set on foot. Mr. Chamberlain, in that letter of his, says the

policy of coercion is the policy of the Tories. But what are the facts? During the last fifty years fifty Coercion Acts have been passed with regard to Ireland. During those fifty years the Liberals were in power thirty-four years, and the Conservatives sixteen years; and whereas during the sixteen years of Conservative Government we only passed eleven Coercion Acts, the other thirty-nine were passed in the thirty-four years of Liberal Government. And of those Acts which were passed by the Conservatives more than one-half were Continuation Acts of the Coercion Acts passed by the Liberals, which were, as in the year 1875, mitigated by the Continuation Act passed by the Conservative Government. I have dealt thus fully with the question with regard to Ireland, because I am certain you would all feel that that was the immediate question which would have to be dealt with in Parliament. It is desirable that a member who has taken some part in the discussion of Irish affairs in the House of Commons, and who certainly hopes to take some part in their future discussion in the coming session, should come before his constituents and tell them frankly what he thinks. I believe the state of Ireland to be full of danger. I am sure it has been made worse by the adoption of that kind of legislation which is contained in the Irish Land Act, and which must necessarily lead to confusion. I am sure it will be made worse if we are to continue to depend as an habitual weapon upon that power of arbitrary imprisonment which should be reserved for extreme exigencies. I hope we may see a better state of things in Ireland. We dare not despair, for we cannot let Ireland go; we cannot lose the responsibility of governing Ireland, and so we must try, again and again, to bring to it peace and contentment. I believe our true course with Ireland will be to adhere as far as possible to those principles of freedom of contract which there and here I believe to be the safeguard of the industrial community. I believe the next thing we have to do is this, to take care that the Government is obeyed. It must be at any cost, for the most expensive thing in this world is a Government that is only partially successful. You must take care that Government is obeyed, and that the measures adopted for the security of life and property, and the preservation of peace and order in that country, are measures as nearly akin as circumstances will permit them to be to those measures under which we have the happiness to live, and under which we enjoy our present liberties.

*Annual Address to the Electors of Plymouth
at the Guildhall.*

JANUARY 3, 1883.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—The chairman has said that this is a meeting of the whole constituency. I heartily wish that it were, and that I could make my voice heard in this address to-night by all those whose interests I have the honour and the privilege to represent in the House of Commons. But we have, at all events, got the largest place in the borough. I think we have it pretty well filled, and to this substantial representation of the constituency of Plymouth I am anxious to address some observations upon the present condition of public affairs. At the beginning of last year I addressed four meetings of my constituents in different parts of the town, for I desired that after a large accession to the number of the constituency I should as far as possible make myself personally known to those who had not shared in returning me to Parliament, but whose confidence I hoped to earn and whose support I hoped to enjoy at the next election. It is not necessary, for two or three reasons, that I should at the beginning of 1883 address four meetings of my constituents. For one reason it is not necessary, because I am glad to say that I have found the opportunity from time to time of taking part in important debates in the House of Commons itself, and I hope that everything I say in the House of Commons is considered by those constituents whose interests I am there to represent. I am glad to know that everything I say in the House of Commons is faithfully reported to my constituents by one of the newspapers of this town. And I must make acknowledgment, at the same time, of the energy and the courtesy of the conductors of the *Western Morning News* in reporting fully for this constituency speeches that I have made in other parts of the country.

I have heard it said that I make a great many speeches in other parts of the country. I do. I do not make one-tenth as many as I am asked, and those who support me here in Plymouth, and support me because they are in earnest in their political views and believe that I am in earnest, will not, I think, grudge my speaking to large assemblies of my fellow-countrymen in different parts of the country when they themselves at the same time, through the energy and the courtesy to which I have referred, have the opportunity of reading those speeches in the paper here. One other reason exists why I

need not address four meetings at this time. A great part of the addresses which I delivered at the beginning of last January were occupied in the discussion of legislation which I sincerely hoped would have been effected in the course of the then coming session. Unfortunately, what was in the future then, is in the future now. We are still looking forward to the measures with regard to bankruptcy, with regard to corrupt practices, with regard to the amendment of the administration of the law, and, in fact, to all the measures which were then considered to be necessary for the welfare of the people of this part of the kingdom. It has been a bare and meagre tale of achievement during the past session. There was but one measure of considerable importance passed with reference to the interests of England, and that was a measure of very great advantage, dealing with the difficult subject of settled lands, lands which were held in settlement, and the country is indebted for it, not to Her Majesty's Government, but to the ex-Lord Chancellor, Lord Cairns. I think almost the only measure that the Government themselves can claim to have originated and passed is the measure for allowing the Post-office to issue reply post-cards.

So far as the Government are concerned the history of the last year has been the history, in the first place, of an unnecessary war in Egypt; in the next place, of a discreditable compact with rebels at home; in the third place, the passing of the measure that allowed the reply post-cards; and in the fourth place, the raising of the taxation of this country to very nearly 90,000,000 of money. I am going to speak to-night with regard to the unnecessary war, and with regard to the discreditable compact. You do not want much said on the question of reply post-cards. I find that will be supplemented shortly by the carrying into full effect of a provision for sending parcels by post, the principal effect of which, so far as I can make out, will be to enable people who live in the provinces to deal with co-operative stores in London instead of dealing with tradesmen in the towns they live in. As to the taxation question, we shall have something more to say about that when poor Mr. Childers, who has deserved better things of his associates, is put forward in April to tell the melancholy tale that the national expenditure has increased to six and a half millions more than the expenditure of the Conservative Government in its last year.

Now, I will ask you to consider for a short time the charge I make against the present Government of having waged an unnecessary war. The story of the war in Egypt is remarkable and interesting. It has never, to my very great regret, been fully discussed in the House of Commons, and I say here I can-

not understand for what reason the leaders of a political party, who out of the House of Commons have declared that that war was unjust and unnecessary, did not bring these allegations to the test of a debate in the House of Commons. But it has not been discussed in the House of Commons yet, and it is a very curious and most remarkable episode in the history of this country. The whole story of the inception of the war and its conclusion has been confined in the compass of a year. I am afraid the history of its results may be a difficult history to deal with for some years to come. But on the last day of the year 1881 the Ministry in Egypt presented a project which was to be brought before the Chamber of Notables in Egypt for an organic law, which should control and regulate the proceedings of the Chamber of Notables. Unfortunately before the text of that law had reached England, Earl Granville was influenced by that remarkable but somewhat dangerous man who has just passed away, a man of great personal capacity and power, a man of great and unquestioned service to his country in the hour of her danger and distress, but still a statesman who was a dangerous and disturbing power in European politics—Monsieur Gambetta. Unfortunately Lord Granville was persuaded by that Minister to send what is known as the Dual Note to the Khedive of Egypt. That note was sent by France and England, and it assured the Khedive of support if the Chamber should make any attack upon his authority. I do not understand what business a Minister of this country had to make any such declaration to the Khedive at all. There would have been time to wait and see what the Parliament of that country proposed to do before any such declaration had been made, but in spite of the urgent request of the Turkish Ambassador in this country, who called three successive days on Lord Granville, the joint note of England and France was forwarded to Egypt. The object of the organic law was not a new object. It had been considered for two years; two years earlier than the law for the regulation of the Chamber of Notables in Egypt, and a declaration of its powers had been framed by that remarkable man who has since been the leader of what is called the Egyptian Revolt. At the beginning of the year the project was presented to the Chamber of Notables for the acceptance of this organic law. What do you think they claimed? Egypt is a small country, so far as its population is concerned, and it is a poor country, but it is terribly burdened with taxation. From five and a half millions of people nearly nine millions of money is raised in taxes, and this is a heavy burden to be borne by people so poor, so scanty in resources as these. But there is a more serious business. One-half of the taxation put upon the Egyptian people goes to different countries of Europe to pay interest on money lent to former Khedives who

were the rulers of Egypt. No less than four and a half millions of money are taken from the Egyptian people to pay interest on the debt, and this is secured by provisions with regard to the revenues in Egypt, which put these revenues in the hands of the bondholders to ensure payment of the receipts from these revenues for interest on the debt. Payment of that interest is secured. The Chamber of Notables wanted to be allowed freely to deal with the other half of the revenue of that country, and the one reason why England went to war with Egypt was to prevent the Egyptian people in the only Parliamentary representation which they possess dealing with the half of the revenue which had nothing to do with the payment of the debt. It stands perfectly clear and plain upon the official papers of the time. Let me read to you a few words from the declaration of the Egyptian Minister made on the 8th of February, 1882. He said :—

“ The Controllers-General retain the most extensive powers of investigation and the right of communicating, either to his Highness or his Ministers, the observations arising from their investigations, but the Government never undertook to exclude the country from that discussion. Can it fairly be blamed for admitting the taxpayers to examine the use of the public funds devoted to administrative expenses? Is it not a right common to all countries, a primordial right which cannot seriously be denied to the Government of his Highness the Khedive, without at the same time denying to it the essential prerogative conferred by the firmans of internal administration for Egypt? However, in view of the misgivings which have been manifested, it has been conceded that the Budget before becoming executory, shall be discussed by the Ministerial Council, with the assistance of a delegation from the Chamber of Notables. The Chamber of Delegates has been assembled six weeks ; it is eager to enter on a normal procedure, and impatiently awaits the promulgation of its Organic Statute, which the Ministry cannot further delay. None of the provisions of that Statute infringe the International Conventions in force. The Government of his Highness hopes that that very promulgation will tend to remove all misgivings, and will, by the absolute reservation of all questions relative to the Public Debt, furnish the Governments of France and Great Britain with a fresh proof of its firm determination loyally to observe all its engagements. It relies on the equity and constant goodwill of the two Governments ensuring a favourable reception for the preceding explanations.”

MOUSTAPHA FEHMY.”

That was the declaration of the Egyptian Ministry on the 8th of February in the new Government that had come into existence

almost at the same time that in France M. Gambetta fell from power and M. de Freycinet succeeded him. Unfortunately that was not listened to. The Government acted against the advice of their own representative in Egypt. He advised them that it would be well to concede to the Assembly of Notables the power which it claimed, and to see if it misused that power before they sought to cripple and control it, and he urged in a despatch that after all the Assembly of Notables was the only representation the people of Egypt had. This advice well became the representative of that country which holds Parliamentary representation so dear—and wisely holds it so dear—that its Ministers should watch with an anxious eye for the appearance of that form of representation in any other part of the world. It was this Government that refused that representation, and rather than concede it they sent out from his country 30,000 men to prevent it.

Now, I cannot say there was deliberate wrong-doing in the matter, for this reason, that from the end of January, when M. Gambetta fell from office, to the 15th of May, when our fleets were sent to Alexandria, and we were committed to the war, there was not energy enough in Lord Granville to do anything wrong. He could not do anything at all. When M. Gambetta's influence was withdrawn he was positively helpless, and it is painful to read page after page of the dispatches that went out from the Foreign Office showing the most pitiful incompetence on the part of Lord Granville to deal with matters arising in Egypt. What do you think Lord Granville suggested? The first thing was in the month of March. He suggested that two financial experts should be sent out to examine the questions in Egypt, and Lord Granville instructed our representative to make that suggestion to the French Government. The Minister in France at once said: "What do you want to send over two financial experts for? Are they to be commissioners to administer the finances of the country?" But no—they were to be sent over as arithmeticians and were to go out for the purpose of giving information and making calculations, and all that sort of thing. The French representative said, "But you have two consuls or representatives of the control already. Have you not got arithmeticians enough?" Well, the French Government quietly put that by, and to Lord Granville's great regret, because, after all, he seems to have thought it not a bad idea, and it ought not to be dismissed from consideration. A month or so later another brilliant idea occurred to him—one that deserves to be recorded if ever the life of Lord Granville is found worth writing. He instructed Lord Lyons to suggest to M. de Freycinet that the proper way to deal with things in Egypt was just this—let

Turkey send out a general without any troops ; let England and France each send out a general without any troops to remedy the disorders in the Egyptian army. When that suggestion was made to M. de Freycinet he seems to have thought it was a joke and he asked the very pertinent question of Lord Lyons—"Are the generals to be unanimous?" Lord Lyons said he was not quite certain, but it was his belief that they were to be. That was not a hopeful thing, to send out a Turkish, a French, and an English general to Egypt to be unanimous with regard to the military administration of that country. This also was put aside for a while, but Lord Granville thought it a splendid idea, and Lord Granville afterwards instructed Lord Lyons to make the proposal again. Well, the French Minister very sensibly said, "Suppose it is unanimous, and the Egyptian people give way to it and submit—well and good ; but suppose they don't, what then?" That had never occurred to Lord Granville. You see that was something beyond the resources of the Foreign Office. Lord Granville in playing the game of diplomatic chess seemed to be unable to think what move his opponent was going to make. Thus he was clearly put aside by the French office, and on the 5th of May Lord Granville wrote and said with regard to this precious suggestion that it could stand over, that it was "of no consequence, thank you," because it was a matter that did not press. You will hardly believe that, within ten days of his writing this dispatch and saying the matter did not press, and that it could be held over, our ships were on their way to Alexandria, and the war was practically begun.

There was just this one other incident, which was a remarkable one, and really forced affairs to hostilities in Egypt. In the Ministry which came into office in the month of February, Arabi Bey was Minister of War. I will not stop to discuss at length the question of the character of Arabi Bey. It was said the other day, by Mr. Chamberlain, that Arabi Bey was an Egyptian adventurer of ordinary type. It may have been so, but there is no evidence whatever of it in the official papers which have been published with regard to Egypt. So far from that, Arabi Bey was the son of a fellah. He had been much better educated than most of those with whom he had associated, and two years before he came into office—which was in February of last year—he was the person who had sketched out the organic laws for the Chamber of Notables in Egypt. He was in power from the month of February. A plot against him was discovered, and about fifty officers were arrested. There could be no doubt that a plot had existed. There is no doubt that Arabi Bey's notion was "Egypt for the Egyptians," and when he became Minister of War he promoted Egyptians

instead of Circassians, who had been put forward and patronised by the Khedive before that time. In that way he earned the animosity of the Circassian soldiers, and the plot against him was a serious and a large one. About fifty officers were tried, and upon trial were convicted, and, being convicted, they were sentenced to be transported to the White Nile. That is with regard to Egypt practically the same as Siberia is to Russia—it is a life of perpetual exile and speedy death. But directly the sentence had been pronounced and the papers laid before the Khedive, the Ministry of which Arabi was a member recommended to the Khedive that the sentence should be commuted to simple banishment and the deprivation of military rank and honours. That was the recommendation he gave when he had the power in his hands, and when the sentence of death had been passed. What do you think the English and French representatives did? In the first place they advised the Khedive not to submit to the Sultan, who had made a claim that the sentence should be submitted to him before it was carried out. Our representative advised him not to submit it to the Sultan, and then the English and French representatives further advised the Khedive to commute the sentence, and the part that they took in this transaction forms one of the strangest things ever seen in an English blue-book. Our consul says, "We went to the palace, my French colleague and I, and found the representatives of Germany, Austria, and Russia, and the Khedive asked for advice, and the other Governments declined to give it. We, as representing England and France, recommended him to commute the sentence. The representatives of the other Powers then left." The French and English Consuls remained. They had the decree drawn up commuting the sentence, and the English Consul says in his dispatch that "In order it should not be believed that this was done by the influence of the Ministry we remained two hours with the Khedive while the decree was being prepared and signed, so that it should not be suggested that anybody else had the credit for the mercy being shown." The English and French Consuls stayed with the Khedive while the decree was being prepared in order that Egyptian Ministers should not have the credit. They advised that the Khedive should commute the sentence, and that there should be no loss of military rank. Then the Ministry refused to bend. They said that people convicted by court-martial of such a crime as this ought to be struck off the roll, and that was the immediate outbreak between the Khedive and the Ministers which brought about intervention.

In a speech at Ashton-under-Lyne Mr. Chamberlain said that the 15th of May was the turning point of the history, and that

if wrong was done any time wrong was done then, because then we were committed to a particular course and could not withdraw from it. I quite agree with this. It would have been difficult to draw back without loss of self-respect, which comes to everyone who puts himself in an untenable position. But what was done on the 15th of May? It was said by Mr. Chamberlain that then, if at all, we made the mistake. I am agreeing with him. I say then we did make the mistake and it was confessed to be so by the Minister who took that step. In the dispatch which Lord Granville wrote on the 15th of May he communicated to the French Government his acquiescence in sending the fleet to Alexandria, and added, "Her Majesty's Government think this is a mistake. They think that the other Powers should have been invited to co-operate; but as France has gone so far with us in this and other matters, we must yield to her on this occasion." In that very dispatch he used these words—"Her Majesty's Government think this a mistake." I do not think we employ Foreign Ministers to make mistakes, and to confess them to be mistakes at the time they make them. It was then the mistake was made I quite agree, and the fatal consequences of that mistake followed in quick succession. It was difficult afterwards to withdraw, and so we acknowledged ourselves committed to that war which, as I believe, was a war against all that there was of freedom or the promise of freedom in Egyptian institutions. In the end we came out of that war with great credit. Our soldiers and sailors, and our marines especially, did nobly in that war. Our generals distinguished themselves by their great power of combination, and by the skilful execution of plans well contrived, and our administrators did well in the dispatch of so great a force. It was remarkable to hear Her Majesty's Ministers celebrate that great success in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister told the country, speaking from his place in the House of Commons, how in the course of a month we had sent out some 200 ships; how we had sent out 30,000 troops; how we had effected a vast success; and he spoke of the great resources of the country which alone would enable it to achieve such a success; and it occurred to me, when listening to that great speech, that the truest condensation of it would be—

"We've got the ships, we've got the men,
We've got the money too."

But, gentlemen, after all, it is not a matter, this Egyptian war, of which, as a nation, we may be very proud. We sent out a body of men twice in number the whole standing army of Egypt. At the time when the war broke out there were only 14,000 men under the colours of Egypt, and we sent out 30,000

men to fight them ; and although the country was all on Arabi's side you know it is a very different matter meeting recruits a fortnight or three weeks under colours to meeting a formed and disciplined European army.

But let us see what the future is with regard to Egypt? We are in Egypt, and we shall have to stay there whatever difficulty there may be in reconciling ourselves to that state of things. It is idle to talk of retiring from Egypt and leaving the Khedive to establish a Government. If British troops were withdrawn from the country Tewfik would not be in the country a week, and you might as well take away your hand from the egg you have balanced on its end on the table and expect it to stand, as expect the Khedive to stand without British support. It is perfectly clear we shall have to deal with Egyptian affairs for some time to come, but I hope we shall deal with them by diminishing the grievances of that country. Just imagine the state of things. What would be our feelings if we had to pay forty-five millions every year in interest to foreign bondholders upon loans which practically had never come to benefit the people of this country? Suppose we had 12,000 foreigners here filling all the well paid public offices, and taking four millions from the taxation of the country ; suppose we had a Frenchman and a German entitled to sit in the Cabinet with our Ministers and deal with all questions the Cabinet had to deal with, or interfere at every turn with regard to financial affairs—do you think we should be content to bear it? Well, that was the case with Egypt. Of the nine millions they paid in taxation, four and a half went to pay interest on debt, and at the time the war broke out there were more than 1,200 European officials taking £400,000 a year in salaries.

Now, I turn from that question to the other question of which I spoke. I said we had made an unnecessary war, and I said that a discreditable contract had been made with rebels. And I pass on to speak of that which, although all the resources of equivocation have been used with regard to it, is known and will be known as the treaty of Kilmainham. In October, 1881, Mr. Parnell was arrested and sent to Kilmainham Gaol under the Coercion Act then in force. He was rightly arrested, because a fortnight before he had made a speech in Ireland in which he incited his countrymen to drive back the accursed alien rule over the Channel whence it came, never to return. That speech, however it may be explained or justified, was the speech of a rebel, and no Government which had the right to call itself a Government at all, could afford to allow that speech to be made with impunity and repeated with impunity. Mr. Parnell was sent to Kilmainham, and it was loudly proclaimed in the Guildhall that by his arrest the first step had been taken

towards the re-establishment of law and order in Ireland. Some people wondered that first step had not been taken before. We had seen that from May, 1880, until October, 1881, this strong Ministry had been unable to take even the feeblest and most faltering step towards the re-establishment of good government in Ireland. So it was proclaimed that the first step was taken, and then for some months Mr. Parnell was in Kilmainham Gaol. But the time came when Parliament was meeting, and Mr. Redmond in the House of Commons proposed a bill by which he asked that the British taxpayers should pay the rent for the tenants who had been either persuaded by the Land League not to pay their rent, or had been terrorised over. Now, I shall not make too great an accusation against the tenant farmers of Ireland when I say that if you take the condition of Ireland in 1880 you will see it required as much resolution to pay your just debts as if the doing so was an act of perfectly exceptional virtue. One can easily forgive a tenant farmer who was to a certain extent pinched by the distress of a few bad seasons, who would have found a difficulty in paying his rent, and to whom the evil agitator came and said, "If you pay your rent you are an enemy to your country." When you persuade a man that a breach of his obligations to his creditors is in itself a patriotic act, and when he remembers, also, that the fulfilment of his duty may be the murder of himself and his children, the maiming of his cattle, and the firing of his ricks—when that state of things exists you cannot be very much surprised that, partly from cupidity, partly from fear, partly from some notion of patriotism, a very great many refused to pay their rent. But afterwards a proposal was made in the House of Commons by Mr. Redmond that a gift of money should be made from the English people to pay their rents for them, and Mr. Redmond in his speech said that that Bill had been formulated by Mr. Parnell. Now, what took place? On the 8th of April Captain O'Shea, who was member for Clare, wrote to Mr. Gladstone—as it appears there are some in this room to whom a quotation from the words of Mr. Gladstone would be welcome, I will read them a quotation at once, and I beg them to mark every word and every syllable of it, for I shall show them before ten minutes have passed that I had not exaggerated in the slightest when I said that with regard to this unwise treaty all the resources of equivocation had been used in the House of Commons. Now for the quotation. This was said on the 4th of May, in the House of Commons, by the leader of the Government:—"There is no bargain, no arrangement, no negotiation; for nothing has been asked and nothing taken." And on the 15th of May he added, "I did say, and I repeat now, that there never was the slightest understanding of any

kind between Her Majesty's Government and the hon. member for the city of Cork. The hon. member for the city of Cork has asked nothing and got nothing from us; on our side we asked nothing and got nothing from him." Now that was the statement, and when I have finished what I am going to tell you, and the extracts I am going to read from statements made in the House of Commons and from letters, I will just read that extract again. On the 8th of April Captain O'Shea asked by letter if Mr. Gladstone would accept a statement on Irish affairs as they presented themselves to him. Three days after that a very curious incident happened, Mr. Parnell being released from gaol, not for any definite time although it was understood that he might take a fortnight, and he was released in order that he might attend the funeral of a nephew in the city of Paris. Well, he did not attend that funeral for he got there too late, but he stayed his full fortnight out of Kilmainham Gaol, and during the latter part of that fortnight communications took place between Captain O'Shea and the Government. Let me tell you this: Mr. Parnell did go to Paris, and it was because he went to Paris and there had the opportunity of seeing Patrick Egan that he was able to make the offer to Mr. Forster and the Government which he afterwards made. On the 13th of April Captain O'Shea wrote a letter which he sent in duplicate—one to Mr. Gladstone and one to Mr. Chamberlain—containing Mr. Parnell's proposals. The principal proposal you now know was the bringing into Parliament of an Arrears Bill, which was to get an amount from the English people for the purpose of paying the back rents of the Irish tenantry. The answers to that letter were written on the 15th of April. Mr. Gladstone said, "I have this day received your letter of the 13th, and I will communicate with Mr. Forster on the important and varied matter which it contains." But Mr. Chamberlain was not so practised in this kind of diplomacy, and he wrote:—"I am really very much obliged to you for your letter, and especially for a copy of your important and interesting communication to Mr. Gladstone. I am not in a position, as you will understand, to write you fully on the subject, but I think I may say there appears to me nothing in your proposals which does not deserve consideration." So they proceeded to consider it. And as Mr. Gladstone said he would refer the matter to Mr. Forster, the next thing done was to put Captain O'Shea into communication with Mr. Forster. It appeared from what Sir William Harcourt afterwards said that they were not satisfied with the statement made by Captain O'Shea. They wanted something in Mr. Parnell's handwriting, and I will read you what Sir William Harcourt said on the matter in the House of Com-

mons. He said, "The solution we had to arrive at was— Was this a bona fide statement that these gentlemen would be the friends of law and order in Ireland? We were bound to satisfy ourselves upon that subject as well as we could, and we did satisfy ourselves, and we did desire to know from the member for Clare that it did not pass in mere loose conversation, but that the member for Cork should distinctly make that statement. And he did make it in the letter which he handed to the hon. member for Clare, and which was placed before us." Mr. Forster suggested to Captain O'Shea an easy way in which he could go to Kilmainham without attracting attention. The rules of Kilmainham Gaol were suspended, and he was allowed to have an interview of six hours with Mr. Parnell on the 29th of April. And on the evening of the 29th of April Captain O'Shea, with a letter from Mr. Parnell, came over to see the Government. There was a remarkable sentence in that letter which Mr. Parnell sent over. It was this:—"It would, I feel sure, enable us to co-operate cordially for the future with the Liberal party in forwarding Liberal principles." Now, after that interview of six hours at Kilmainham on a Saturday, Captain O'Shea hurried back to London on Sunday morning, the 30th of April. He went to see Mr. Forster at his house at 30, Eccleston-square, and there made his proposals, and Mr. Forster, with a prudence which I should think he has greatly rejoiced at ever since, noted down directly after it happened what took place at that interview. Listen to his account:—"After telling me that he had been from eleven to five o'clock with Mr. Parnell yesterday, Captain O'Shea gave me his letter to him, saying that he hoped it would be a satisfactory expression of union with the Liberal party. After carefully reading it I said to him, 'Is that all, do you think, that Parnell would be inclined to say?' He said, 'What more do you want? Doubtless I could supplement it.' I said, 'It comes to this, that upon our doing certain things he would help us to prevent outrages,' or words to that effect. He again said, 'How can I supplement it?' referring, I imagined, to different measures. I did not feel justified in giving him my own opinion, which might be interpreted to be that of the Cabinet, so I said I had better show the letter to Mr. Gladstone and one or two others. He said, 'If these words won't do I must get others.'" And then, in discussion with Mr. Forster, he said that the organization used to procure "Boycotting" would be used for the prevention of outrage, and he suggested that a man named Sheridan, against whom warrants were then out, and who had been an instigator of crime, should be allowed to come back and take part in putting down outrages and boycotting. Mr. Forster then felt sorry he had entered upon the negotiation. When the Cabinet met on Monday they had before them the letter of Mr. Parnell,

and they had Mr. Forster's note of what had taken place between him and Captain O'Shea ; but an extraordinary thing had happened in the meantime. Captain O'Shea had not only sent to Mr. Forster, but also to that other Minister with whom such frequent negotiations took place, Mr. Chamberlain, the letter Mr. Parnell had written, and something was said about that unfortunate sentence as to union with the Liberal party. It was part of the bargain, and meant to be part of the bargain, but they didn't like it to appear in the papers. It was suggested at that interview between Captain O'Shea and Mr. Chamberlain that that sentence should be struck out, and Captain O'Shea afterwards said that he struck out that sentence because he thought there might be a difficulty with regard to the release of Mr. Parnell. The sentence was struck out, and the difficulty was thus removed. The interview had taken place on the Sunday ; on Monday the Cabinet met, and they gave orders for the release of Mr. Parnell. Mr. Forster and Earl Cowper resigned the great offices which they held in Ireland rather than be parties to such a transaction ; and Sir William Harcourt said in the House of Commons, " We parted company simply because out of fourteen gentlemen one gentleman thought the assurance was not sufficient and the other thirteen thought it was." Now, gentlemen, I have read to you an outline of what took place then. The quotations I have read to you are quotations which are from speeches and letters of the Cabinet Ministers themselves. I have shown to you how a Cabinet Minister opened the door of Kilmainham in order that Captain O'Shea should go to Mr. Parnell and get the written document, without which the Cabinet did not feel safe in acting. He went there, and he got it, he discussed other matters, and he came back with the assurance that the "no-rent" manifesto was withdrawn, and at the same time he mentioned to Mr. Forster, as a stipulation, that Michael Davitt should be released from prison. All this discussion having taken place, the order was given on the 1st of May for the release. Now listen to what was said by the Prime Minister, for I will read the sentences again. " There was no bargain, no arrangement, no negotiations ; for nothing has been asked and nothing taken. . . . I did say, and I repeat now, that there never was the slightest understanding of any kind between Her Majesty's Government and the hon. member for the city of Cork. The hon. member for the city of Cork has asked for nothing and got nothing"—remember that he was out of prison at that time—" and we on our side asked nothing and got nothing from him"—though that letter contained the promise of co-operation with the Liberal party.

Gentlemen, I was bound to deal at some length with this matter here, for this reason. We made every possible effort in

the House of Commons during the autumn session to bring the matter to the test of debate and discussion. The Prime Minister rashly one night in the House of Commons ventured to throw out the challenge that if Mr. Yorke would move for an inquiry he would consent to the motion. But he acted afterwards very much in the style of Bob Acres. I think you will remember that that worthy gentleman sends a most valiant challenge, but when he comes to the place to fight he says, "I feel my valour going; it is going fast. Valour will come and go; it is oozing out, as it were, at the palms of my hands." And this heroic duellist in the House of Commons is just like the duellist who goes about looking for a second. He says, "My dear fellow, will you second me? If you have any objection to the shedding of blood, I would not for the world persuade you to bloodguiltiness, but if you have no regard for any life do second me." And so one night, when the adjournment of the debate was moved at ten minutes past twelve in order that this matter should be discussed, good friends of Mr. Gladstone—Mr. Labouchere one of them—and one or two gentlemen who are very seldom heard of in the House of Commons, such as Mr. Mellor, the member for Grantham; Mr. Courtauld, the member for Maldon, and one or two other gentlemen whose voices were unfamiliar, rendered valuable service to the Government by talking until half-past twelve had come, and then, according to the rules of the House, the motion could not be brought on. But we did have an opportunity, by forty members rising in their places, of getting some debate upon the matter; and I said in the House of Commons at the close of that debate that I declared it was a discreditable and a disgraceful transaction, that I meant to say so elsewhere—I was thinking of my constituents at the time—and that because I was going to say it elsewhere I got up and said it then, in the face of the Ministers whose conduct I was condemning in their presence.

Well now, gentlemen, my friend Mr. Hawker said at the beginning of the meeting that no doubt I should deal at length with the question of clôtûre. But I do not propose to do so—for this reason. At the beginning of last year I discussed that question in my speeches. I said then what I had to say, and I hope that some of those who are here may have read the very excellent report that appeared in a Plymouth paper of the speech I made on that subject in the House of Commons itself. It is not now necessary to say much about it, for this reason. Really we had a perfectly unnecessary autumn session. The whole fight was with regard to the first resolution of the clôtûre. It was forced upon a reluctant House of Commons by the use of every instrument of authority which belongs to the Ministry of

the day, and in favour of it the Ministry, after all, got but a very scanty and unsatisfactory majority. I hope it may always be left to the credit—if they choose to think it a credit—of the Liberal party that they put that rule on the order-book of the House of Commons, and I hope it will be some day, and that soon, the credit of the Conservative party to erase it from the book. Gentlemen, with regard to the other resolutions, they were matters almost of detail; and if the leader of the Government, or the member of the Government who was entrusted with those resolutions, had in the ordinary session of Parliament communicated with the leaders of the Opposition with a view of arranging practical measures, if the communication had been made in a friendly spirit of co-operation in order to facilitate the work of the House of Commons, all those resolutions, except the *clôture* resolution, might have been disposed of in a single week. I hope they will work well. But to one of them I have a very strong objection. I entirely object to the House of Commons relegating its duty to a Grand Committee. I think it would have been much better to have saved its time by the proposal which I myself made in the House of Commons of carrying bills on from one session to another if there had not been time to pass them, and I believe if that had been adopted there would have been no necessity for Grand Committees. Of course, when the House of Commons has devoted a special session to arranging the business of the House it would be no use to make further proposals on that subject, probably for some years to come; but I have a firm conviction that before many years pass it will be the duty of some one, my own duty, I hope, in the House of Commons to again bring forward and press upon the House the proposal which I made, and which is one that in practice has been found to work well in the majority of the legislative assemblies of Europe.

Now, gentlemen, what have I to say with regard to the prospects of the coming session? There is not much to say, because, as I have already remarked to you, that which is in the future now is precisely that which we thought was in the immediate future years ago. Sir Charles Dilke has just told his constituents that the Government have not yet made up their minds whether they will have a Redistribution Bill with a Franchise Bill, or separately; and until they have settled that important question possibly we need not begin to discuss the measure. It may be well, however, to remember that the nobleman whose accession to the Liberal Government I expressed a strong wish for twelve months ago has now, I am glad to say, joined them. I could have wished nothing worse for the Liberal Government than that Lord Derby should become a member of it. I have not the

smallest doubt when they are discussing the question of redistribution, and whether they are to have a Franchise Bill and a Redistribution Bill separately, Lord Derby will remind them that he, from the Conservative side of the House, in 1866, seconded the resolution, which nearly drove out the Gladstone Government, and compelled them to put franchise and redistribution into the compass of a single measure. If he will remind them of that we shall be very glad that he recollects some of his former Conservatism. There are two other matters with regard to which I am desirous of saying a word. One is the Corrupt Practices Bill, which was brought in last session, and which I believe might easily have been passed that session if the Government had not chosen to waste a considerable number of valuable nights over that ridiculous attack upon the House of Lords for an investigation into the Irish Land Act. However, the Corrupt Practices Bill will come forward again, and the consequence will be—for I understand they are going to relegate it to one of those Grand Committees—that the measure will be chiefly discussed by business men who have no business, and lawyers who have no practice. And it may possibly be necessary for the House of Commons, when it is fully formed in the evening, and when the people who are competent to do the work are there to assist, to look pretty sharply on that which has been done in the Grand Committee. With regard to the Corrupt Practices Bill I took a great interest in that measure, and I put down a series of amendments, consisting of some ten or twelve clauses, which I shall certainly move when the House of Commons has the measure before it again, with the view of securing a cheaper and more thorough investigation with reference to corrupt practices. I told you a year ago that I believed the real reason why you were not able in a great many places to deal with corrupt practices was this, that directly the judges are appointed to come down to a town the thing is turned into a lawsuit between the two political parties, and each has the object of preventing a knowledge of as much as they can possibly conceal. And the consequence is, that if it is clear that an election is to be voided as the result of some corrupt practice, the inquiry is at an end, and the real state of things does not in all cases come out. I told you a year ago that I thought the real remedy for that was that which was proposed by Mr. Disraeli many years since. He proposed, in brief, that, after an election, Commissioners should be sent down, with power to call before them such witnesses as they thought could give them information, and the power to insist upon the production of documents which they thought might reveal the truth. Now, I have translated that suggestion into a full plan of some eight or ten clauses, which I certainly propose to ask

the House of Commons to consider—even if they do not adopt—when the Corrupt Practices Bill is again before them. There are just two other amendments with regard to that bill which I intend to propose. One of them is not, perhaps, a very obvious one, but it is one which I think will be of great value. It is, that from the day the Corrupt Practices Bill passes no investigation upon any election petition shall go back to anything before the date of the passing of that bill. We know there are certain boroughs in this country where corrupt practices do exist, and where people dare not petition against the return because they know if an investigation takes place into the electoral history of the borough it will be disfranchised in consequence of the corruption which has taken place in past times. We know of boroughs in this country where there are, on both sides of political parties, earnest and resolute men, determined, as far as may be, to make elections pure, but who yet are fettered by this difficulty with regard to the past history of their borough. Well, then, let us draw a line, and let us start a fresh system, and then I believe we shall find that, this difficulty being got out of the way, some of those boroughs whose electoral history has not been pure, will be for the future places where Parliamentary elections are properly and purely conducted. There is one other amendment which I am going to try to introduce into the bill. There ought to be some equitable power in the judges: if they find that the act which is charged as being a violation of the Act of Parliament is a single act, entirely contrary to the will of the candidate, and entirely contrary also to the instructions which he has given, they ought not to allow that one single instance, where it does not affect the result of the election, to deprive a man of his seat. I think if the judges should say, "We find that there was a single act of bribery, but the member did all he could to prevent bribery, and that its commission was distinctly contrary to his instructions and to his efforts, and it was a single act which did not affect the result of the election,"—then, I say, if the judges so determine they ought to be permitted to say that the member shall keep his seat in the House of Commons. Well, now, gentlemen, so far with regard to the Corrupt Practices Bill. My friend, the chairman, has referred to the matter of the Bankruptcy Bill, which was the subject of a curious incident in the House of Commons last year. I think you will remember in the autumn of 1881 a very successful meeting of the Associated Chambers of Commerce was held in this town. They were well received, and it was in all respects, I think, a satisfactory and successful meeting. At that meeting it was decided to introduce a Bankruptcy Bill in the House of Commons, and that bill I had the opportunity of going over clause by clause.

I went over a draft of it with Mr. Barran, of Leeds, and upon that bill were four names. Mine was the only Conservative name; the other three were Mr. Norwood, of Hull; Mr. Barran, of Leeds; and Mr. Monk, of Gloucester. It was a bill which I believe would have done an enormous deal of good to the commercial community. It represented the considered experience and opinion of the Associated Chambers of Commerce; certainly my three colleagues in that bill are men of large commercial experience, and I know something about law. We did our best to make it a useful bill. It would have prevented that "liquidation by arrangement" which is, to a great extent the serious defect of the bankruptcy law at the present time. Whatever the merits of the bill were, its history was a curious one. No member put down his name to oppose the second reading, so one night, rather late, the bill came on. But Mr. Chamberlain moved that the debate be adjourned. We divided on the motion, and we beat the Government. Although all the members of the Government voted for Mr. Chamberlain's resolution, fourteen Liberal members were with us, and we had a majority against the Government. Now, gentlemen, what happened? One would have thought that the President of the Board of Trade would have said, "Here is a bill promoted by the Associated Chambers of Commerce throughout the country, after the consideration of their members, and which has been approved by the House of Commons; let us take it up and see if we can make a satisfactory bill of it." Instead of that, however, he put a block against the bill in his own name, and told Mr. Barran he would take the block off only if he (Mr. Barran) promised not to bring the bill on until his (Mr. Chamberlain's) bill was before the House of Commons. Mr. Barran gave the promise, and the block was removed, but Mr. Chamberlain's bill was never before the House, and in consequence of his conduct the bankruptcy law remains unchanged. This is one of the matters we are going to deal with next session, and I do most sincerely hope in that session, to be commenced on the 15th of February, we shall have an opportunity of doing some work which ought to be done by the goodwill and good work of the best men of both sides, whichever party is in power to have the credit of the legislative result. I think I have touched upon the principal measures with which we have to deal. I am speaking here to the whole constituency, and not, of course, to an assembly of my political friends; but, at the same time, as a great many of my political friends are here, I should like to say I hope there is every prospect of the Conservative party in the House of Commons taking a firm and commanding attitude during the coming session. You have heard a good deal lately, and the world has heard a good deal

of criticism from one side or the other, with regard to the leadership of the Conservative party. I have said my say with regard to that at Durham; I have said deliberately what I think, and I have not one syllable to alter or retract. A "dual control" will not do for any political party. It must have one head, and that head and leader should be in the House of Commons, because it is in the House of Commons that sudden resolutions have to be taken which may affect the fortunes of a political party for years to come. I think some of the criticism which is now being exchanged, with what I look upon as a little want of dignity, by members of the Conservative party, in the pages of monthly magazines, might be spared, for this reason—that it has now become clear that some of that hesitation and apparent weakness which has discouraged the Conservative party throughout the country, and has, to a certain extent, also distressed the Conservative party in the House of Commons, was owing to illness. That most kindly and accomplished Devonshire gentleman who has hitherto led the Conservative party in the House of Commons, has had his health broken down under the tremendous strain of Parliamentary responsibility and work which have been thrown upon him as the head of a political party. We are not, however, in either party, certainly not on the Conservative side, obliged to talk and discuss as to the present leadership or rival claims for the leadership at every turn. Principles must be held firmly before the country, and when the time comes there is always a man to take the lead. No political party has ever wanted in the hour of its difficulty or of its responsibility a man to meet the one or to bear, and worthily to bear, the other. But to principles we are bound to stand firmly, and especially so when we bear witness to principles which, I am sorry to say, we cannot enforce upon the Government. I was looking back the other day with some interest upon a volume in which the kindness of some dear to me had preserved reports of the first speeches I made here when I came among you in June, 1880. You have known me for two years and a half, and I hope those two years and a half have not been discouraging to those who have the interest of the Conservative party at heart in this borough, or to those, and there are many of them in Plymouth, who feel kindly interested in my personal fortunes and prospects. Gentlemen, I find that in that first speech I proclaimed the three great principles of my political faith—freedom and justice at home, honour abroad. By those principles we are bound to stand, unmoved by the provocation of passion or the tempting convenience of the hour. Freedom is the absolute right of every man to regulate his life and conduct as he chooses, and enter into any contracts he may

think fit, so long as he does not interfere with public order or imperil public health. Justice we are bound to enforce. It is the duty of the State by speedy, impartial, and competent tribunals to administer justice among all people, binding them to the observance not only of their public duties, but of the contracts which in the ordinary course of their lives they have entered into. And while the State enforces justice the State itself must be just. We have no right to take from the pockets of one class to satisfy the discontent of another, however loud and threatening that discontent may be. Nor is it just to take from the taxation which you and I bear in order to subsidize the Irish Land League by paying Irish rents. And, gentlemen, we are bound to uphold our honour abroad. Honour does not rest merely upon the prestige of military success. It rests on something better than that. It rests upon the clear, and intelligible, and honest purposes of the statesmen who represent this Empire. If the clear purpose is backed by a resolute will, small as these islands are, great as are the exertions we have to make to put large armies in the field, you need not think any nation in the world will hold us cheap or lightly venture to challenge the interests of the Empire. But, with the clear purpose and the resolute will at the back of it, there must be the discharge of those obligations that are imposed upon us, and a firm fulfilment of the duties we have accepted, wherever those duties have been undertaken and wherever they are to be performed. Things look black in South Africa at the present moment. We have abandoned 700,000 negroes in the Transvaal to whom we had pledged the faith of this country that they should be protected from the Boers, by whom they are now deprived of what they hold dear—deprived by the Boers whom we fought, and from whom, unfortunately, we were content to accept defeat. The Afghan tribes whom we assured of our protection, and then deserted, now form a hostile zone, which may constitute what we may hereafter find to be a serious danger. Gentlemen, it is not by scuttling out of one country and running away from another, or by setting up the pretence of a phantom authority in this place or that, that our authority will be upheld. We want no wars of conquest or annexation. Thank God, we can do without them. We alone among the nations of the modern world have capacity for the peaceful conquests of colonization. And in such measure as we at home stand fast by the traditions of liberty and justice may we expect those principles to flourish and abide in communities which the overflowing life and energy of our people have established on every distant shore. There is no need for wars of conquest and annexation. But when England has spoken she

should stand to her word ; and thus clear in her purpose, firm in her resolve, true to the fulfilment of her duties, she will find that honour will give her repute and credit throughout the world, and bring peace and safety to the vast Empire to which we belong.

*Annual Address to the Electors of Plymouth
in the Guildhall.*

JANUARY 4, 1884.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I suppose it is part of one's training that one should feel inclined always to quarrel with the last speaker. And there is one point upon which I should almost feel inclined to quarrel with my most admirable and excellent friend who occupies the chair to-night. He has appealed on my behalf to you to give me a fair and a patient hearing. Gentlemen, three years ago or more that appeal might have had to be made. I have been member for Plymouth now for three years and a half, or nearly so, and I have learned to value in Plymouth not only the steady support of my political friends, but the general courtesy and fairness of those who belong to the Liberal party in this borough. And if ever such an appeal were necessary as that which the chairman has made to you, I believe that it is not necessary now, when a member comes to address you upon public topics, and a member with regard to whom, I think, however widely you may differ, some of you, from some parts of his political creed, you will do him the justice to believe that he has done the best he could during the last three years to serve your interests and the interests of the country.

My friend, the chairman, has referred to the fact that I have made many speeches in and near the borough which I represent. Ladies and gentlemen, I am not only a speaker myself, I am the cause of much speaking in others. And it appears that whenever I have made an appearance, whenever I have given an address to an audience in Plymouth, or, for the matter of that, anywhere in the western counties, the Liberal Club in this borough finds it necessary at once to give a congratulatory dinner to somebody. A year ago a congratulatory dinner was given to the member for Ipswich (Mr. Jesse Collings), and much more recently a congratulatory dinner was given to Mr. Medley. And Mr. Medley was candid enough in his speech to let the

cat out of the bag. He explained that he had had a letter from the secretary of the Liberal Club, who told him that I had been making a good many speeches in this part of the country, and that it was necessary somebody should deliver a counterblast, and the usual congratulatory dinner was arranged in order that Mr. Medley might demolish me. Now, gentlemen, after that exordium, Mr. Medley went on with a speech which dealt a great deal more with Lord Henry Lennox and Lord George Hamilton than it did with myself, and the only observation I can find in it that directly refers to me was, that Mr. Gibson and I were travelling as the bagmen of finance. Well, I confess to some difficulty in understanding the meaning of that sentence. I am not very well acquainted with bagmen, and I do not quite understand what "bagmen of finance" means. I am quite sure that Mr. Medley never travelled in that article, or he would probably have more acquaintance with it. But, inasmuch as that was the sole reference that was made to my speeches in this answer of Mr. Medley, I have just one word or two to say with regard to the subject of finance. Whatever Plymouth electors may think of the inferences which I draw from figures, they may always be certain that my figures are correct. Sir, I do not quote these figures from the pamphlets of political associations. I take my figures only from the authentic Government returns with regard to public income and public expenditure, and it would be well if my critics were to follow the same course. They would find themselves safer on the subject of finance if they purchased the Blue-books which are issued by Government offices, and did not go to Liverpool for partizan pamphlets.

It will be remembered that on a previous occasion in Plymouth I made some statements with regard to the comparative expenditure of the Liberal and Conservative Governments. Now, gentlemen, in the month of June, 1883, a return was published by the Board of Trade, showing the national income and the national expenditure during the last fifteen years. These are figures with whose authority no one can quarrel. They were not even issued by a wicked Tory Government. They are issued by the Liberal Government with which the country at present is blessed. And, gentlemen, there is a table of figures, the results of which I have already made known to a Plymouth audience, and the results of which I do not intend Plymouth to forget. There is one curious alteration which has lately taken place in keeping the national accounts, which should be borne in mind by those who are comparing the expenditure of one Government with the expenditure of those that have gone before. Until last year's accounts the system adopted was, that not only the money voted by Parliament should be debited to

the Government, so that they should have to account for its expenditure; but that receipts from the army and navy, called "extra receipts," should be brought into income and counted in expenditure. That is the proper course, because if a Government receives stores or value at the beginning of the year, and expends them in the course of that year, the country is just as much poorer at the end of the year as if it had had to buy those stores in the course of the twelve months. But in the year 1881 this Government made an order that for the future those extra receipts should not come into the account on either side—should neither be counted as income nor be reckoned as expenditure. Whether the order was right or wrong you will all see this—that if you are comparing the expenditure of 1882-83 with the expenditure of any year that went before you must, to make the comparison fair, include all the amounts which would have been included in the manner to which I have alluded. By that means you equalize the sum.

Now, gentlemen, in the last complete year of our national financial life the amount of these extra receipts was £800,000, and if you add that to the accounts which are given by the Board of Trade—and again I may explain that I am using official figures—of the finance of the last year, this is the result: In the six years of the Conservative Government the expenditure of the country amounted to £480,000,000—nearly £481,000,000; that is to say, an average of £80,165,000 per annum. We have had three years of Liberal Government, and in the course of those three years the national expenditure has been 258 millions and a quarter, or an annual expenditure of £86,093,000. From figures which no fair man can challenge or dispute I have proved to you that the average expenditure of the Conservative years of Government was £80,165,000 and the average expenditure of the Liberal three years has been £86,093,000.

But I have not quite done with my assailants. It was said after the last speech I made on finance that in the six years of the Conservative Government they only paid off £1,974,000 of the National Debt. Gentlemen, I did not blame the people who have said this, for they did not know they were wrong; but I do blame those who, after I have in the columns of the papers and from the public platform demonstrated from official figures that that statement is not true—I do complain of their repeating it then as if it were to be accepted as a fact. I can tell you why I did not blame them. It is because it appears the obscure and anonymous people who are dealing with these matters at Plymouth have one respectable authority, at least, for their assertion. On October 30 last year two speeches were reported in the *Times* newspaper, both of which were delivered on the previous evening. They both dealt with the question of finance.

One was delivered by Lord Richard Grosvenor at Carnarvon. Lord Richard Grosvenor is called a Lord of the Treasury. He has not much to do with the Treasury; he has more to do with the door of the lobby of the House of Commons. But he made a speech at Carnarvon, and he said that "during the six years the late Government were in power they paid off £1,974,000 of debt." Sir, I am afraid even Lords of the Treasury condescend to waste their time in reading Financial Reform Almanacks, or else they would never go so hopelessly wrong. On the same page in the same newspaper was to be found a speech made by the Attorney-General, Sir Henry James—(applause)—a very able man, deserving applause, who had had the advantage of being coached at Hawarden for the delivery of that essay, and I quote from his speech, which has since been quoted as the official statement of statistics. He said, "The Tory Government paid off £17,300,000 in six years or about £3,000,000 in each year. Now that is the statement of the representative of the Government, who had been in communication with Mr. Gladstone before he delivered his speech. And what do you think, now, of the people who here in Plymouth, and elsewhere, are repeating again and again the shameless untruth—"oh! oh!"—the shameless untruth which is directly contradicted by the Attorney-General of the present Government, speaking as the official expounder of their financial policy. Let me say but one word more before I pass from this subject of finance. If in the future you have figures flung before you which profess to tell a different story ask the people where they got them? If they got them from the Financial Reform Almanack or a Cobden Club pamphlet, you may dismiss them at once. They are unworthy of notice.

Now last year when I spoke in this place, I adverted to some measures coming before the House of Commons, and I then expressed my sincere regret that the measures we were then contemplating—the Bankruptcy Act, the Corrupt Practices Act, and the Patents Act—had not been passed in the previous sessions. I am glad to think that these three matters have now been dealt with in the House of Commons. They were dealt with with the concurrence of both parties, and both parties assisted in passing them. The official representatives of the Government, the President of the Board of Trade and Attorney-General, acknowledged the assistance they received from the Conservative side in these matters. I do not now intend to say much with regard to the Bankruptcy Act, I am afraid there is one matter with regard to that Act upon which discussions may take place in the House of Commons, and for special and obvious reasons I do not refer to it to-night. But with regard to the Corrupt Practices Bill I should like to say I took a very earnest and active part in the

discussion of that measure. I was very anxious that two things should be done. First, that you should secure purity of election ; secondly, that you should try to avoid the hardships which had borne upon innocent candidates in times gone by. And when I was here on the 3rd of January last year speaking in this Guildhall I used some sentences with regard to that Bill, to which I will ask you now to listen. I said : " There are two other amendments with regard to that Bill which I intend to propose. One of them is not, perhaps, a very obvious one, but it is one which I think will be of great value. It is that from the day the Corrupt Practices Bill passes no investigation upon any election petition shall go back to anything before the date of the passing of that Bill. We know there are certain boroughs in this country where corrupt practices do exist, and where people dare not petition against the return, because they know if an investigation takes place into the electoral history of that borough it will be disfranchised in consequence of the corruption which has taken place in past times. We know of boroughs in this country where there are on both sides of political parties earnest and resolute men, determined, as far as may be, to make elections pure, but who yet are fettered by this difficulty with regard to the past history of their borough. Well, then, let us draw a line, and let us start a fresh system, and then I believe we shall find that, this difficulty being got out of the way, some of those boroughs whose electoral history has not been pure, will be for the future places where Parliamentary elections are properly and purely conducted." I further said " There ought to be some equitable power in the judges, if they find that the act which is charged as being a violation of the Act of Parliament is a single act, entirely contrary to the will of the candidate, and entirely contrary, also, to the instructions which he has given, they ought not to allow that one single instance, where it does not affect the result of the election, to deprive a man of his seat. I think if the judges should say, ' We find that there was a single act of bribery, but the member did all he could to prevent bribery, and that its commission was distinctly contrary to his instructions and to his efforts, and it was a single act which did not affect the result of the election '—then I say, if the judges so determine, they ought to be permitted to say that the member shall keep his seat in the House of Commons." I am reading from the report of the *Western Morning News* of the 4th of January last. These are the two amendments which on the 3rd of January last I said I should try and introduce into the Corrupt Practices Bill. They are both parts of that Act. I am glad to say that I was joined by others on the opposite side of the House in the effort to get those two amendments into the Bill, and especially I was joined by one of the ablest men on the

other side, by one who, for the sake of the Liberals—and I congratulate them—I am glad to see is coming down to Plymouth soon; I mean my friend Mr. Fowler, of Wolverhampton. We did not succeed to the full extent with regard to the equitable power of the judges. We obtained it in cases of treating and everything but bribery, and I believe the result of that will be found most beneficial.

Now, so far for the legislation of last session. The two most remarkable incidents of the session were incidents upon which the Conservative party can thoroughly congratulate themselves. The first was the defeat of the Affirmation Bill. The second was the abandonment by the Government of the Suez Canal Convention. Upon the first matter I believe that the majority of the country were steadily on our side. The House of Commons has again and again had that question before it, and the constituencies have had the opportunity of making their opinions felt both by Conservative members and Liberal members. There is not a single Conservative member who finds himself in fear of losing support because he opposed that Bill, and the only explanation of our majority is this, that numbers of the Liberal members thought they would lose their seats if they dared to support it. As to the Suez Canal, the history of that transaction is a most complete proof of the incapacity in matters of business that characterizes the present Government. Why, gentlemen, the Suez Canal Convention was not defeated by the Conservative party in the House of Commons. The country kicked it out. The opposition came from every side, and it did not need a division in the House of Commons. Notice of amendment was given by Sir Stafford Northcote, and in face of that amendment, and on a day that will be memorable to one political party in Plymouth—for it was the date of the opening of the Conservative Club—on that day I had the pleasure of telegraphing to the members of the new club my congratulations on the fact that the Government had not been beaten, because they had run away.

Now, last year I spoke to you on two very important topics. I spoke to you on the topic of Ireland and the topic of Egypt. Both these questions are pressing upon public attention now, but I do not propose to speak at great length upon them. I do not know that there is anything to add to what I said here a year ago. During that time Ireland has been governed in a state of siege. Somebody has said it is easy to govern in a state of siege. I give all credit to those two distinguished Whigs—Lord Spencer and Mr. Trevelyan—who are now endeavouring to enforce law and order in Ireland. But the terrible problem remains. What are you to do with Ireland when Coercion Acts are withdrawn? You cannot always govern a people by a state

of siege. It is only, I believe, by recasting the tone and purpose of our legislation with regard to that country that we shall secure what we all desire to secure in the end—the peaceable and happy alliance of the peoples of the two Islands. I shall have a word to say about Ireland presently when I speak on the question of the Reform Bill; but there is one thing you must remember, because it is month by month becoming one of the most important factors in our political life. You must remember that next year some Government will have to face the question of the renewal or abandonment of the Coercion Act. We must hope and pray—(A VOICE: “Ah!” and laughter). If there is one man in this place who thinks the happiness of a nation is not an object and a fitting object for hope and for prayer I pity him. We have not all of us abandoned our belief in the Almighty guidance which works in all the ways of this world, and which, as we believe and trust, will in the end, out of contending creeds, and angry sects, and political rivalries, and class and national hatreds, work out for us the happy result of a peaceful and contented nation. I say again, we must hope and pray that during the time that elapses before it has to be done, Ireland may have come into a condition more peaceful, making it possible for us to restore to it those blessings of equal laws with ours that we desire to see accomplished. But it is a grave and serious question, a question not to be scoffed at or jeered at, a question to be carefully thought out by those who are responsible for political affairs in this country.

Now, with regard to Egypt, there is a word or two I want to say. On the 3rd of January last year when I spoke here we were full of prophecy that we were soon going to leave Egypt. You will remember that it was on the 15th of September in the year 1882 that the battle of Tel-el-Kebir was fought. After that time no armed opposition was found by us in Egypt. The only question was the consolidation of the authority which we had established, and the restoring of peace to the districts of which we were then the military masters; and we were told that six months would be sufficient for the purpose, and that in six months British troops might be withdrawn from Egypt. Gentlemen, I will read you a few words I said last year, and ask you whether you do not think they have been justified by the events. I said, “Let us see what the future is with regard to Egypt. We are in Egypt, and we shall have to stay there whatever difficulty there may be in reconciling ourselves to that state of things. It is idle to talk of retiring from Egypt and leaving the Khedive to establish a Government. If British troops were withdrawn from the country Tewfik would not be in the country a week, and you might as well take away your hand from the egg you have balanced on its end on the table and expect it to

stand as expect the Khedive to stand without British support. It is perfectly clear we shall have to deal with Egyptian affairs for some time to come, but I hope we shall deal with them by diminishing the grievances of that country." Those are the words I used. And what are the facts to-day? Those words are justified by the event. We are in Egypt, and even less able to leave it than we were twelve months ago. The Khedive is still as absolutely dependent upon our support, and our papers to-day are discussing whether or not he is going to abdicate in order to let another creature of ours be put upon the throne instead of him. There is one thing I am afraid we have not done. We have stayed there, as I expected and believed we should have to do, but I am afraid we have not done much to diminish the grievances of the people of that country. If it be true, as I saw stated a day or two ago in the papers, that a sum of four millions and a quarter is to be the compensation paid by the Egyptians for the damage done in the riots of Alexandria, what do you think the effect will be in taxation upon the overburdened people of that country? We have added a debt of seven or eight millions to the debt which long pressed so heavily upon those people. We have not, I do not complain of it, because I think it was impossible—but we have not given them any sort of Representative Government. Have we done away with one of their great grievances—the number of foreigners in the country? Gentlemen, the foreigners are there now, not merely in the Administrative departments, but as masters of the country, and practically we are at this moment administering Egypt. We have Sir Evelyn Wood in command of the army. General Baker is in command of the gendarmerie. Sir Auckland Colville, I think, is in control of the finances. Sir Evelyn Baring, with a large salary, is a sort of Consul-General, with great powers of general control. There is not a post of authority in that country which is not either filled by an Englishman or filled by some native who knows perfectly well that it is his duty to obey the instructions an Englishman gives him. And that being so, is it not time to have done with the hypocrisy? We are there and we must stay there. It would be the greatest cruelty in the world for us to withdraw and leave the native people in that country to be made the prey of those political adventurers who would at once strive to turn the opportunity to their purpose. Whether we like it or not we must stay there. We have wasted a great deal of money in going; we have waged a war which was perfectly unnecessary, because we might without any war at all, but practically with the consent of the European Powers, including Turkey, have stepped into the position we now occupy, without inflicting the distress upon Egypt of that war, and without discouraging all there was of

promising national life in Egypt by the course we took with regard to Arabi and his followers. However, the mischief has been done, the money has been wasted, the lives have been thrown away, and being there, I trust that our Government may to-day have the sensible resolution to adopt candidly and straightforwardly before the country the position which they must, in fact, occupy, and make us in avowal, as well as in fact, the responsible masters of the Egyptian Government.

Now, gentlemen, I generally desire in addressing you from time to time in Plymouth to occupy the time, after a few casual observations, upon some specially important topic. You will find as year after year goes by, and you and I become friends of older standing, you will find that many topics, such as that of Ireland for instance, treated and treated fully in one year, becomes a subject which it is not necessary to discuss at large in the following year; and so I propose to turn at once to a question which is coming upon us now, apparently very promptly, the question of the reform of the Parliament of this country. Gentlemen, reform is a large question and a very complex question. It consists of three parts if it is to be dealt with thoroughly—first, the extension of the franchise; secondly, redistribution of political power; and thirdly—and I put it separately because it is a matter of some complication and has been a great difficulty in Reform Bills—the question of the enlargement of the boundaries of boroughs. That is a matter not so often mentioned as the other two, but those who are familiar with the history of the Reform question will know it is a very important matter indeed. Now it is said that this question is to be thrown upon the House of Commons next session. I am very sorry for it. I am sorry not as a party man, because I can tell you this—I believe there is no subject which is more likely to lead to the disintegration and defeat of the Liberal party than the question of Reform. It was so before; and it will, I believe, be so again. But I will tell you why I am sorry for it. I believe that the present Parliament, if it have measures brought before it, such as those we have had to deal with in the past session of Parliament, is perfectly capable of dealing with those questions to the satisfaction of the country.

Take those three questions which have been settled in the past session—Corrupt Practices, Bankruptcy, Patents. Will any Liberal here say that he thinks that those matters would have been better dealt with in another Parliament than they have been in this? Is it possible that any alteration in the franchise or any redistribution of seats could give you a Parliament more capable of dealing with practical legislation of that kind than the Parliament you have at present? Well, gentlemen, have

we exhausted this matter of practical legislation? Why, surely not. We have been told by the members of the Ministry again and again that their portfolios are full of the most valuable bills upon all sorts of public subjects which they do not put before the House of Commons, simply because they are sure there is not time to pass them. But, gentlemen, why should there not be time to pass them? (A VOICE: "Obstruction.") Oh! it is rather too funny to hear that parrot cry of obstruction raised again. No Minister, no prominent man on the Liberal side of the House of Commons, will venture to get up in that House and charge the Tory party with obstruction. They have been challenged to do it again and again, and they dare not face the challenge, but they slink away to provincial platforms, and there they mouth the charge which they dare not whisper in the House of Commons. And they teach their followers to echo their foolish phrase. We may begin this next session of Parliament, if the Ministry so choose, by having three or four measures of practical importance put before the country. Does the country want county government amendment? Perhaps it does. If so let us have a measure submitted to Parliament. Does the country want a reform, as it is called, of the municipal government of London? Then let us have a measure submitted to the House of Commons. Does it want measures for dealing with local option? If it does, why is not such a measure submitted to the House of Commons? I will tell you why these measures are not submitted. It is because the Ministers now in power desire to shuffle off to another time and to other authorities all great public questions which they are not prepared to deal with themselves. And so, gentlemen, this is to be the order of things. Advocates of local option are anxious to have their measure introduced into the House of Commons. Well and good. But what say Ministers? They say, "We cannot bring it in; we are going to leave this to the County Government Boards." Well, but you have not got County Government Boards. Then we must wait until we have created them. Then why don't you create them? Because we want another Parliament to create them. Well, but if you cannot do it, why don't you stand out of the way and let somebody else do it? Because we want to have a Reform Bill passed before we begin them. Now, I understand the feelings of those who put the franchise before everything. I understand it even though I may not agree with it. But the fact is that you are about to ask the House of Commons to engage upon a discussion of the most elaborate and most difficult of political questions, and you insist upon their discussing and settling that before they begin to create County Boards, which, when they are created, are to begin to legislate for local option.

Now, gentlemen, I do not think that is business. I think the House of Commons had better address itself to practical tasks. But I go on to say this. If the leaders of my opponents' party insist upon bringing this question of Reform before the House of Commons, I am not in the least unready to meet it, or unwilling to discuss it. I need scarcely remind you that it is a large question. It involves not only the extension of the franchise, but it involves also the alteration of the distribution of political power. If you asked the most vigorous Liberal here in Plymouth—I will not mention him, but I know him—if you asked him whether he would be content with the passing of a Franchise Bill and then not have a Redistribution Bill for ten years, I think he would go back to his calculations and consider very carefully what the effect of that would be. It is not so simple a question as those think who have put the franchise question to the front. And now let me tell you one or two facts with regard to this question. It is generally supposed that what is desired is to give the franchise to agricultural labourers. By all means. I have not, and I never had, the smallest objection to give the franchise to any class of persons in the community with regard to whom there was reason to believe that they would be able intelligently to use that trust. That is obviously a necessary qualification, because no man would be so idiotic as to give the control, or even a share of the control of the great political system of this country to people whom he believed not to be intelligent enough to exercise so important a trust.

Do you happen to know how many agricultural labourers there are in this country? I take England and Wales. We are told that the effect of the Franchise Bill is to be to enfranchise the agricultural labourers, and it is at the same time proposed to strike off the votes of freeholders unless they reside upon their holdings. But, gentlemen, do you know the proportion between the agricultural labourers of England and the freeholders? In England and Wales there are only altogether 870,000 agricultural labourers. That is by far the largest industry in the country. The cotton industry, which comes next to it, is scarcely half so large, and that great industry of agriculture I quite agree ought to be largely and fully represented. But there are in England and Wales 970,000 freeholders, and when you are going to deal with the question of the franchise, and propose to strike off the freeholders who do not reside upon their holdings, you will find that you are making an attack upon a body of voters in this country so large in number that the boldest Minister this country has seen for the last fifty years may well pause before putting such a proposition before the constituencies. There are four county constituencies in this county—the names of

which I could give you—in which the proposition which has been made to strike off the names of freeholders who do not reside upon their holdings would mean the disfranchisement, in those four counties together, of 25,000 voters. Do you think if that question went to the constituencies at the General Election that those 25,000 voters would vote for their own extinction? The true thinking leaders of the Liberal party know better than to believe that this is a simple question, and you may possibly find that there is a good deal more hesitation as to the details of a Franchise Bill than a host of not very well thought-over resolutions of a Leeds Conference would induce you to believe.

Now, there are two matters which I desire to mention here tonight with regard to the Reform Bill. In the first place it has been said by two distinguished members of the Government—one of them being my friend, Mr. Leonard Courtney, who first made the statement at Liskeard, which was afterwards quoted by another member of the Government—that when anybody proposed to deal with the question of Reform they should stop for a moment and mention the word Ireland. Now, Mr. Courtney indicated a very serious difficulty indeed in making that observation. If you are going to deal with the franchise in Ireland, as well as in this country, and to extend it in Ireland in the same way that it is extended here, you will multiply the constituencies of Ireland by either four or five times their present number. The effect of that will be to increase the power of the Irreconcilable party who represent certain Irish constituencies in the House of Commons, so as to give them altogether some eighty or ninety votes. At this moment the leaders of that party are declaring that in the next Parliament they will hold the balance between the two parties, and will put either Liberals or Tories into power according to the best bargain which they can make. Now, that is enough to indicate a great difficulty.

But in spite of the danger and difficulty that I have indicated I am in favour of including Ireland in any measure for the extension of the franchise. I am not insensible of the effect of including Ireland in the Franchise Bill, yet there are two things that seem to me to be conclusive on the point. The first is, that upon the present constituencies, so far as I can see, the Irreconcilable party will be largely increased in the next House of Commons. Whether you extend the franchise in Ireland or do not extend it, I believe there will be a large increase of the Irish party in that House. And, mind you, it will not gain by representing a large number of voters; it gains not by the number of voters it represents, but by the number of interminable speakers it can throw into the debates in the House of Commons. But there is another and very much stronger objection that I have to leaving Ireland outside this Reform Bill, and it is this. If you

leave Ireland outside the Bill, and if, after wasting several sessions—in which, observe, the Irishmen not being immediately interested in the Bill, would be absolutely free to sell their Parliamentary support to either party during the varying fortunes of the reform conflict—if, after those varying fortunes have lasted some sessions, you were to succeed in passing your Reform Bill and getting your new Parliament, the Irish difficulty would then start up ; it would be one of the first questions that would be brought into prominence, the new Parliament would again have to address itself to the Irish franchise, and you would be left in this most serious difficulty, that you would have kept, both during the reform contest and after the reform contest, the Irish vote as a power in the House of Commons, for which the leaders of both parties were tempted to bid. That support has been bid for in the House of Commons ; it has been bought in the House of Commons—and it could be bought again. We know the terms of the written agreement upon which the doors of Kilmainham Gaol were opened—the agreement which the Ministry insisted on having put in writing before they would act upon it. The words of that agreement were that the Irish party would find itself able to support the Liberal party in future legislation.

Gentlemen, I am anxious to save both parties from such temptations as these. Those who know the pressure that is brought to bear upon candidates at the time of a close election, when a particular section of a constituency can give its votes one way or the way, and perhaps turn the fortunes of the day, may estimate the pressure that is brought upon members of political parties in the House of Commons when you have a separate body of votes, whether it numbers 60 or 90, which may turn the fortunes of a political conflict, and determine the success or failure of a great political undertaking. Do let us, of all things, try and keep our political life clear from influences so mean and degrading as that. I care much less about personal victory or about party success than I do about the success of the Parliament of England in dealing with the great questions with which it has to deal. You may defeat a statesman, but other statesmen will come, for England is rich in capacity for public life. You may destroy a Coalition or a Ministry ; but as time goes on, and the interests of the people dictate, a new Ministry will spring up and will be able to act on the traditions, aye, and be warned by the failures, of its predecessors. But if you lower the tone of your public life, and let the great parties in the State be bidding against each other for the support of a faction, which is hostile, not to either of them, but to the cause which both together represent, then you will have struck a blow at the Parliamentary institutions of this country from which it may not recover for many years.

Now, gentlemen, I say for that reason, whatever the difficulties may be, I hope Ireland will be included in the Reform Bill. I must mention another reason. It is this. I believe in any proper Reform Bill Ireland will be called upon to surrender some of its members. If Ireland now, upon population only, were to have its allotted share of members, it would have 97 instead of 103, and these six members would be valuable for the great communities we have now wanting representation in this country. But that is not all. One of the members of the Ministry came down—a minor member indeed, Mr. Evelyn Ashley—the other day to Torquay, and he seemed to have a very simple and happy way of solving the redistribution question. He said, take ten members from Ireland, and give them to Scotland, and the thing is done. It is not quite so simple as that after all. If you took the population only, this country would have its representation increased by six. Scotland would remain as it is ; Ireland would be reduced six. But it is scarcely fair to consider the population only ; you must have also some regard to the revenue which is drawn from the different countries. If you were to put it on revenue only, Ireland, instead of having 103 members, would have only 60. Well, now, I agree that just as on one side it would be unreasonable to consider the population only, so, on the other, it would be unreasonable to consider the revenue only. If you took the mean between the two you would find that Ireland ought to have properly eighty-four members—that is to say, nineteen or twenty members would be taken from Ireland in dealing with the redistribution question, and of these nineteen members taken from Ireland eight would be given to Scotland and the remainder would be properly allotted to England and Wales. Well, now, is not that a very strong reason for including Ireland in the Bill ? Observe, if you deal with the English and Scotch franchise, and then with English and Scotch redistribution, leaving Ireland out of the question, you cannot take members from Ireland. You cannot take members from Ireland when you are only dealing with the redistribution of England, Wales, and Scotland. Are you going to keep your redistribution back until after you have passed the Franchise Bill for England, Scotland, and Wales, and until you have also, and as a separate measure, passed a Franchise Bill for Ireland ? If so, your redistribution is postponed, I won't say to the Greek Kalends, but at all events for some years to come. And so I think it is obvious that while, on the one hand, you must in order to have any certainty and safety about the matter include Ireland in the Franchise Bill, it is also obvious if you do include Ireland you must also include that country in the Redistribution Bill, because a great part of any efficient redistribution scheme must have direct reference to the representation of Ireland.

There is one other point upon which I feel strongly, and upon which I want to say a word. When you are carrying out your redistribution and giving several members to the large towns in the community, I say you ought to have some representation of minorities. It has always appeared to me that directly you come to a three member constituency the representation of minorities is obviously just. Suppose you have a constituency in which we will say the electors were 45,000 in number. There are, you know, constituencies larger than that : Lambeth at the present time has 65,000 electors certainly. However, supposing you had 45,000 voters and three members, and 25,000 of these voters, let me say for the sake of hypothesis, were Conservatives and 20,000 were Liberals. (A VOICE : "Impossible," and laughter.) Well, I don't mind ; let us try the other way. Let us assume the improbable—and let us take it as 25,000 Liberals and 20,000 Conservatives. Ought these 25,000 Liberals to return all three members. (A VOICE : "Yes.") But why? Has anybody invented a reason which would hold water for a moment? Is it not a great deal more fair that the 25,000 should send two members, and the 20,000 should send one? The only answer to that is, that if the Liberals sent two members and the Conservatives one, it is said the constituency has practically only one member. (A VOICE : "That's right.") But you must know that is absurd. ("No.") My good friends, if that were true, you in Plymouth at this moment would have no member at all.

I do not hear anybody say that Plymouth has not a member. But now the real thing is that that answer is based upon an entire misconception of the duty and the work of a member of Parliament. The duty and the work of a member of Parliament is not to be perpetually fighting as to which Ministry shall be in power. I have said elsewhere, and I say again, if that were the work and duty of a member of Parliament, I would not go to Parliament. I would not condescend to sacrifice time and leisure and the many enjoyments of life in order to go to Parliament simply to fight whether A or B shall be in power or in a particular office. The work of Parliament is much higher, and better, and more worthy work than that ; and the man who goes to Parliament representing a large section of his fellow-citizens or fellow-countrymen, who goes to Parliament to do his work there, finds that nine-tenths of his time is taken up with matters which practically do not concern the transfer of political power from one side to another. It is really practical legislation we want. We do not want too much legislation, because in a great and old country like this we have a great mass of law which has through the centuries been steadily moulding and readjusting itself to the wants of the people, and you do not want to be always breaking it up as if your law were simply an old road,

which you were always to go at with pick-axe and hammer. But you do want laws modified as the circumstances of the people alter, as the duties of the nation enlarge, and as the capacities of our people increase. And for this purpose and not for mere party purposes you want the best representatives you can get in the House of Commons.

Now, I hope and believe there will be some provision for the representation of minorities in the House of Commons. There was a very remarkable and most valuable speech delivered at Devonport not very long ago by Mr. W. E. Forster—and I should be glad if all would read and re-read that thoughtful speech, because Mr. Forster pointed out that we had not in this country the securities against sudden and hasty changes in policy which they have in the United States of America. And he went on to say—and in this I most cordially and heartily agree with him—that the securities against sudden and violent changes cannot properly be looked for in the House of Lords, but should be looked for and established in the House of Commons itself. Mr. Forster, for reasons which he specified, and which I do not discuss at this moment, expressed his preference for the establishment of single constituencies throughout the whole kingdom. The one objection to that is this, that it would involve the breaking up of, I will not say nine-tenths, but of five-sixths of all the constituencies in the kingdom, which would be a disturbance involving the whole country in considerable difficulty. You must do not only what you think is theoretically best, but what is most easily practicable; and the most easily practicable thing is to add a third member to the great constituencies and give the minority vote. You may depend upon it you will gain one great advantage from that vote. There is a virtue on the part of members of Parliament which I am afraid is somewhat diminished by the very close contests that for the most part take place, and that is the virtue of independence. Now, unless a constituency sends a man to Parliament who is to speak and to be independent, I think it had better not send anybody at all. A man who is worthy the suffrage of a great constituency, who is worthy, for instance, for you to say to him, "We will trust you to speak in our name in the House of Commons," that man must have strong and definite opinions of his own, and opinions which, being honestly and conscientiously formed, he would not waive or give up for the sake of the votes of any constituency.

But it is often said minorities in this country already have a great power. In one respect it is certainly true, and last session gave, and gave to the sad injury of this constituency, the most remarkable illustration that I think ever has been given of the enormous power that a small and determined minority in the

constituencies holds. I dare say you will guess to what I allude. It is a matter which one does not discuss at large in this room, but a motion was carried in the House of Commons, by a sudden and a snatched vote, which had the effect of practically repealing laws which I believe were of great and substantial benefit to this community.* Now, how was it that that strange division came about? I am quite satisfied that if you went to each member of the House of Commons and talked over the subject, and found out the members' opinions, you would find a large majority who agreed fully in opinion with Lord Northbrook, Sir William Harcourt, and Lord Hartington, the persons immediately responsible, that the laws ought to be maintained. How was it that vote took place? Because there had been for sometime in the constituencies—for the most part not subject to these laws, and knowing nothing of their operation—there had been a vigorous party of energetic, but to their credit be it said ignorant, women, who have agitated this matter, and brought pressure to bear upon the electors; and a large number of members had promised either to vote in accordance with their wishes or not vote upon the subject at all—and so the disaster occurred. But it is a terrible thing that the decisions of Parliament should be governed by what is a very small minority indeed, but is through the constituencies very energetic and vigorous. How is the extension of that evil to be avoided? Why, by having three members and the minority vote. If you had three members now and had the minority vote the best Liberal and the best Conservative would be safe of their seats. Nothing could prevent their getting in. The fight would be between the other Liberal and the other Conservative for the third seat, and the moment you establish that state of things you take away the power of a small band of electors, who may, by bargaining with candidates at close elections, induce them to accept or reject some particular crotchet. Gentlemen, I say this quite candidly and with satisfaction, although I hardly know it is necessary for me to say it—I am one who has formed his own opinion, and in answering any question you have never found me reluctant to give a plain and straightforward answer. And dearly as I love my opportunities for public service, which a membership of Parliament affords to one, I would not sell myself to the advocacy of a particular motion or to its support by my vote for the honour of representing any constituency in this country. Now, I trust we shall have the minority vote. There are many members of the present Government who have at one time or another recorded their votes in its favour. Lord Spencer, Lord Derby, Lord Morley, Mr. Fawcett, Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. Courtney, and, with the

* The Contagious Diseases Acts.

qualifications I have mentioned, Mr. Forster. They have all been at one time or another supporters of the representation of minorities. I notice to-day a statement of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, with regard to a circular it has sent out to Liberal members, asking their opinion on some questions of reform. They gave a statement of the number of those in favour of the Franchise Bill coming first or the Local Government Bill coming first, and they say the majority are against proportional representation. But they don't give the figures, and they say the numbers in favour of proportional representation have exceeded their expectation. I hope that is an augury that when the Reform Bill is dealt with completely we shall have some proportional representation.

I had not expected to occupy so much time in this address, as you know I have been blamed over and over again for making long speeches—(cries of "Go on")—but I have said to my constituents that if I do make long speeches to them it is because they make it so pleasant to speak. I come down here just before entering upon the work of a new session, to meet those whose confidence gives me my place in Parliament, and whose confidence is a strong support. Gentlemen, any man may be proud to sit in the House of Commons as the representative of Plymouth, not only because it is one of the twenty large cities of this country, but because of its history, because of its situation, which must always make it of importance in this country.

Now, I have spoken to you on one or two topics with regard to the future session. What sort of a session it is to be we can none of us forecast. It may be a short one. It may be that before the session has run its course, we shall be back here again, not as members but as candidates. I think nobody imagines that I am afraid to come down in that capacity. And most of you know the confident hope I have that when next I go from Plymouth to Parliament I shall go with Sir Edward Bates. Gentlemen, whether another session should run its allotted course or not, at all events one is going to Parliament to embark upon its work, and before embarking upon that work, I desired to see, and to meet face to face, my constituents in the town. You know the principles on which I asked for your support when I came here first, and you have had every means of knowing how far I have been able to work in your behalf since I have been in Parliament. Again I renew the personal acquaintance with you which this meeting once a year gives me the opportunity and the pleasure of doing, and again I ask you to let me go from this meeting back to the House of Commons, when it shall meet, as your representative, and, I hope, as your trusted representative—again to do what I

can in Parliament to support those principles by the avowal of which I earned your suffrages, and by maintaining which I hope to retain them, and to represent also the varied interests of this borough, of the people who are here, and who are to be affected by the legislation of Parliament. These are matters to which my duties refer, and in the discharge of those duties I shall be stimulated and encouraged by the expression of your feelings with regard to me to-night.

*Annual Address to the Electors of Plymouth,
at the Guildhall.*

FEBRUARY 6, 1885.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—The chairman has truly said that there is one subject which at this moment presses so heavily upon the minds of Englishmen, that it is one which must take an unchallenged pre-eminence among those which are to be discussed by a public speaker. And if I were simply addressing a political audience at an ordinary political gathering I should address myself at once to the question so vital to the interests and to the honour of this country—the question, what is to be done in Egypt? But though, of course, I shall have to deal with that subject later in the evening, I am here as a member of Parliament meeting his constituents and speaking to them of the public matters which have taken place within the past year, and speaking to them of the action which he himself has taken with regard to those matters. And, therefore, all engrossing as our interest in Egypt is at this moment, I shall ask you to let me, before I deal with that subject, refer to what has happened in our political history during the past year and to one or two matters of special importance to this constituency.

The legislative history of the year has contained but one measure, but that measure is one of very great importance. The Franchise Bill is now upon the Statute Book, the Redistribution Bill is, I believe, beyond the reach of harm. When I was speaking in this hall about a year ago to my constituents I laid down four propositions with regard to the treatment of the question of Reform. I mentioned four propositions, upon which I said I thought it was of vital importance to the country that

we should steadily insist. The first was that the new franchise should not be allowed to come into operation until the redistribution of the constituencies had taken place. My second proposition was that the freeholders' vote, which was then being greatly attacked throughout the country, ought not to be abolished. The third was that Ireland ought to be included within the scope of any Reform Bill. The fourth was that as far as possible, there should be a proportional representation in Parliament of the opinions of the people of this country. Now that a twelvemonth later in the same place I speak of that which then was matter of speculation, but now has become matter of history, I think I for one have no reason to regret the course which events have taken. The enlarged franchise and the redistributed constituencies will both come into operation at the same moment. With respect to the freeholders' vote, not only has that been retained, but the effect of the division of the counties into small areas and single-member constituencies will be largely to increase the influence of that vote in the country—I believe will at the very least double it in its numerical strength. Ireland has been included in the Franchise Bill which has been passed, and, with regard to proportional representation, although that has not been done which I had hoped to see, at all events some advance has been made towards proportional representation.

Sir, I said that Ireland had been included within the scope of this bill, and I must say the one thing which I regret most in the measure as it now stands is that the two political parties, by a fortunate concurrence of events brought into joint authority and joint action upon the reform question, had not the courage to treat Ireland upon the same principle as they treated England and the rest of the empire. If the numerical rule is to be adopted with regard to the representation of other parts of the empire, if Scotland is to have members added to it because of its numbers, I do not understand why that rule should not have been observed in regard to Ireland, and why Ireland should be allowed to retain a larger number of members than she is entitled to, either by her population or by the share which she bears of the national burdens. And I think there has been a regrettable want of courage on the part of the political leaders in not dealing with Ireland precisely in the same way, and precisely upon the same principles as have been applied to the rest of the Empire. With regard to proportional representation, I think it is known to most of those here that I have striven—and am striving now—to secure what I think would be an improvement of the system which is at present devised. When the question of redistribution was before the House of Commons the Prime

Minister stated that single member constituencies would give, to some extent, a representation of minorities in this country; and, of course, it is obvious that if you are to rest upon the chance that a minority in one place will be a majority in the other, the smaller the areas are, and the more the country is cut up, the more likelihood there is that that sort of rough compensation will come into operation. Indeed, fifteen months ago, speaking at Brighton, before any plan of representation was before the country, I said that I would desire to have, if possible, three-member constituencies, with a minority vote, but that if one could not have that, the next best thing to it was the single-member constituencies. Some of my friends have asked me why, if I think single-member constituencies the next best thing, I am not satisfied with it now, but am trying to prevent its adoption. Why, simply for this reason: I hope that this settlement of the reform controversy may be the settlement of a quarter of a century. I hope that it may be possible for a quarter of century that Parliament with its enlarged franchise and its redistributed power may address itself without interruption to the practical business which is always ready for its hand, and if that is so, and I see the way by which something better can be obtained without imperilling the Bill, then I am ready to strive for that something better and to endeavour to secure it for the benefit of the country.

I do not propose to argue that question at any length here. I have been, as many of you probably know, during the past few weeks, upon public platforms with those who from time to time have been, and are likely to be, among my strongest political opponents advocating the cause of proportional representation. I do not want to leave people at the mercy of chance for the expression of their opinions in Parliament. I do not want to rely upon the chance that a minority in one place may be the majority in the other. I would rather adopt that system—and a system exists, and is perfectly plain and simple and applicable to the purpose—which would give to every section of the community its true expression in Parliament, neither more nor less, but the full expression of the opinion of every class of the people of this country. Sir, I do not know what the result may be of the exertions which are being made by the society to which I belong, and which is being advocated in all parts of the country by Sir John Lubbock and Mr. Leonard Courtney, but, whatever the result of our work may be, this I am sure of, it will not in the least degree imperil the carrying through of that redistribution bill which has been agreed upon and is now before the Houses of Parliament.

Now, sir, this, as I have said, has been the one contribution we have had to the legislation of the country during the past

year, but the history of that measure is, in my judgment and belief, of more importance and more value to the country than even the placing upon the Statute Book of the measure itself. Let us for a moment recollect what has taken place, because in that struggle, which may become historic and which will be marked in history, the people of Plymouth played no unimportant part. In that struggle we have secured not only the result which we of the Conservative party hoped for, with respect to the union of franchise and redistribution, but we have got another of at least equal importance to the country—that is, the vindication of the authority of the House of Lords—the establishment beyond challenge and dispute of its right to take free and equal share in the deliberations of the Imperial Parliament. Just let us recall—for it will be instructive—the outline of the history of that conflict. We knew early in June that the Franchise Bill would pass through the House of Commons with large majorities, and the question of its reception by the House of Lords was then being actively discussed, and Liberal speakers in all directions were threatening the House of Lords—as the Prime Minister threatened them afterwards—as to what would happen to them if they ventured for a moment to interfere with the passing of that Bill into law. At that crisis it was the good fortune of the people of the Western Counties that the leader of the Conservative party in the House of Lords came among them. And I know that, when Lord Salisbury went back to London after the two meetings that took place in this hall, he went back satisfied from what he had seen that he could rely upon the loyal and unwavering support of his party in the line which he advised the House of Lords to take. Now, what was the line that Lord Salisbury laid down in this hall on June 5th last? He said he did not object, and the House of Lords did not object, to the extension of the franchise; that they were not, it was true, entitled to set up a claim for the dissolution of Parliament, but that this they were entitled to say, that no such measure should pass into law—except by the will of the people expressed at a dissolution—without a Redistribution Bill being attached to it. Now, when the measure came before the House of Lords an amendment—proposed by Lord Cairns—was carried which, in promise, accepted the principle of the Franchise Bill, but declared the House of Lords was not prepared to pass it unless accompanied by a large and full measure of redistribution. Directly the resolution was passed by the House of Lords the floodgates of Radical indignation were opened all over the country. Hop-poles were hired by hundreds. A Cabinet Minister declared that it would be to betray the Liberal cause if the Government yielded one inch to the pretensions of the House of Lords. All sorts of prescriptions were offered by all

sorts of men. Some orators wanted to abolish the House of Lords ; some orators wanted to add largely to its numbers ; some orators proposed to stop the supplies altogether ; but I think Mr. Jesse Collings was satisfied with suggesting that they should refuse to pay the salaries of the doorkeepers of the House of Lords. And so the tumult went on for three or four months, and every Radical paper was continually declaring that the people had risen in their might, and the House of Lords must bend or be broken.

But the leaders of the Liberal party knew better what the spirit and temper of the people was, so that at the very time when the Radical papers had worked themselves up to the very topmost height of their anger a change took place. Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote were invited to Downing Street. The Ministers of the Crown laid before Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote the proposals they were going to make for redistribution. They submitted them to the approval and correction of Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote—and when the Conservative leaders had corrected and approved them—and not until they had corrected and approved them, and when the Government had pledged its existence as a Government upon the passing of the Bill which Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote had approved—then, and not until then, the Franchise Bill passed the House of Lords. It was a time of great excitement ; it has been a time of great results. We have got as a result that Reform will come into operation as a whole and not piecemeal—that it shall not be manipulated for the advantage of one political party. We have the advantage that we have tested and proved the strength of the Conservative party. We have the advantage that we have established the authority of the House of Lords.

Well, now, passing away from that, I pass away from the legislative measures of the past session, for that was practically the only one. It is not, as a rule, very useful to discuss the history of Bills which have been withdrawn from the House of Commons ; but there was one Bill brought in which was afterwards withdrawn, which was of so great an interest to this constituency, and which had so remarkable a history, that I think you will allow me to dwell a little while upon it. I allude to the Merchant Shipping Bill introduced by Mr. Chamberlain. Now, Mr. Chamberlain has never been very successful as an administrator. He was successful as a mutineer, but never as an administrator. But some time ago, in the year 1883, Mr. Chamberlain conceived the idea of dealing with the laws which related to Merchant Shipping. That these laws require amendment no one denies. In the year 1876 the late Conservative Government brought forward a Bill for the amendment of the laws relating

to Maritime Contracts, which was prevented from passing in great measure through the success of certain efforts at obstruction which were then being made by Mr. Chamberlain. But in 1883 Mr. Chamberlain determined to try his hand at a measure. He began in a way which would have made one think it was his fixed intention from the very beginning not to succeed. In November, 1883, a circular was issued with reference to the proposals about to be made by the Board of Trade, and that circular was a wanton and unjust attack upon the body of the shipowners of this country. It stated that the loss of life had been increasing, and it said that this loss of life arose in a very great degree from preventible causes with which the Bill to be proposed would have to deal. It was not a fact that the loss of life had been increasing. The year 1881-82 was a year during which there was a terrible loss of life, especially among fishermen. Very nearly 600 fishermen lost their lives in the gales of 1881, and that number raised very largely the average of the loss upon merchant shipping services. Raised as it was by the loss among fishing-boats, the average of the loss during that year was smaller than the average of the years before; and it is to be remarked that, although this disastrous loss of life in fishing-boats was brought in to swell the statistics to be used in support of the Bill, the Bill would have had no reference to the fishing-boats. But between November, 1884, and February, 1885, no opportunity was lost of exciting the public mind against the shipowners, who were denounced in the speeches of the President of the Board of Trade as men who were in the pursuit of unholy gains, and then on the 6th of February the Bill was introduced.

That Bill was full of the most serious difficulties. It proposed that any person who was interested in the insurance of a vessel should have the right of opening the question of whether that vessel was over-insured or not when the insurance was claimed. It left out, curiously enough, after what had been stated, all reference to the insurance of cargo, and I believe there is good reason to say that the loss of life happening either intentionally or through wanton carelessness, happens more often from the over-insurance of cargo than the over-insurance of the hull. But that Bill proposed to do a number of other things not in the least necessary for the protection of the lives of our sailors. For instance, it proposed to do away altogether with compulsory pilotage. I had the pleasure of coming down very soon after the Bill was introduced to meet the pilots here, and hear them upon that clause, and anybody would have been fully convinced who heard the pilots and knew the way in which they were engaged. All must feel that the abolition of compulsory pilotage, whatever might be stated in its favour, would certainly rather imperil than tend to save the lives of the British

seamen. But there was another proposal in that Bill. It was proposed that when companies had been formed—and we know that companies had been largely formed for the purpose of owning the ships—that the law of limited liability should be abolished, and that all the members of these companies should be liable, if anything happened, to the full extent of their fortunes without the interference of any Limited Liability Act Bill. That was the most gross interference with the ordinary course and rule of law, and an interference entirely unjustified.

Well, before that Bill was on the table of the House of Commons the Minister who brought it forward had succeeded in creating so strong a feeling of antagonism against him among those concerned in the shipping trade that under any circumstances it would have required the greatest possible tact on his part to have passed that Bill. I go through this history, because I am satisfied that Bill was a sham altogether, from beginning to end. It was never meant to pass—it was meant as a cry for the constituencies. On the 6th of February that Bill was read a first time. It was put down again for second reading on the 17th of May, but during that time negotiations had taken place—not between Mr. Chamberlain and the shipowners, because the shipowners declined to meet him—but between the Solicitor-General (Sir Farrer Herschell), acting for Mr. Chamberlain, and the shipowners. I was present upon the evening of the second reading, listening to the whole debate. Mr. Chamberlain opened it, and he spoke within a few minutes of four hours. The debate began about six or seven o'clock in the evening, and I stayed there listening to every word of Mr. Chamberlain's speech and took notes of it, and there were not twenty sentences in that speech which were necessary for the support of the Bill, which he was then putting forward. The Bill had been pulled all to pieces. The section against compulsory pilotage had been given up, the section abolishing limited liability had been given up. The Bill had been brought back to such a form that it was not as good a Bill for the benefit of the seamen as the Maritime Contracts Bill of 1876 would have been.

But what was the meaning of that four hours' speech? I can tell you exactly. It was not only that that speech should occupy a very considerable time of the evening, but that in it should be repeated accusations against the shipowners which they should never have the opportunity of answering. At the end of that debate I moved the adjournment, and, of course, the four hours' speech of Mr. Chamberlain had left very little room for any other speaking. Week after week went by and the Bill was never put down again. At last, about the 20th of June, I asked Mr. Gladstone when the Merchant Shipping Bill would be put down again for discussion, and Mr. Gladstone's answer

was that he had received no communication from the right honourable gentleman in charge of the Bill, which led him to think it desirable to fix the date for the resumed debate. That Bill was never again put down for second reading. It was put down on the 9th of July for the purpose of being withdrawn. No opportunity was ever given in the House of Commons of discussing the question and of answering the speeches which Mr. Chamberlain had made. And now what is the result of the whole thing? Instead of a debate in the House of Commons a Royal Commission has been appointed; but Mr. Chamberlain did not have his own way in appointing that Commission, for when the Commission was nominated a movement against it as unfairly constituted was led by Mr. Cowen, and when it actually came to the day for discussion the Government knew they would be beaten, and so they gave in, and allowed the Commission to be reconstituted. But the result of the whole business—and the mischievous result—is that now, in consequence of this manipulation of the question by Mr. Chamberlain, a Royal Commission will be appointed, which will probably take two, if not three, years to report, and then the whole matter will have to be dealt with again.

I was not myself idle with regard to the matter. It appeared quite possible when this Bill had been read a first time—considering the attack made upon it—that it would not pass through the House of Commons, so I joined Mr. Norwood, who is known by name to many of you, and I hold in my hand a copy of a Bill bearing his name and mine which we introduced on the 9th of March, called the Merchant Shipping Insurance Bill. I believe that Bill contains within a small compass all the provisions that are necessary for securing the results we all desire to secure, and I would have been content to pass that Bill, or the remnants of Mr. Chamberlain's Bill, or any Bill that seriously or modestly attempted to deal with the question. But it is trifling with the constituencies and the interests of the people, if Bills are brought forward and the fashion of them is changed in the House of Commons through the action of the very man who was seeking to make capital by bringing them in. I have heard lately that Mr. Chamberlain is likely to be promoted, either up or down. I think that for the benefit of fishermen and of those interested in shipping it would be a very good thing if he found some other sphere for his energies than the Board of Trade.

Now, let me pass to another question upon which I want to say a few words to you before I come to speak of what has occurred in Egypt. It is a question of finance. Now, ladies and gentlemen, do not be afraid that I am going to trouble you again with all the figures with which I have been dealing here and elsewhere during the past few months. I think

you will remember that in September last, addressing the Conservative Association here I made some statements with regard to Mr. Gladstone's figures, which some of his industrious friends in Cornwall immediately called his attention to. Well, I said when I made those statements at the Assembly Rooms that I should be very happy to repeat them in the House of Commons, and when they were challenged I took every means I could to get an opportunity of repeating them in the House of Commons, and of making Mr. Gladstone answer them there. I wrote to him directly the session began, and told him that I would move an amendment to the Address simply for the purpose of bringing forward my attack upon his figures, and giving him an opportunity of answering them. He wrote to me and suggested it would be better if I put it off to a later stage. I adopted the suggestion at once. I put it off to a later stage. When the later stage came I succeeded at last in getting a good opportunity. The ballot at the House of Commons for places on any Tuesday or Friday is a ballot which one may try over and over again without getting a chance in the course of a session of bringing one's motion forward; but I was fortunate in getting a second place for the 21st of November last, and then I went down to the House of Commons certainly expecting that I should have it out with Mr. Gladstone there, and that there, where, at least, he would not have to complain of not getting an impartial audience, and where we should have been heard and reported, so that there could be no mistake about it, I hoped we should have had the controversy out. Well, he sent me a letter and a memorandum, and told me that if I did make my speech he should not make any answer to it. So that I think I may at all events claim this, that I was not satisfied with making my attack upon his figures here in Plymouth, but took every opportunity of making it to his face in the House of Commons, and I was determined that it should not be said that I was making it unexpectedly and without notice. I gave the fullest notice, and consulted his convenience as to the time the attack should be made, and if he does not choose to answer it, I don't think it is so much the worse for me. However, there is one respect in which, perhaps, it was not an unsatisfactory thing that he should shrink from a discussion in the House of Commons, and that is that it is rather difficult even for the most highly-trained audience to hear figures discussed and to follow them with perfect exactness in the course of discussion. It is much better to have them down in type, so that you may turn backwards and forwards and compare them, and Mr. Gladstone gave me a very good reason for adopting that plan. When I got his letter I told the House of Commons I was not going to occupy its time by making a speech to which

no answer would be given, but that I would put that speech into print and would print with it the memorandum Mr. Gladstone had sent by way of answer, and would take care that every member had a copy of it. That pamphlet was only actually completed by the printer yesterday, but before the end of next week every member of the House of Commons and of the House of Lords will have an opportunity of forming a judgment upon the controversy between myself and Mr. Gladstone by a perusal of that pamphlet.

Now, I am not going over again here the exposure of the most fantastic and delusive figures in which Mr. Gladstone chose to indulge. But there is one matter connected with the financial history of this country which at this moment and in the light of the news which we have had yesterday and to-day is of supreme importance. I have said again and again here and elsewhere that while I think that a great increase of expenditure should be most jealously watched, the fact that a Government are spending more money is no reason for censuring them until you have examined to see how they are spending it. I quite agree that a Ministry is fully entitled to spend—is bound to spend—more money year by year, if by the expenditure of more money it can give greater security to our interests and to our commerce, and strengthen the resources we have for the protection of the country. But the terrible fact—and the main fact in my charge against this Government—is that, while they have raised our expenditure from the average of a little over 80 millions to an average of $86\frac{1}{2}$ millions, they have not increased the strength of the country for defence—they have not spent that money upon the efficient service of the army or the navy, but, on the contrary, they have allowed our strength in the army and in the navy to decrease instead of increasing it.

There are some here who do not feel inclined to believe that at the first moment. Just let me tell you a few facts with regard to it. Our expenditure upon the army has considerably increased. But if you take the six years of Lord Beaconsfield's Government and compare them with the first four years of this Government, you will find that during the first four years of this Government the number of soldiers serving with the colours averaged 2500 less than it did during the Conservative Government. But that is not all. During those six years—they were a great and glorious six years—of Lord Beaconsfield the spirit of the country was such that the volunteer force of this country increased by not less than 34,300 men. During the first four years of this Government it only increased 3000. Under the late Government the yeomanry force of this country averaged 12,200 men. Under the present Government it has averaged only 11,150. When the late Government left office the militia and

militia reserve numbered 130,000. It has fallen to 116,000. When the late Government left office the army reserve was left at 38,000 men. It has fallen from 38,000 to 26,000, and upon every branch of our national army defence, while there has been a steady increase in expenditure, there has been a steady diminution in the strength of the country.

It is not easy to follow figures, so let me put this fact before you in another way which, I think, illustrates more clearly what I mean. I take the fourth year of each Government, and I think I fairly take it because when a Government has been four years in office it has had time to put its principles of administration into practice. Well, I take the fourth year of the late Government, the year 1878, and I take the fourth year of the present Government, the year ending March, 1884. In 1878 the country spent upon the army fourteen millions and a half of money. In 1884 it spent sixteen millions—a million and a half more. Now what do you think the strength was? The army of this country in 1884 was 19,000 men weaker than it was in 1878, the army reserve was 9000 fewer, and the yeomanry 1000 fewer, so that with an increased expenditure of a million and a half a year, in the event of war we have 30,000 fewer men for the defence of the country. Now, how is this? (A VOICE: "More pay.") I assure you it is nothing of the kind. If it were a question of better pay there would be something to be said for it, but I will tell you where the alteration is. In 1884—and now I take two other years for comparison—the expenditure upon the army was three-quarters of a million more than it had been in the previous year, but the expenditure upon army pensions was a million more. That is to say, that though three-quarters of a million more was spent upon the army there was a quarter of a million less spent upon the efficient force. All the rest had gone into the pension list and in the payments which fell upon the country in consequence of the abolition of the purchase system.

With respect to the navy the case is substantially the same. But there is this very remarkable thing about the present Government, that while it has increased its total expenditure to this enormous extent it has actually decreased its expenditure upon the navy of this country. If you take the four years of this Government and compare them with the four last years of the late Government, you will find that the present Government has spent a million and a quarter less upon the navy than the late Government did in the corresponding period. The interests of the country are enlarging, and her responsibilities are increasing every year. The wages of the men and the cost of materials are all increasing from year to year, and the natural course of things would be that a Government would

steadily—it need not be largely, but steadily—increase the expenditure upon the naval resources of the country, and I do not believe you would find in this hall a dozen men who would grumble at an increase in expenditure upon the navy if that increase brought and added security to our shores.

But what have we got? After this Government has been in office four and a half years all at once we find out the navy is falling far below the requirements of the country; that so far from being in advance of other countries we are perilously near to the position at which we should not be able to hold our own. There is a sudden excitement, newspaper articles written, speeches made on public platforms and the like, and what is the nett result of it all—Lord Northbrook makes a speech in one House, Sir Thomas Brassey makes one in the other, and so far as I can see the department settles down in its ordinary quiet, and there, I suppose, they will stop until some disaster brings upon the country a sense of the mischief that has been done.

Now, I said these were matters which were of great importance in view of the tidings which came to us yesterday and have come to us to-day, and I ask you to consider their enormous importance. We have sustained a great and most grievous disaster. I do not speak only of the man with regard to whose fate we are yet in doubt, who, we hope and trust, is living, although a prisoner, and who, we hope and trust, is in a position where we shall be able either by force of arms or by diplomacy, if need be, to secure his safe return to this country. But when we have expressed our sympathy with General Gordon—when we have spoken with the pride which Englishmen cannot help feeling of the way in which he has maintained his position at Khartoum for the last year, we turn aside to consider other questions, which are very serious questions indeed. We have had great reason during the last few weeks to feel proud of the bravery of that little force which went out from Korti and made a dash across the desert, and at a time when men were faint with long toil and marching, were so tired that they were falling from their places with fatigue, was obliged to fight with a host of enemies, and to fight against men of whose courage we cannot but speak with terms of great respect. But while we are proud of these men—and Englishmen have never had greater cause to be proud of the valour of those who wore the English uniform and fought under the English colours—the terrible thought comes upon us how many have we like them. It was a small force that was with Sir Herbert Stewart in the desert, but we are painfully conscious that it was not a force which represented the army of this country. It was a picked force from our best regiments. The best 40 men had been picked from each, and they were set together and sent upon that expedition.

They were men who had been together for weeks, had been toiling together, and had got to know each other, and it is terrible to think how scanty are the battalions we have in this country now, and how ill-prepared our regiments would be to go abroad to face the perils and toils which may be before them in the immediate future. It will be absolutely necessary that there should be a revision of our military system, and that an attempt should be made to introduce some plan, at all events, which will enable us to do better when we are called to meet emergencies of this kind than simply to pick out our best men from several regiments and put them together in the column that goes forth.

But there are other questions with regard to Gordon and to Egypt. If this disaster has fallen upon us, and I feel little doubt it has, whose fault is it? It is the fault of that long course of cowardice and imbecility which has continued in spite of warnings at home, in spite of entreaties from Gordon himself, and which has left him for a year to face these dangers and difficulties alone. Why, it was on the 8th of the month of February in last year that Gordon went to Khartoum, and he had not been at Khartoum a fortnight when he sent home this message to this country, and it is one which has a strange and pathetic interest now that this disaster has happened. On the 27th of February last year Gordon telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Baring to say:—"The evacuation of Khartoum is impossible until the Government asserts its authority. We can hold out, and force back the revolt, but the position will not ameliorate by time, and our money must come to an end. You have to say whether this partial evacuation of the Soudan fulfils your desires. If it does not, then you must act by Indian Moslem troops from Wady Halfa; and do so at once by sending detachments of troops to Wady Halfa." That was not a single expression contained in a long despatch which might have been overlooked or forgotten. It was so peremptory that on the 29th of February last year Gordon wrote these words:—"There is not much chance of improving, and every chance of it getting worse, for we have nothing to rely on to make it better. You must therefore decide whether you will or will not make an attempt to save two-thirds of the population who are well affected before these two-thirds retreat. Should you wish to intervene, send 200 British troops to Wady Halfa, and adjutants to inspect Dongola, and then open up Suakim-Berber road by Indian Moslem troops. This will cause an immediate collapse of the revolt." Well, from day to day Gordon went on sending these urgent despatches. Again, on the 2nd March he telegraphed. He was afraid the Government might be waiting to organize a large force, and that they might be in doubt as to

whether we could send a great expedition ; so Gordon sent these words by telegraph :—" I have no option about staying at Khartoum ; it has passed out of my hands, and as to sending a larger force than 200 I do not think it necessary to Wady Halfa. It is not the number, but the prestige which I need. I am sure the revolt will collapse if I can say that I have British troops at my back."

These were messages which Gordon was sending from Khartoum nearly twelve months ago. There was for a moment apparently a chance of his wish being fulfilled. We sent out an expedition to Suakim under General Graham ; we fought two bloody battles there ; we defeated the enemy with great slaughter, and there was hope that the force might be told to open the road from Suakim to Berber which Gordon had said it was necessary should be opened. All that bloodshed came to nothing. The force was brought back to this country, and at this very moment, where General Graham fought those battles in the month of March last, our troops are so beleagured in Suakim itself that they cannot ride ten miles out without being liable to be cut off by the enemy. And so month after month went on. Everything was tried in Parliament until the Prime Minister complained that they were having votes of censure every six weeks, because the Opposition was doing its best to force the Government into doing something to relieve this state of things at Khartoum. In the Prime Minister we have the greatest talker since the world began. During those three months of May, June, and July he was exhausting the most copious vocabulary that a human creature ever possessed, in explaining that warlike preparations did not mean warlike operations, and that warlike operations did not necessarily mean war, and that there was a very clear distinction between General Gordon being surrounded and General Gordon being hemmed in. And so month after month went on. At last, on the 5th of August, Mr. Gladstone came down to the House and asked for a vote, not for operations, but for preparations. The vote was granted without hesitation ; but it was not until eighteen days later that any orders were give for those preparations, and then no boats were in readiness, the camels were not purchased, and long arrangements had to be gone through. And now what state of things do we find ourselves in ? Why, British troops get to Khartoum too late to rescue Gordon, and only this afternoon the following announcement is made :—" The Cabinet at the meeting to-day decided to give *carte blanche* to Lord Wolseley with regard to the measures which he may consider it necessary to adopt with reference to the rescue of Gordon, if alive, and such military operations as his lordship advises for the recovery of the lost ground in the Soudan by the fall of Khartoum. Amongst

the alternatives in view are immediate measures for retaking Khartoum by the employment, if necessary, of Indian troops to re-open the Berber route." Not only too late, ten months too late this has to be done; but Gordon has been sacrificed from the most puerile vacillation that a Cabinet was ever guilty of. And I believe it will be said of us all over the world there never was a nation that had a braver soldier, and that there never was a nation that so basely deserted him. We hear an outcry now for vigorous measures. Vigorous measures ought always to be adopted in times of war and in times of danger; but if we want vigorous measures we must get other men into the Government. I do not believe that from this Government, which has disgraced itself, we ever shall get a policy worthy of England's honour.

Now, sir, there are just a few words I want to say upon another topic before I conclude. We hear a great deal about measures to be proposed in the next Parliament. I do not propose to discuss these measures now. I shall be here again before the new Parliament assembles, and when the new Parliament has been elected I daresay I shall be able to take counsel with my constituents. I do not think we shall hear much in the new Parliament of many of these measures which are now being so loudly discussed. They are not meant for Parliament; they are meant for the constituencies. These political "cheap-jacks," from Birmingham and elsewhere, who are shouting their wares at every street corner—gentlemen, they have razors made to sell, but not to use—and when their loud-voiced promises have got these men into Parliament, and perhaps into the Cabinet, they will be the first people to explain and apologize for the badness of their wares. While I do not propose to discuss the measures that will be brought before the new Parliament, there are two observations I would like to make. The first is, that we have abundant proof that whatever the new Parliament will be it will not be a Radical Parliament. Gentlemen, we have perfect assurance upon that point. The disestablishment of the Church has been postponed by Mr. Bright himself to the Parliament after next. Local Option has disappeared, it is to be tacked on to the Local Government Bill; and as to the Landlords, why half your Liberal candidates are only advocating what I have always advocated myself—that is to say, the register of titles and the cheap transfer of land. Sir, it is the most Conservative proposition in the world. It would give the seller a high price for his land, while it would give the buyer a cheaper purchase, by relieving both from the burden of costly expenditure, and it would do that which I believe would be of enormous benefit to this country. It would increase the number of freeholders in the kingdom,

and, sir, I have this reason for desiring that—while freeholders are always independent they are always Conservative. If I wanted any further assurance of the innoxious character of the legislation of the new Parliament I should find it in the new Liberal candidates for the county of Devon. The Constitution will not have much to fear, nor the ardent Radicals much to hope for, so long as they find candidates in Lord Lyminster, Lord Ebrington, and Mr. Mildmay.

As to the character of the new constituencies, a good many people are asking, "What will they do?" I do not think, and I never have thought, there need be any doubt or despondency in the answer. They will do what the real leaders of public opinion show them to be most to the interest and honour of the country. There will be a larger number of them, but they will have no new problems to deal with; and if the old problems are differently stated they must be solved upon the old principles, or not at all. We have ripe experience in Constitutional Government. For over six hundred years this country has been learning how to reconcile liberty with order, how to reconcile respect for the individual judgment of every man with the respect they ought to feel for the organized government of the State. We have learnt, I believe, some lessons we shall not easily let go. We have learnt that, upon the whole, the free action of the nation and the interest of the people are the best guide and the best rule to the prosperity of the country, and that it would be a disaster for the country if you subjected the free opinion and the free action of the nation to the arbitrary rule laid down by any political party whatsoever. There is no danger in regard to our home affairs; but with regard to foreign affairs there is, perhaps, a danger. There is a danger always inherent in a democracy, which is as passionate and as changeful as a woman. And a democracy, vigorous as it is in its action when its feelings are once excited and its determination is formed, is liable to heat and cold, to fits of passion and indifference which do not give it the same steadfastness of action which belongs to a despotism or an aristocracy. That is simply the result of the history of the world as it has shown itself wherever a Democratic Constitution has existed. And what is the moral? That we should distrust the people? or live in fear of them? Surely not. The moral is that we should try to guide them. And those who have the responsibility of taking a leading part in political life should recognise the responsibility and be true to it; that they should never be afraid to say what they think will be unpopular if they know it to be true and that it is essential the people should be told it.

It has been my great privilege now for several years to have been member for this constituency. As it has been my pride,

so it is my chiefest hope, that, as long as I may take any part in public affairs, I may take that part as representing the constituency of Plymouth. And I hope that when from time to time I come before you, while I shall not shrink, as I have not shrunk, from expressing my opinion upon matters in which I differ strongly from some of my best supporters, at least they will give me the credit of believing that I address myself to the consideration of public affairs and to their discussions with a real respect for the opinions of the people, and with the deepest, the most profound attachment to the Constitution, which I believe secures the happiness of this country.

Election Speech at the Guildhall, Plymouth.

JUNE 28, 1886.

[On the 7th June, 1886, Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was defeated upon the Second Reading by a majority of thirty. Parliament was at once dissolved; and at Plymouth Sir Edward Bates and Mr. Edward Clarke were opposed by Mr. F. R. Stephens and Mr. E. Strachey. The polling took place on 3rd July, and the numbers were:—Mr. E. Clarke, 4137; Sir E. Bates, 4133. Mr. Stephens, 3255; Mr. Strachey, 3175. The following speech was delivered at the opening meeting of the contest:—]

I CANNOT claim the long friendship with the people of Plymouth that has been enjoyed by my friend, Sir Edward Bates, and of which he has spoken with pardonable pride. But my acquaintance with Plymouth is not an acquaintance of yesterday. It was on Monday, the 28th of June, in the year 1880, six years ago to the day, that I came down among you, very little known, to receive from you a most generous welcome, and obtain election as member for the borough of Plymouth. During those six years, whatever may have been my shortcomings in the performance of public duty, at least I have valued as the greatest privilege of my life the right of going to the House of Commons as the representative of this great constituency. I have tried to do my duty to the constituency in all its parts; I have endeavoured as far as I could in the House of Commons to take a worthy place in the deliberations of that House upon great public questions, and I think I may say that I have not been indifferent or idle with regard to any of the local or special obligations which lie upon the member for the borough of Plymouth. Sir, even if this were an ordinary election I should have

no fear of the result of a contest. If there are any of our Liberal friends in the hall to-night, I think they will agree with me that last November we fought out in good temper, and with perfect fairness, a straight, upright fight between two political parties in this borough. The Liberal party had then as a candidate a man who had served them well, and who was as strong a candidate as they could possibly bring down to this borough. I am not sure that the Liberal party served him very gratefully, for he went away after his defeat with scarcely a single word of "good bye," and no expression was given by the Liberals of Plymouth to the gratitude, which I am sure they felt, though they did not express it, for the services he had done them. And, sir, in any case, if this were an ordinary contest, I should feel the greater confidence in its issue from this fact—that where Mr. Macliver did not think it good enough to try other people are not very likely to succeed. But, sir, it is not an ordinary contest of party against party. It is a struggle here, as in other parts of the country, which will not result in a party triumph, which is a struggle between Unionists and Separatists upon a great, a clear, and a definite issue, for the election of a Parliament which shall have as its chief and almost its only duty the final solution of the question of the relations between Great Britain and Ireland; and, sir, it is for that reason that Sir Edward Bates and I have an exceptional right to look forward with confidence to triumph in this election. The Liberal party in this borough is hopelessly divided. There are men in Plymouth who have for many years stood in the forefront of the Liberal ranks, men who have served the highest offices in this community which their fellow-citizens can elect them to, men who have been the known and deservedly trusted champions of the political cause which they had espoused—there is not one of them, so far as I know, who is going against us in this contest. The extent of the change that has taken place with regard to the Liberal party is to be measured by what took place last night in a hall not many yards from this place, where there was upon the platform a pitiful parade of the residuum of the Liberal party of Plymouth. And, while they are thus disorganized, while we have not to meet now as we had in November, the firm and serried and united ranks of the historic Liberal party, we have the satisfaction of knowing that the principles which we are now announcing, and which we appeal to you to give us your authority to vindicate and declare in your name, are principles as closely and as truly held by many of the leaders of the Liberal party as by any of those who sit on this platform to-night.

Now, sir, what is it that has brought about this great change, and enabled us, without abating one jot of the characteristic

principles of our party, to fight in cordial amity with those who have hitherto been opposed to us? It is because at this election the people of the Three Kingdoms have to decide whether Ireland is or is not to be governed by a separate Parliament. The proposal before them is that Ireland shall have a separate Parliament; that it shall have a separate Executive Government; and that the landowners of Ireland shall be protected from the spoliation of that Government by a large resort to the public money and the public credit of this country. This is the proposal before the country, and it is a proposal which is perfectly intelligible. There are some words which are cast about from place to place in platform speeches and election addresses for the purpose of deceiving and deluding those who do not, as wise men do, insist upon an exact examination of the meaning of words. You hear, I say, talk of Home Rule, of autonomy—which means, if possible, even less than Home Rule—and of self-government, which may mean nothing whatever. There is self-government in the Parish Vestry, there is self-government in a Town Council, there is self-government among the rulers of a university, there is self-government among the benchers of an Inn of Court. Any sort of authority that exists in this country, or any country, for the administration of purely local affairs may be called self-government, but a Parliament is an intelligible thing. A Parliament is an actual, executive, operative Government by Queen, Lords, and Commons, or by some throne or president, with a Parliament, whether in two Chambers or in one Chamber, and that is the proposal which has been put before the country, and upon which it is to give its verdict.

I venture to say one thing with regard to the bill which has lately been proposed, which perhaps will somewhat startle some of this audience. I believe that bill was an ably constructed bill. I think if the thing had to be done the mode that was adopted for doing it marked high political genius, and the reason that that bill has failed, and will in my belief fail, is this: that it attempted to do a thing no political genius could do at all. Now, sir, we are told that the bill is dead. We are told that the principle survives, but people are going about trying to influence doubting and timid Liberals by telling them the Prime Minister has said the bill is dead. Why, sir, the bill is dead only in the sense in which the snake is dead when it lies like a piece of stick by the road in the winter, but the warmth of an election success would rouse it from its torpidity, would bring it back to mischievous existence and activity, and there would be no difficulty in finding out, in the long ambiguities of many columns of Gladstonese, explanations for any mode of dealing with that bill. A great many of the Liberal party

has said this bill would be a better bill if the Irish members were allowed still to sit in the Imperial Parliament—if they were allowed to sit in their own Parliament for the discharge of local duties, but had the right to come to the Imperial Parliament to deal with Imperial matters.

Well, sir, I do not wonder that there has been a revolt on the part of the people of England and Scotland against the idea of banishing the Irishmen altogether from that Imperial assembly in which the great questions of national importance must be discussed. But just let me ask you to consider what is the line taken with regard to this by the Prime Minister and those at his back. I will show you what that line is, and then I will tell why I think they were right, and why I think they could not depart from their proposals without destroying the bill which they brought in. Mr. Morley, who is undoubtedly one of the most powerful of the agents in putting forward this bill to the country, has pledged himself in unequivocal terms to the necessity of removing the Irish members from the Parliament at Westminster. He said, on the 9th of April, 1886, "I have always thought it a cardinal point of policy since this movement began that Irish members should cease to sit in this Parliament." But, sir, Mr. Gladstone himself gave the most distinct pledge on this question when he introduced this bill to the House of Commons. He said: "There cannot be a domestic Legislature in Ireland dealing with Irish affairs, and Irish peers and Irish representatives sitting in Parliament at Westminster to take part in English and Scotch affairs." Now, sir, these declarations are perfectly clear, but there is another party to the bargain which has resulted in bringing forward this bill, and that is the Irish party, and the Irish party has spoken on this matter with perfect distinctness. Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who is well known as the member of the Irish party who at the election in November last drew up and issued a circular denouncing the Liberals, said, "The retention of the Irish members—especially in their full numbers—is merely the mask for reducing the Irish Legislature to the position of a Vestry or Town Council. I very much mistake the temper of my colleagues if that be a proposal they will not consider it their duty to resist by every means in their power." If Mr. Gladstone makes it a cardinal point of policy that the Irish members shall not sit in the Imperial Parliament, and if the Irish party themselves, by whose aid alone the Ministry can hope to carry any sort of measure, make it a cardinal point of their policy that they shall not sit in the Imperial Parliament, there is no chance of any such modification of the bill as has been accepted by some of the Liberals as an excuse for supporting it.

It has been said, let the Irishmen sit in their own Parliament

to deal with local affairs, and let them come over to the Imperial Parliament when it is going to deal with matters that concern them. Sir, that proposal was made at an early period, and Mr. Gladstone expressed his distinct opinion upon it. "Well," said Mr. Gladstone, "I have thought much, reasoned much, and inquired much with regard to that distinction. I had hoped it might be possible to draw a distinction, and I have arrived at the conclusion that it cannot be drawn. I believe it passes the wit of man; at any rate, it passes not my wit alone, but the wit of many with whom I have consulted;" and the inevitable result is that the only way you can get your Irish Parliament is by banishing the Irish members from the Imperial Parliament and from all consideration of Imperial questions. But if this be done let the Liberal party and Englishmen of all parties think for a moment what that means. It means that Ireland is to become a subject country, paying a yearly tribute to the support of the army and navy, over whose direction she has no authority whatever, of whose achievements she will have no reason to be proud, from the result of whose deeds she will be absolutely alienated by her position, and I think it is impossible to believe that the Irishmen of our day—a high-spirited and courageous race—would long sit down under the ignominy of being treated as a vassal country, paying its tribute to a sovereign State, with every fort within its circuit and with every ship of war upon its coasts garrisoned with soldiers or manned by sailors for whom its people paid but over whom it exercised no authority whatever.

But suppose this problem, which Mr. Gladstone declares passes the wit of men, to be solved, and suppose we could have the Irish members over to the Parliament of Westminster whenever Imperial affairs were being discussed, don't you see that would destroy the authority of Parliament itself? The real secret of the enormous strength and influence of our House of Commons is that when we meet at half-past four of the afternoon everything that has happened in the habitable globe during the last twenty-four hours may become the subject of immediate discussion? There are things happening in all parts of our great empire with regard to which our Ministers have to take sudden and important decision. In the House of Commons now a question is asked, and the Minister tells us what he is going to do, and if the instinct of the House is against it, the proposed course is challenged, a discussion takes place and the opinion of Parliament is expressed. Suppose we had this new-fangled system of bringing over the Irishmen from Dublin, whenever the House discussed Imperial affairs, it would be an absolute prohibition of the House of Commons from the discussion of Imperial affairs unless you had a week's notice. And, whereas, now, the Minister holds his course from day to day subject to the inquiry

and the check of the great council of the nation, then his position would be that if he had taken a step which Parliament was inclined to challenge, he would say, "Wait a bit; there are 103 members in Ireland who have never been consulted about this, and they shall come over and give their opinion." And observe what would follow? Those 103 men who came over would be men who were habitually dissociated from the political life of this country. They would have their own special interests and their own special desires, and every time that their assistance was invited they would be able to make their bargain with the Minister of the day, as the price of the support they would give him. And so I venture to say that Mr. Gladstone is right in thinking that if you have a Parliament in Ireland the representatives of Ireland must be excluded from the Imperial Parliament; what I think he is wrong in is in his belief—if he entertains it—that either England, Scotland, or Ireland will consent to so monstrous a proposition.

There is another part of this controversy upon which much conflict has arisen. A great many Liberal candidates are going about and saying: "We approve of Mr. Gladstone's plan of Home Rule, but we disapprove of his plan for land purchase." I find in one of the addresses to the people of Plymouth, published by those hastily-chosen Liberals, this passage:—"I did not approve of the Land Purchase Bill, which formed part of the late plan of the Government, and I rejoice that Mr. Gladstone now recognizes in the coming appeal to the people an opportunity of withdrawing the proposal." Well, I am very sorry that the gentleman should offer himself to a constituency and be so badly informed as to what Mr. Gladstone means. It is not correct that Mr. Gladstone ever said he would withdraw the Land Purchase Bill. So far from that his course with regard to that bill has been a clear, systematic course. I do not say his explanations have been clear, because, of course, they have been couched in the language I mentioned a little while ago. But his course has been clear in this respect. When he brought this bill before the House of Commons he stated it was an obligation of duty, as well as a matter of policy, to make provision for the Land question. He has never gone away from that declaration. If he had gone away from it he would have lost Lord Spencer and Mr. Morley, as well as the rest. And what did he say in his last speech upon the matter? So far from saying that the Land Purchase Bill was to be abandoned, he said the Land Purchase scheme must be looked upon as part of the machinery for the settlement he desired to be carried out; and although he has not said he will reconstruct the bill, he has not promised he will not reconstruct, and so now you know all about it.

Now, allow me just a word or two about this Land Purchase scheme. Mr. Morley has declared that he never would leave the Irish landlords to the uncovenanted mercies of the Irish Parliament. Why not? Why, because every man knows, who knows the history of the National League, that the first thing the National League would be called upon to do by the people through whom it has got its living, and by whose support it has existed at all, would be to make the tenants the owners of the land which they now rent. How is that to be done? There are only two ways. There is the way of robbery, and there is the way of purchase. I don't believe that any member of the present Cabinet—though I cannot say I think particularly well of them—would propose the scheme of leaving all the land-owners of Ireland to the tender mercies of the National League Parliament. That would be the most scandalous abandonment of the duty of this country to protect those, who, in reliance upon our laws and upon the protection of their fair administration, have invested capital and become the owners of the soil in Ireland. But if you are not to rob you must purchase, and to purchase you must either have the money in cash, or you must have the credit of a great country at your back. The land purchase scheme is a scheme which pledges the credit of this country, and the result of it would be this—that the tenants of Ireland who now are rebelling at paying rent to these landlords would be called upon to pay for 49 years a commuted rent, not to the landlords, whom they in many instances know, near whose houses they live, and between whom and themselves there is the remains at all events of an old friendship, but to the receiver of a foreign Government. And it is idle to suppose that for 49 years, or 49 months, that payment would go on without so much difficulty in the exaction of the tribute that we should have face to face with us in Ireland a complication and responsibility heavier even than this we have at present.

I have asked more than once, why is it that this has been put before the nation? It is not what the Irishmen asked for. They asked for something very different. They asked for Ireland to be free to take her place among the nations of the earth, which is a very different thing from a subordinate Parliament and a foreign garrison and a foreign fleet. Why should we give it? There is one reason, and one only, for changing the political institutions of any country, and that reason is that under your changed institutions the people will be happier, and will obtain measures of justice and of freedom which they otherwise have not. Let us try it by this test. In 1871 Mr. Gladstone himself spoke with regard to the position of Ireland, and although Sir E. Bates has quoted one sentence from that speech he has not

quoted the sentence to which I wish to call attention. In 1871 Mr. Gladstone said :

“Has Ireland great grievances? What is it that Ireland has demanded from the Imperial Parliament, and that the Imperial Parliament has refused? It will not do to deal with this matter in vague and shadowy assertions. I have looked in vain for the setting forth of any practical scheme of policy which the Imperial Parliament is not equal to deal with, or which it refused to deal with, and which is to be brought about by Home Rule. You would expect when it is said that the Imperial Parliament is to be broken up—you would expect that at the very least a case should be made out, showing that there were great subjects of policy and great demands necessary for the welfare of Ireland, which the representatives of Ireland had united to ask, and which the representatives of England, Scotland, and Wales had united to refuse. There is no such statement. There is nothing that Ireland has asked and that this Parliament has refused. This Parliament has done for Ireland what it would have scrupled to do for England or for Scotland.”

Now, that was the declaration in 1871 made by Mr. Gladstone himself, and since that time he has had the opportunity of passing another Land measure.

But in the House of Commons in this session I threw out precisely the same challenge to the representatives of Ireland. I spoke on the second night of the debate upon the second reading of this bill, and I asked the members of the Parnellite party to mention anything for the benefit of Ireland which they hoped to get from an Irish Parliament, and which they could not expect to get from the Imperial Parliament. That challenge was never answered. Not one member of those eighty-six, though some of the most able of them spoke afterwards, took up that challenge; so long as they can make out no claim on that ground, so long I use for my words those weighty and impressive words in which Mr. Bright has vindicated at once the consistency of his long career, and the independence of his character. He says :

“No Irish Parliament can be so powerful or so just in Ireland as the United Parliament sitting in Westminster. I cannot trust the peace and the interests of Ireland, north or south, to the Irish Parliamentary party, to whom the Government now propose to make a general surrender. My six years' experience of them, of their language in the House of Commons, and of their deeds in Ireland, makes it impossible for me to consent to hand over to them the industry, the property, and the rights of the five millions of the Queen's subjects, our countrymen, in Ireland. At least two millions of them are as loyal as the population of your town, and I will be no party to a measure

which will thrust them from the generosity and the justice of the United and Imperial Parliament."

Well, if in the scheme which has been prepared by the keenest intellect and the greatest political experience of our time, we find there are great and cardinal defects—defects which the Liberal party would willingly remove, but which I think I have shown cannot be removed without destroying the scheme altogether—if we find that the representatives of Ireland cannot show us any good reason for hoping that the grant of this Parliament would give a larger measure of freedom and happiness to her people—what is our inducement to give it?

We have been told within the last few days, within this town, by a great authority, Mr. Parnell, that we are a strong people and that Ireland is weak, and that if in three years we find that Ireland misused the boon that had been granted we should have the strength to take it away. That is true. We should have the strength to take it away. Our ships would be on all her coasts, our troops would be all in her fortresses, and this country could, by the exercise of its power, reconquer Ireland. But we are asked to put in operation a scheme which we see beforehand must be wholly fruitless of any good; which we know may in its operation bring the curse of civil war upon Ireland; and we are told by the very people who are inviting us to give this boon, that if they misuse it we shall have upon our hands the sad, the awful responsibility of putting forth our power to reconquer Ireland. Such a proposal may be a Parliamentary expedient in a time of difficulty, but it is not statesmanship. Statesmanship works upon tried and safe lines, taking advantage of machinery and power that exist, and working step by step, with patient hope, towards the fruition of its proposals. Statesmanship does not indulge in reckless experiments which may, in the course of a few years, oblige a country like Britain to reconquer by arms the people of that island with which we have so long lived in unity.

Now, I have said so much with regard to the great question with which we have to deal, and you will observe I have not condescended to any criticism of detail. I have dwelt upon great principles and great issues, and pointed out to you that the grant of this boon, as it is called, would certainly be destructive of the integrity and efficiency of your Parliamentary system, while we could not hope that it would be of any advantage to the people to whom it is given.

But there is another topic upon which I wish to say a few words. I spoke of the peculiar circumstances of this election. Now, what is the position of the two great parties with regard to this contest. I think I have especial responsibility with regard to this matter. In the late division ninety-five members of the

Liberal party voted against the Liberal Government, and the question at once arose what should be done by the Conservatives in the constituencies to which those members belonged? I had, before that vote was taken, spoken in this hall with regard to the course that should be followed, and I hope you will allow me to recall the words I used on the 29th April last. I had spoken of the improbability of an election—and, to tell you the truth, I never believed Mr. Gladstone would do us the great kindness to help us to a general election at a time when his own party was so hopelessly split to pieces, and then I went on to say :

“But, sir, I think that if that election by any chance should come upon us, our duty is perfectly clear as far as Plymouth is concerned. We know perfectly well that there would go back from Plymouth the two members who represent the whole of the Conservative party, and who upon this subject would represent the most important and enlightened section of the Liberal party. But how about other constituencies? Now, I take two, in both of which I keenly interested myself at the last election. I was very anxious to win the constituency of West Cornwall, and I was very anxious that there should be a good fight made for the constituency of Tavistock. And I am very hopeful that my two personal friends, Mr. Ross and Mr. Imbert-Terry, may before long obtain seats in the House of Commons. But I say this for myself that I will do all that lies in my power, if that general election should come, to prevent, or if possible by personal exertions to combat, any attack upon the seats of Sir John St. Aubyn or Lord Ebrington. The distinction between our political parties is one that has lived throughout the course of Parliamentary Government and will still live. I do not want to ignore it. I do not want to forget our differences. There are many things upon which hereafter we shall be fighting each other just as keenly as we have fought in times past, but so long as the question before the country is a clear and distinct issue of the maintenance or the overthrow of the unimpaired authority of the Imperial Parliament, so long I will gladly go upon a platform to speak for any Liberal who has had the courage to imperil his whole political career by taking up a course of patriotic duty.”

Now, I was fully conscious of the responsibility that a public speaker took upon him in making such a statement, but I do not regret having made it. I am glad to say that there is no Conservative candidate assailing Sir John St. Aubyn or Lord Ebrington. It has needed a great deal of discipline and self-denial on the part of the Conservatives. Ninety-five Liberals voted against the Government. By that vote they set up a mass of disturbance and disunion in their own constituencies which would have made it almost certain that if the Conserva-

tives had taken strictly party lines and put forward party candidates they would have won at least 40 or 50 seats. I knew how great would be the strain on old Conservative politicians, but I had faith in the patriotism of the Conservative party. And now, thanks to the patriotism of that party, out of those 95 seats I think there are 91 or 92, where no Conservative is assailing them. I am quite sure that any one who is well acquainted with the political feeling in different parts of the country will say that for Lord Salisbury, and the leaders of our party to have succeeded in evoking that spirit in so many constituencies, is one of the greatest triumphs of patriotism that the Conservative party have to show.

But, sir, there is another side to the question. We are going to fight for Liberal candidates. I have but one county vote. It is in the county of Essex, and I hope to go up there in time to vote for a Liberal, whom I might almost call a Radical, and who is one of our strongest opponents on ordinary occasions. I shall cordially give him my vote, as I have striven with all the influence in my power to prevent his seat being attacked by a Conservative. What about the other side? If the Conservatives make this effort of self-denial they have the right to claim from the Liberals who agree with them that they should give us their support. This action of the Conservative party leaves to the Liberals at least forty or fifty seats which might have been obtained by the Conservatives if they had chosen to take advantage of the disunion of the constituencies. I shall do my best, as I have done my best, to bring about this union on the Conservative side. It was for the leaders of the Liberal party to speak in their turn in strong and emphatic language to their followers, and I am very glad to see that great leader of true Liberal opinion, Lord Hartington—whose manliness and courtesy in the conduct of this great controversy it is impossible to overpraise—has spoken out in definite words as to the duty of Liberals at this crisis. Sir, he said this—

“The single question which we have to ask ourselves is this—what are Liberal Unionists to do in a constituency where they cannot give expression to their own opinion by supporting a Liberal Unionist, and where a Conservative Unionist and a Ministerialist are the only candidates in the field? Will they fulfil their duty by abstention from the poll? I confess that, in my judgment, they would not so fulfil their duty. If this were a minor issue, if it were not the greatest issue that can be submitted to the country, I should say that it would not be the duty of the Liberals to subordinate their opinions upon any question to the interest of the Home Rule party; but if you honestly believe, as I believe, the majority of those whom I am addressing believe, that this is, at all events at the present time, the

greatest political question which can be submitted to the country, then I say, in my humble judgment and without seeking to dictate the course which any man's conscience tells him to take, I believe that we shall best consult our interests and the interests of our country by not abstaining from the poll—but by giving our vote to the Unionist candidates irrespective of any other political consideration.”

These are clear, and definite, and manly words. If Lord Hartington were here he would, upon that principle, fight for Sir Edward Bates and for me—exactly as, if I were in the Rossendale Division, I should be one of the hardest workers in Lord Hartington's cause. I am glad to believe that the voice of Lord Hartington may be actually heard here within this week, but if it be not so heard we have the echo of that voice which spoke at Glasgow, and which I believe points out to the Liberals of this borough, the course which their patriotism should induce them to take.

In my last few words let me point out to this great assembly what are the issues involved in the result of the conflict we are now engaged in. If we have a decisive voice from the people of this country, a distinct and definite declaration that they will not have a separate Parliament, that they will give to Ireland all that justice demands or requires, and that the interests of her people measured and limited by considerations of policy and justice can enable her to ask, but that they will not have the empire broken up or the seeds of disintegration sown—sir, what will be the result of that great declaration? We have had near this place within the last few days the leader of the Irish party in the House of Commons addressing a very large meeting of his fellow-countrymen and others at the Drill Hall. Now, there is no man in the House of Commons who has a clearer and a calmer judgment than Mr. Parnell. There is no man in the House of Commons who more quickly measures the possibilities of a situation and adjusts his requirements to that situation. The requirements of America have, well, we will say, have been adjusted to the atmosphere of the House of Commons—and once let Great Britain show by a clear and resolute decision that it is no use talking about separate Parliaments, and that we mean to keep our united Parliament as it is, depend upon it Mr. Parnell is a great deal too shrewd and careful a man to waste his breath like a child in crying after impossibilities. He will see that his interest and duty lead him to consider what requirements, what boons, for Ireland within that definite limit can be asked from Parliament for those whom he represents.

Let us pass to the discussion of those questions. They will be fairly discussed in the House of Commons. No one need

fear that Ireland in the House of Commons will get less than her fair share of discussion and indulgence. So far as legislation is concerned the only thing that can save this country from the folly and mischief of long debate and discussion and disunion, the splitting up of political parties, and the sowing of the seed of civil discord here as well as in Ireland, the only thing that can save it will be a clear and resolute declaration by the people of this country that they will not have disunion. It will not be a party triumph if, as we feel sure, that declaration is firmly made. It will be a triumph of a national party, and a triumph which will clear the air, will sweep away many of the difficulties that beset and endanger our path, and which, by removing this great subject of controversy out of the arena of practical debate, will allow Parliament with exceptional efficiency and reasserted freedom to discuss those questions of political and national importance with which all agree it ought to deal, to proceed in its true course of promulgating and passing useful legislation for the benefit of all parts of the empire, and seeing that equal laws are established, and that those equal laws are justly and equally enforced.

*Annual Address to the Electors in the
Guildhall, Plymouth.*

JANUARY 11, 1887.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Before I address myself to the discussion of political topics, I must, in two or three words, echo the remarks which fell from my colleague, Sir Edward Bates—as to the loss which he and I and the Conservative party in Plymouth sustained only a few months ago. Mr. William Foster Moore was my proposer when I came to Plymouth and met the Conservatives of this borough with a view to my becoming their candidate for Parliament. From that day to the last day of his life he gave to me a most cordial and most active friendship and support. He was a man of whom Plymouth might well be proud, a man of firm, and resolute, and unwavering character, never afraid or unwilling to speak out what he believed to be the truth upon public questions. I think his memory is honoured and regarded by all the inhabitants—it will certainly be to me a memory that I am always bound to respect and to cherish.

Sir, you have truly said that the time which has passed since last I met the constituency of Plymouth in this hall has been a

very remarkable and very interesting time. During the last twelve months the country has passed through a crisis which has tested the patriotism of all its citizens, and it is, I think, to be congratulated on the fact that that crisis, sudden and unexpected, and perplexing as it was, has been faced with resolution and with decision, and has resulted in the establishment of a firm principle of national action. It will be a year to-morrow since the Parliament of 1886 met. That Parliament met at a time when the Conservatives had been assailed on every Radical platform by the most violent attacks because of their supposed alliance with the Parnellite party. But before that Parliament was three weeks old, by a sudden manœuvre, the leader of the Radical party joined hands with the Parnellites, obtained their aid in his attack upon the Treasury Bench, and succeeded—by their help and as their servant—in again getting into power. Sir, he tried to carry out the bargain by which he had obtained his reappointment to public office. But the nation was before him, and against him, and refused to be a party to his scheme for the disruption of the empire. In a Parliament in which there were only 250 Conservatives the leader of the Liberal party was defeated at a crowning division, and when the appeal was made to the country as to whether it would accept, and ratify, and endorse the shameful bargain which he had made with the Irish faction, the country emphatically refused its consent.

Apart from its result upon the fortunes of political parties or political individuals this year has been a great and a memorable year. It has shown that with a free people the most popular political leader is the leader only and not the master of his party. It has shown that the associations of political life are not strong enough to warp men from the consciousness of their duty and their resolve to do their duty to their country, and has enabled Englishmen in all parts of the land to show that there is a public spirit superior to the bonds of party asserting itself in defiance, in disregard of political and personal interests, and securing for the voice of the people and the consciences of the people upon a great question of Imperial politics, an authoritative and an emphatic expression in Parliament. Sir, we had a time of great anxiety throughout the country. Some of us took a tolerably active part in the campaign in the West of England—and there is no part of the country where the result was so satisfactory as in the two counties of Devon and Cornwall. Here in Plymouth we found that the oldest and most trusted leaders of the Liberal party refused to be dragged into complicity with schemes which they believed to be hostile to the interests of the country. The Liberal Unionists of Plymouth stood well together, and when the election came they turned that which was already an assured victory into a splendid and

overwhelming triumph. And I am glad to believe that the services which they rendered to the Conservative Unionists here we, the Conservatives, were able in full measure to return to the Liberal Unionists in other parts of this county. No question of personal claim, no matter of political prejudice, no desire to snatch a party advantage, was allowed for one moment to disturb the loyalty of the Conservative party to those whose voices and votes were felt to be firmly given to the cause of the Union. Men laid aside the associations of their political life. Mr. Henry Lopes spoke for Mr. Mildmay; Mr. Imbert-Terry worked for Lord Ebrington; Colonel Edgcumbe worked for Mr. Leonard Courtney. In the West of Cornwall Mr. Charles Ross worked for Sir John St. Aubyn; and Devon and Cornwall did their duty. In this county of Devon all the thirteen members, with one single and personally insignificant exception—went to the House of Commons pledged to the support of the Union; and when we went back to that House it was perfectly clear that in the Parliament as it is now constituted, there was a force in support of the Unionist cause which no intrigue on the part of the most ambitious of the Radical leaders could hope to disturb or overthrow.

We have had some interesting events during the last few weeks. I do not mean to comment in detail this evening upon that which has been called the political crisis—that is to say, the rearrangement of the Government which has recently taken place. But I cannot help saying this, that however great was my regret at losing from the front rank of the Conservative party the keen intellect, the prompt and ready ability, and the unfailing courage of Lord Randolph Churchill, I am far more grieved to believe—for it may not yet be absolutely certain—that one of the consequences of his leaving the Government would be the loss to that Government of the Earl of Iddesleigh. Sir, that is a more serious thing to the Conservative party than the loss of Lord Randolph Churchill. Lord Iddesleigh has for very many years occupied an honoured place in the councils of the Conservative party. He is a man of the highest training in departmental and in official work, a man of scrupulous honour, of upright and blameless life, a man who has unshrinkingly given himself at all times to the service of our cause. And I most sincerely hope that if it be true that circumstances have caused Lord Iddesleigh for a time to leave the active work of the Conservative party it will only be for a very short time, and that Devonshire, at all events, will know, as I am sure it will be glad to know, that he will soon return to take his place in the councils of that party.

Sir, the changes that have taken place in the Conservative Government have of late started a new undertaking. It is pro-

posed, as we understand, to hold a conference of five persons in order to endeavour to re-arrange the forces of the Liberal party. And I believe that on the 13th instant four gentlemen, two from each side—Mr. John Morley and Sir William Harcourt on the one side, and Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan on the other—are to meet under the experienced presidency of Lord Herschell, who, I suppose, is to represent with regard to them the spirit, the guiding spirit, of judicious compromise—and they are to endeavour to find for the Liberal party not, sir, a policy—for that is hopeless; not a principle—for they have not one in common—but in default of either principle or policy they are to endeavour to find something which is disguised in Latin phrase and called a *modus vivendi*. Now, a *modus vivendi*, when it is applied to domestic life, means just a way of getting on without absolutely quarrelling, and I suppose that is the idea with which the *modus vivendi* is to be arranged for the Liberal party. It is not that there is likely to be, or can be, any very pleasant common action between them, but only that for certain reasons which are becoming day by day increasingly plain to the unfortunate Liberals who find themselves out of office, it is desirable to find some way, if possible, of arranging that they shall try and get back together. Now, sir, it is not a very hopeful task. Mr. Chamberlain has laid down very distinctly his terms with regard to the Irish question. He has said that he would give to Ireland, as he would give to Scotland and to England, ample measures of self-government—but that he insists upon the absolute and complete supremacy of the Imperial Parliament of this country. Sir George Trevelyan has made his line no less clear. He has said that while giving a full measure of local self-government to Ireland he insists that the effective forces in Ireland—the army, the navy, and the governing forces—shall be directly under the control of the Imperial Parliament. And inasmuch as both Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan have sacrificed to the firmness of their opinions upon that point their alliance with the Liberal party and their present hope of taking any effective part in public affairs, I am not one of those who think that Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan are going to meet at the round table in order to allow themselves at once to be coaxed over into a repentant submission to Mr. John Morley and Sir William Harcourt. Sir, the probabilities are distinctly the other way. There have been a good many indications that Sir William Harcourt has already come to the conclusion that he made a mistake when he took the Parnellite side. It was only in September, 1885, that Sir William Harcourt said: “It had now become perfectly plain from the declarations of Mr. Parnell and his friends what the policy was which Mr. Parnell and his party had adopted. It was

policy of the absolute separation of the two countries."—(No.) That proposition may not have been true, but it was Sir William Harcourt who said it. In an evil hour he allowed himself to be induced not to follow the great leaders of the Liberal party, Lord Hartington and Mr. Bright: but he allowed himself to become an accomplice of the Home Rule adventure in the House of Commons. But there have been several indications of late that he is a little tired of the position he occupies now. I think the fact is that Sir William Harcourt has now been for a twelve-month, to use his own most delicate and beautiful phrase, stewing in the Parnellite juice. And he does not seem to like it. I think he would be extremely grateful to anybody who would hook him out. And if this conference of five men at the table can give Sir William Harcourt the opportunity for a respectable conversion I think it is an opportunity he will very gladly seize.

But, sir, I do not myself understand why people are making such a pothor about these five men at the table, because when all is said and done, it matters very little what decision they come to. They cannot get a majority of the House of Commons; and until they get a majority of the House of Commons they may be pretty sure that the policy which the people have approved at the polls will be stoutly maintained by the Government which is in power. It seems to be forgotten that there are in the House of Commons at the present time four distinct groups. Mr. Gladstone leads about 190 members of the House. As against those 190 members who follow Mr. Gladstone, there are 316 who sit on the Conservative side, and the rest of the House consists of the 84 Nationalist members from Ireland—more than there ought to be—and about 80 members who are Liberal Unionists, following the lead of Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain. Now, sir, if at this conference of five men round a table, Mr. John Morley and Sir William Harcourt, in defiance of all known physical laws, were to succeed in dragging over to their side Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan, they would still not have a majority of the House of Commons. Mr. Labouchere is always telling us that Mr. Chamberlain represents only the Chamberlain family and a very faithful henchman, one Jesse Collings. Sir George Trevelyan does not happen to be in the House of Commons, so that, according to Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Chamberlain would not bring half a dozen people with him on the Liberal side if Sir William Harcourt succeeded in converting him. But if that were so, what would be the numbers? There would be 190 Gladstonians, let us say 10 Chamberlainites—in order to put it handsomely—and 84 Parnellites. That gives you 284, as against 316 Conservatives; and if Lord

Hartington and every Liberal Unionist stayed out of the House altogether there would still be a majority of thirty against Mr. Gladstone and the Parnellites. But we know that the Liberal Unionists would not stay out of the House altogether. We know that Lord Hartington is as true as steel, and that those who are with him—and I read an admirable letter on the subject a day or two ago, in one of your Western papers, from Mr. Pitt-Lewis—count the cost, and know that they are working for a great cause, and are clearly determined that whatever may happen with regard to other matters in this Parliament, this Parliament shall last long enough to stamp out this claim for Home Rule in Ireland, and that they will not tolerate any alliance or intrigues that can imperil the cause for which they have risked so much and fought so nobly.

Sir, we have representatives of the Home Rule agitation down in this part, and here, by the way, I should like to say a word about Mr. Parnell, and there may be some here to whom I may address my reproach. At the last election Mr. Parnell came down here and made a speech in the Volunteer Drill-hall, and I saw a week or two ago that some of his friends at Plymouth had sent an illuminated address thanking him for coming down on that occasion. Sir, I feel that I have a right to reproach them. Of all men in Plymouth who have reason to thank Mr. Parnell for coming here I have the most reason. He was good enough to travel about in different parts of the country, and, with one exception—Cardiff—he lost the seat wherever he went, and I am very much obliged to Mr. Parnell for having paid that visit to Plymouth, and for having done, not so much as Lord Hartington did in this hall, but very nearly as much, to steady and strengthen the ranks of the Liberal Unionists and force them into direct alliance with, and support of, the Conservative party at the last election.

I noticed a few days ago that one of the representatives of the Irish party, Mr. John Redmond, addressed an assembly at Torquay on the Irish question. I was a good deal interested in the report of some observations made by Mr. Redmond at the end of that meeting, when Mr. Terry had called his attention to the report of a speech made by Mr. Parnell at Cincinnati. The incident is so important, and these words of Mr. Redmond at Torquay are so deserving of full report and circulation, that I pause for a moment upon this subject. In the year 1880 Mr. Parnell said this at Cincinnati: "None of us, whether we are in America or in Ireland, or wherever we may be, will be satisfied until we have destroyed the last link which keeps Ireland bound to England." I have quoted these words in the House of Commons, and others have quoted them. They have not been denied, and cannot be denied. There was an attempt

at a denial, but it was met at once by the production of the American papers which gave the words I have just read. At Torquay the other evening Mr. Redmond was trying, for home consumption, to limit, as closely and tenderly as he could, the scope of the Home Rule claim, and he was challenged with that speech at Cincinnati. And I sincerely wish I could secure that every London newspaper should to-morrow reprint the words I am going to read to you, because, being met by that quotation, Mr. Redmond said this: "With reference to the quotation from an alleged speech by Mr. Parnell, that gentleman had said in the House of Commons that he did not remember having used the words which he was reported to have done, and that if he did use them they did not represent his feelings either then or now."

I am very much mistaken if those words of Mr. Redmond, reported in America, would not very seriously check the subscriptions that come from across the water. They were not accurate. Mr. Parnell has never repudiated those words, and he could not do so, because there are others, which I will read directly, that are quite as strong, and which were uttered five years later. Speaking at Mayo, on the 3rd November, 1885, Mr. Parnell said this: "Speaking for myself, and I believe for the Irish people, and for all my colleagues, I have to declare that we will never accept, either expressly or implied, anything but the full and complete right to arrange our own affairs and make our land a nation, to secure for her, free from outside control, the right to direct her own course among the peoples of the world." That has been the claim which Mr. Parnell has made: but what did Mr. Redmond say at Torquay the other day? Let me read you his definition of the Irish claim. He said: "Mr Chamberlain had quite rightly defined the claim of the Irish party to be a Local Parliament for purely domestic affairs, maintaining the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament." Why, sir, that is not what they have asked in Ireland, or in America, or in the House of Commons. It is not what Mr. Redmond has asked, for I have here a quotation from a speech which that same Mr. Redmond made at Chicago in the autumn of 1886. When Mr. Gladstone's Bill was defeated a deputation, consisting of Mr. Redmond and Mr. O'Brien, and one or two others, went over to America to help to raise funds in that country for the agitation. Mr. Redmond made a speech in Chicago in August 1886, and this is what he said: "It was no question of a Local Parliament for purely domestic affairs, maintaining the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament." These are his words: "The one great principle of any settlement of the Irish question must be the recognition of the Divine right of Irishmen, and Irishmen alone, to rule Ireland." Where is the

supremacy of the Imperial Parliament—an Imperial Parliament containing Englishmen and Scotchmen as well—if it is the divine right of Irishmen and Irishmen alone to govern Ireland and direct her course? And then Mr. Redmond, who comes down to Torquay and talks about local government and the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, when at Chicago, and describing Mr. Gladstone's bill, described that bill as being "cramped and deformed by humiliating safeguards and unnecessary limitations."

We shall, of course, have this question before the House of Commons again, and we shall have brought before the House of Commons the state of things—which is a very serious and sad state of things—in Ireland at this time. It is impossible for one, looking on from a distance, to know how the battle between order and disorder is going in Ireland. It is a battle which has to be fought out, and the Government cannot afford to allow itself to be beaten in the conflict. We have hoped, and we still hope, that the administration of the ordinary law may be sufficient to restore peace, and to restore the observance of duty as between man and man in that country. But it may not be so, and it may be necessary for the Government, however composed, to come to Parliament and ask for further powers to deal with the forces of disorder in Ireland. I am quite sure that the new member of the Government who has come to the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer will have no hesitation in joining his colleagues in asking for that if it be necessary. There is no man who has spoken more courageously and more firmly than Mr. Goschen has with regard to the maintenance of law in Ireland, and if it be necessary—I hope it may not—but if it be necessary that the Government should come to Parliament for further powers, I have not the slightest doubt that, upon being satisfied that every effort has been made to use with its full authority the existing law, and that that effort has failed, Parliament will grant, reluctantly perhaps, but still will certainly grant, further powers to the administrators of the law in Ireland.

The fact is that we are face to face with great difficulties in Ireland. One of the leaders of the Irish party the other day said that he should not admit that his action in the plan of campaign was illegal until a jury had declared it to be illegal. Sir, it is not the province of a jury to declare the law. The judge declares the law; it is for the jury to find the facts. And the great trouble we have to deal with in Ireland is this, that the population of that country from which the jury panels are drawn, is either so corrupted or so terrorized that it is scarcely possible to have jury trial in its full and fair meaning in that country. But we ought to remember that trial by jury is only a means to an end. It is adopted—and I am glad to say that it

s sufficient in this country in almost all cases to secure the fair enforcement of the law. But if it be found that jurymen are terrorized, that they dare not—as in many parts of Ireland they dare not—give a fair and impartial verdict, because they will be followed after the verdict, and dogged and persecuted for having given a verdict according to their oaths ; if that state of things exists, the remedy must be faced and adopted—trial by jury must be abolished if its use has disappeared. I know there are other means which men have been anxious to resort to—the change of venue for trial from one country to another, the challenge of a certain number of jurymen to make them stand aside. These are means towards the same end, but I, for one, say that I would have much more faith in a trial conducted by two judges sworn to the discharge of their duties, and responsible to the country in the face of the publicity of the Press, than I would in the packing of a jury or the changing of a venue from one country to another.

Now, sir, I turn to another subject. There has been a good deal of excitement of late in connection with the resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill, and I, of course, listened with interest and with much sympathy to what my colleague has said with regard to the action of the Government with respect to the Dockyards and the Dockyard establishments in this place. Sir, we have been warned, and rightly warned, that the time has not yet come when the full discussion can take place with regard to Lord Randolph Churchill's conduct in leaving the Government. But I should like to say this : that if it be true, as I believe it is, that he left the Government because he could not secure an immediate and a considerable reduction in the estimates for the army and navy, I venture to think if that be true, his action will not be approved by the people of this country.

Sir, economy is an exceedingly good thing. Every administrator has it as part of his duty to watch the expenditure and the growth of public expenditure, and as far as he can to check any extravagance. But to come down and say that at any given moment the expenditure on the army and navy must be reduced by an arbitrary and considerable sum is not practical administration, and would never be suggested by any one who had experience of departmental work. By far the larger amount of the cost which goes out year by year to the army and navy is cost of a character with which no administrator at a moment can deal. It consists of expenditure upon works which have been erected and cannot be abandoned, and expenditure upon ships which, when once they are afloat and are in commission, must be kept up from year to year ; of expenditure upon pensions which have been earned in past times, and now have to be paid from year to year in fulfilment of public obligations. If you

wanted to cut down at this moment the expenditure on the army and navy by two or three millions a year there would be only one way of doing it, and that is by getting rid of men from your arsenals and dockyards, by discharging them, by making still worse that pressure which, to our great regret, has been brought upon the dockyard and arsenal towns in recent times by the compulsory discharge of persons who were there employed. But what would the result of it be? If you think your army is too strong, if you think your navy is too well equipped, then let the supplies be refused, and let the extravagance be retrenched. But unhappily we know that is not the state of things. We know the condition of our army is not such as to indicate an extravagant and unnecessary expenditure, but is rather one which indicates in some directions too great a parsimony in past years. And unfortunately we know this, that not very long ago, in Mr. Gladstone's time, there was what was called the Russian scare, and we seemed to be upon the eve of a European war. The defects that were found in our dockyards, in the stores, in the furniture for our ships of war, were so large and so various that they compelled immediate attention and a large vote of Parliament. If now, for the sake of producing a popular budget, two or three millions were retrenched from the public expenditure, and the stores were allowed to go down, and the trained artificers were allowed to drift away into other employment, the time would come when we might have to face national danger with national reserves absolutely insufficient for our needs, and we should have to spend ten millions in the time of trouble and danger for every million we had been extravagant enough to retrench in time of peace.

Apart from the question of the reasons for which Lord Randolph Churchill left the Government, there is one observation upon that resignation which I should like to make. I have been a little surprised to see within the last few days a speech by a Conservative member of Parliament in which he spoke of his regret that Lord Randolph had left the Government, because it took away from the Government, as he appeared to suggest, the progressive character which he believed that Government had. If there were any foundation for that statement it would be a very serious one, but nobody who looks back upon the history of the last Conservative Administration can fail to see that twelve years ago there was just as much energy in dealing with, and endeavouring to remedy, admitted mischiefs, and to meet the wants of the people as, even if Lord Randolph Churchill had stayed in the Government, that Government could now have shown.

Have our friends forgotten so soon the great Beaconsfield Administration from 1874 to 1880? When that Administration

came into power in 1874 it was taunted because it had a "policy of sewage." It was taunted because it was said that it was addressing itself not to great questions but to small matters which did not concern questions of high policy. Sir, in 1874 the Conservative Ministry took its place on the front bench. Mr. Disraeli led it, and his two trusted lieutenants were Sir Stafford Northcote and the then Mr. Cross, the Home Secretary. We have never had a more conscientious Chancellor of the Exchequer than Sir Stafford Northcote; I believe this country had no more competent Home Secretary than Mr. Cross. During the first three years of that Government measures were passed affecting the social interests of the people in almost every direction. That Government came in to find great difficulties existing with regard to the relations of master and servant. Those difficulties were all solved. The Employers' and Workmen's Act, which was passed by that Government in 1875; the Conspiracy Act, which was passed in the same year, put an end to all difficulties between employers and workmen, by changing that which had been the subject of criminal procedure into being the subject of civil procedure between master and man. They did away with the hardship under which workmen had felt that they were labouring by being made the subjects of criminal prosecution for the violation of their contracts, and settled the matter so satisfactorily that no one has ever complained, or raised the question since of the relations existing between employers and workmen. We did more than that. The Factory Acts were completed; further protection was given to the women and young persons who were labouring in our factories, and in 1878, by the consolidation of the Factory Acts, the completion and crown was given to that great mass of most useful legislation which the Conservatives had for years pressed upon the acceptance of Parliament against the bitterest opposition from the Radical party. Friendly societies were dealt with and established on a satisfactory basis. Laws were made for the erection of artisans' dwellings, laws for the protection of the purity of rivers, laws for the protection of open spaces valuable to the people of great towns. Within the four years that followed the accession of that Ministry to power twenty-two Acts were put upon the statute-book, not one of which had ever been put forward as the great party cry of a Ministry or of an Opposition, but every one of which was directed simply and straightforwardly towards improving the welfare of the people.

Sir, with such a record as that, and such a recent record—because that was the very last Conservative Government which had really power and authority in the House of Commons—who shall say that useful legislation began to be considered when Lord Randolph Churchill joined the Conservative party? We

happen for the time to have lost him from the front fighting rank of the Conservative party, but I do not doubt that he will be in sympathy and fellowship with us in the work we have to do. I do not doubt, even, that without his official aid and counsel the leaders of the Conservative party will find real and good work to do for the people in the sessions which now lie before us. Of course, there is a disappointment in the incident to which I have been now referring. Changes in the constitution of a Ministry just before the beginning of a session undoubtedly cripple and weaken it for the purpose of effective legislation, and I deeply regret that any such weakening has happened. But no one can doubt that when we are able to address ourselves to the real discussion and treatment of public questions, there are many matters on which the Conservative party is quite prepared to offer to the people legislation which will be of immediate and enduring benefit.

Sir, it is not for me to sketch the programme of the Conservative party, but it may be allowed to me to say this : If I could look forward over four or five years, during which years Parliament had a real opportunity, under the guidance of a Conservative Government, of addressing itself to the practical discussion of matters of great public import, I could think of things which I hope by the end of that period of four or five years would have been dealt with, and dealt with for the benefit of all. The procedure of our Parliament should have been altered, and improved. We would have lessened the cruel strain that is now brought upon the energies and endurance of those who go to work in Parliament, and while diminishing that strain upon the energy and endurance of its members, we would have increased—by the abolition of some of its most technical and silly rules—its practical power for helping the people ; and, sir, while increasing the power of the House of Commons, we would have increased in the best possible way the usefulness of the House of Lords, by enabling it to come into constant and concurrent action with the House of Commons, carrying on with it side by side—not checked by prorogations or adjournments—the work of beneficent legislation.

I hope we should have done something more. I hope we should have rearranged the local administration of the country in a way which would have simplified and made it more intelligible to the people, and enabled them to have a more direct control over the expenditure of the funds they were called upon to contribute. I hope we should have altered the law with regard to the transfer of land ; that we should have accompanied a complete and authoritative survey of the whole kingdom with a law making compulsory a registration of title, so as to give to the dealings in land and in its passing

from man to man, greater freedom than it ever can have so long as it is burdened with the complicated arrangements which beset it now. I hope we should have done something to regulate railway companies, so as to prevent a monopoly which Parliament has given for public purposes being exercised for purposes injurious to the true interests of the people of this country. I hope we should have done something to protect the lives and interests of the seafaring portion of our population—something to guard the merchant sailors of this country from those evils which were admitted many years ago, but which, as yet, there has been no practical and real attempt to deal with. I hope we should have been able to do something to clear and free our Church of the many defects and mischiefs which now afflict and weaken her; that we should peremptorily abolish the shameful traffic in presentations to livings; that we should have ensured to the people of a district some means of objecting to and repelling the intrusion upon their parish of a clergyman not fitted for his work—and that we should have given to the authorities of the Church itself some power of removing from his post a clergyman who, from want of capacity or want of will, had ceased properly to discharge his sacred duties.

Sir, these matters which I have just enumerated are matters which, when I first stood as a candidate for Parliament, in the beginning of the year 1880, appeared to press upon the attention of the people, and to demand legislative action. Not one of them has been touched since. There is not one of them which a Conservative Government cannot deal with with perfect freedom and perfect courage, and upon which it would not have the capacity and the will to pass legislation of benefit to the people. We know not what may be the result of the incidents of the last few weeks. We know not how the new session of Parliament may be perplexed and disturbed by intrigue, or by attacks from the Irish party, but this I do hope and believe that, if it is given to us to take for some years yet an official share in directing the councils and assisting in the plans of Parliament, we may do something in each one of these subjects to meet the requirements of the people, and to justify the claim I have always made and do make for the party to which I belong, that it is the party which holds most dearly, and which seeks with the strongest earnestness, the real welfare and prosperity of the people.

*Annual Address to the Electors of Plymouth,
at the Guildhall.*

JANUARY 3, 1888.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I rise to discharge what has always been a pleasant duty to me, the duty of coming once in the year before my constituents in this hall to speak to them of the work of the past twelve months. And to-day I have two reasons for feeling a special interest and pleasure in being here. In the first place I have now served my apprenticeship in your service. I have filled my seven years of work ; have entered, I think, on another seven years' term, and I have some reason to believe that those seven years of work have not been unacceptable to, or unapproved by, the people of Plymouth. But in the next place, sir, I have to-night for the first time to make answer for the year that has gone by in the capacity of a member of her Majesty's Government—a member of the Government which during that period has been charged with the responsibility of directing the political fortunes of this country.

Sir, the people of Plymouth, when they elected me to Parliament, took upon themselves, as they now see, a serious responsibility. They not only contributed a member to the House of Commons, but they have contributed a Solicitor-General to it also. Not for the first time in the history of Plymouth has it been represented by a legal member of the Government, and I hope, and I have every reason to believe, that those who seven years ago worked hard to make me member for Plymouth, are gratified that at the end of the seven years they have seen me take my place on the Ministerial bench of the House of Commons. And so, sir, I have to-night not only to make answer as a private member of Parliament doing his work in the House of Commons, but I have also the privilege of making answer here for the Government of which I am a member.

Sir, the session has been a very trying session ; but when we got to the end of it we felt that it had been a very gratifying session. It was a very trying session ; it was the longest single session of the House of Commons that has been known during the reign of her Majesty. We have not had for fifty years so long a continuous session of the House of Commons. There has never been a single session of Parliament which has occupied so many hours ; there has never been a session which has placed upon the members of the House of Commons so terrible a burden of sittings

after midnight. I think, sir, sometimes, when our constituents look at the morning papers and see there the reports of what has taken place in the House of Commons down to the close of the sitting, it does not occur to them very often to notice at what time the House of Commons adjourned. But we had during the last session of Parliament 160 sittings. Of that number, 130 were evening sittings beginning at four o'clock in the afternoon, and in those 130 evening sittings the House of Commons sat for 280 hours after midnight, so that the average time for the rising of the House from an evening sitting was about a quarter-past two in the morning. Of course, we had early nights sometimes, and were able to get to bed by about one o'clock, but as a rule it was a good deal the other way, and week after week one went home from House of Commons' work at three or four o'clock in the morning for three or four mornings a week, and I need scarcely say that, especially to those who have to do the whole of their professional work before they go to the House of Commons at four o'clock in the afternoon, to spend ten hours in the House of Commons after that time must, of course, be a serious burden. During the last six weeks of that session I believe that members spent on an average ten hours out of the twenty-four of each working day in the House of Commons, and that such a thing should be possible is a discredit to the House of Commons itself. It is not the fault of the people, it is the fault of the House of Commons; and when the House of Commons chooses to address itself steadily and vigorously to the work, it will make an end of those nonsensical rules which permit or encourage such a waste of time, and such a senseless drain upon the energies of the public men of this country.

But, sir, if from the point of view of a private member of the House of Commons that session was a very trying and fatiguing one, from the point of view of a member of her Majesty's Government it was an eminently satisfactory session. When editorial comments were being made last year upon the speeches which we then delivered at the Guildhall, a local prophet of some pretensions, but of limited circulation, foretold that at the end of twelve months the people of Plymouth would see another Solicitor-General. Well, the prophecy has come as near to the truth as we might have expected. The same Solicitor-General is here again to-night, speaking of the history of the past session. From the Government point of view it was, I say, an extremely satisfactory session. We had to endure obstruction, and we had to suffer from the senseless waste of time of which I have spoken; but we endured it, and we conquered. In spite of all the obstruction, and although that obstruction was suggested, was encouraged, and was taken part in, by leaders of the Glad-

stonian party, in spite of that obstruction we carried our work through Parliament. The Ministry placed its measures before the House of Commons, and the House of Commons approved and adopted those measures. It is true, we had to sit until late in September in order to do the work ; but the work was done. Measures were passed—not only those measures which it was the main purpose and duty of this Parliament to pass, measures which should restore order and contentment to Ireland—but many other measures were passed which to every class of the people of this country brought an alleviation of the troubles under which they laboured, and brought relief from some of the difficulties of their daily lives.

Now, sir, in the course of that session there is but one special matter to which I wish to refer ; and it is a matter to which, I confess, I myself look back with considerable satisfaction. You are aware that in the course of our discussions in the House of Commons during the last session we had to deal at one time quite suddenly with the very grave and important question of the privilege of Parliament. There had been an accusation of falsehood brought in public, in the columns of the *Times* newspaper, against a member of the House of Commons, and an injudicious person on the Conservative side of the House proposed a motion that this should be treated as a matter of privilege, and that the editor of the *Times* should be called upon to appear at the bar of the House. It was thereupon suggested that the House of Commons might appoint a committee to discuss and decide whether the accusation so made by the *Times* newspaper against that member of the House of Commons was or was not true.

Sir, if I could have no other recollection of service done in the House of Commons, and if I were to-night to cease my connection with that House, I confess I should feel great satisfaction and some pride in remembering that my friend, Sir Richard Webster, and I, had the opportunity of advising the Government upon the question, and of taking a prominent part in the debate that arose upon it. We regarded with great respect, and with great anxiety to preserve them, all the just and traditional privileges of the House of Commons. But there is no aristocracy in this country that is above the law, and the House of Commons must not be permitted to make itself one. A committee of the House of Commons is a good place for considering questions which are connected with bills brought before that House for discussion ; but it is not a good place for deciding legal questions and controversies such as then arose. If that committee had been appointed the House of Commons would have committed itself to a precedent of a most dangerous character ; it would have embarked on an inquiry for which a committee of the

House of Commons is not a competent or a right tribunal. While it is important to the people of this country to guard, and jealously guard, and preserve with resolute energy, all the privileges of free speech which belong to the House of Commons, they must preserve with at least as resolute a determination the right of free speech outside the House of Commons. A member of the House of Commons has no privilege before the law because he happens to be a member of that House. If his character be unjustly assailed he can go into a court of law and clear it before his countrymen, and by the verdict of a jury of those countrymen; and it is, I submit, a great service that the Government and the House of Commons did to the country during the last session of Parliament in refusing to allow a question properly belonging to the tribunal of a court of law to be transferred to the unsatisfactory arbitrament of a committee of the House of Commons nominated by the political leaders or the political managers of that House.

Sir, that is the only incident in the history of the past session upon which at this moment I desire to dwell, because I wish to treat of that which I think was the great result of the last session of Parliament. It was not the passing of a particular measure, or the maintenance of a particular policy, but it was the consolidation of a national party. That is a much more important thing than the question of whether a particular measure should pass this year or next year. When last year began we were entering upon a session of Parliament in which parties were very strangely broken up and divided. We on our side had 315 or 316 members of the Conservative party. But those 316 did not constitute a majority of the House of Commons. There sat on the other side of the House three parties. There was the Gladstonian party—perhaps respectable, but certainly small—for they were only 190 in number. There was a Parnellite party—I will not say of that what I said of the other. That party numbered 86. And then there was the Liberal party led by Lord Hartington, that staunch and steadfast band of representatives of the oldest and best traditions of the Liberal party, who had pledged themselves to support even a Conservative Government rather than allow the Empire to be broken up. That was the condition of parties, but it was quite clear to any one who saw the arrangements of the House of Commons itself that there must be serious difficulties in the action of Lord Hartington and his followers with the Conservatives. They were sitting by men with whom they had been in the habit of working for years. Lord Hartington himself in years not long ago, when the leadership of the Liberal party had been deserted by another, led that party in a manner which was worthy of the best traditions of English Parliamentary life. Of course there

were difficulties in the action of a mixed and combined party in the House of Commons during the last session, and it remained to be seen whether under the stress of the difficult questions which from time to time arise in the House of Commons, which disturb party calculations, and disorder party arrangements, the alliance between the Government and Lord Hartington and his followers might not be imperilled or broken. I know there was great hope in the minority in the House of Commons that somehow or other the majority would be dissolved by the accidents and troubles that came in the session. The great result of this last session of Parliament is this, that now the country is secure that, as long as this Parliament lasts, no terms or compromises of any kind will be made with the party of disruption and disunion. It may be that some strange and unexpected event may cause a difficulty in the House of Commons and may cause the dissolution of this present House of Commons. But it is not in the least likely to happen, because, when the majority in the House of Commons has got its own way, and has got it by virtue of having a majority of nearly one hundred over its opponents, its leaders are not very likely to be so foolish as to throw things into the cauldron of a general election again. I have the firmest belief that if we were to have a general election to-morrow the country would stand firm and steadfast to the judgment which it expressed two years ago. But there would be no sense in trying the experiment of a general election simply in order to prove that you would succeed; and, as we know that we should succeed, we will go steadily on without troubling with the experiment. The country has come to recognise, and it does recognise, with great satisfaction, I think, the fact that during the continuance of this Parliament the legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland is absolutely safe. There is no friction, there is no difference existing between the Liberal party who follow Lord Hartington and the Conservative Government. (Interruption.) I can quite imagine that this tone of observation is not altogether cheering to some of our friends. If they can only restrain the expression of their unhappiness I will go on with the exposition.

This is the great result of the session. The alliance has been unbroken; there has been no cleft, no difference at all between the two parties who joined together in maintaining the Unionist cause. And what have we been able to do in consequence of that alliance? Now, I am not going again over the list of the minor measures which were passed during the last session of Parliament, and to my enumeration of which last October our chairman this evening referred. It is sufficient for me to say that by common acknowledgment a great many of those measures were of sub-

stantial advantage to different classes of people in this country. But the real work that we had to do was work in regard to Ireland, and that work has been done, and effectually done. The remedial work that had to be done in Ireland had two parts. In the first place the law-abiding and loyal people of that country had to be protected against crime and outrage, and in the next place the suffering tenants of that country had to be considered, and, as far as legislation could do it, their circumstances had to be ameliorated. I have more than once, here and elsewhere, pointed out that these peripatetic advocates of separation—(voices, "No, no")—it appears to me that some one is putting the cap on very quickly—these gentlemen going about the country, have steadily refrained from saying a word to their audiences, either in Plymouth or elsewhere, as to the remedial measure passed by the Government during the last session of Parliament. You will not find in any of their speeches the smallest reference, whether in criticism or eulogium, to the measure that was passed for the benefit of the tenants in Ireland.

What was that measure? Why, only last week, or the week before last, the Land Commissioners in Ireland issued an order made under the Act which was passed during the last session of Parliament. By this order the rents which had been fixed by the Land Commissioners in 1881, 1882, 1883, and 1884 were further reduced to a very considerable extent, and by that decision the rent of the tenants of Ireland was reduced by no less a sum than at least £300,000 a year. There are two sides from which an attack has been made on the policy which caused the passing of that bill. It has, on the one hand, been said that Parliament had no right to tell landlords that they must reduce rents. It has been said, on the other side, that this reduction was not sufficient, that a larger reduction ought to have been made. I want now, as speaking to men who, whatever opinion they have hitherto formed upon it, are at all events desirous of seeing what the truth is with regard to the Government policy in Ireland, to discuss the question for a few minutes. The original policy of bringing in a legal tribunal to decide the amount of rent, I am glad to say, was not a Conservative policy. It was a wrong and mischievous policy, just as it would be wrong and mischievous for Parliament to-morrow to pass a law that men should get so much a day for their work, or that they should not make things but of a particular shape or size. Parliament has no business to meddle with matters of that kind; these should be left to the requirements of a free people, and to the actual working of the commercial laws and the laws of supply and demand among us. I believe that Parliament had much better leave alone the question of settling the rent of houses or of land in any way. But just observe what the state

of things was. A bill had been passed seven or eight years ago by which a legal tribunal was established to fix the rents for tenants in Ireland. A great many of the tenants went in at once to have their rents fixed. In the year 1881 a great many of these rents were fixed, and by the Act of Parliament were binding upon both tenant and landlord until the year 1896. In 1882 a number more tenants got their rents fixed, in 1883 a number more, while in 1884 others came in and had their rents fixed. During all this time the value of the produce of Ireland had been falling, and the men who got their rents fixed in 1881 found that, as compared with those who had their rents fixed in 1885, the man who was holding the same quality of land, taking the same area of it, was standing at a larger rent than his neighbour who was in exactly the same circumstances. Parliament had to deal with that fact. If it was right for a legal tribunal to fix rents for the tenantry of Ireland, it surely was right to step in and redress that inequality. As it stood the tenant who had his rent fixed in 1881 was paying perhaps 12 per cent. more than the tenant who had his rent fixed in 1884, and of course he said, "This is a hardship; if you are going by law to fix my rent, fix a fair rent, review it and fix it again." Well it was impossible to ask all individual tenants to go back into the land courts in Ireland to get their rents ascertained again. So this bill was passed in the last session of Parliament, by which the Land Commissioners were empowered to do this. They were empowered to divide Ireland into districts, and, having done so, they were to consider how far the value of the produce which these tenants grew upon their farms had been reduced during these years, and then they were entitled to make an order, and say that in the year 1887 the tenant, instead of paying the rent which had been fixed as fair in 1882, should pay a certain smaller percentage of rent. They have done it. They have reduced the rent for 1887 to something like 22 per cent. below the rents which were fixed in 1881. They have also reduced rents something like $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and from that to 4 per cent. below the rents fixed in 1884. The consequence is that, taking the tenants of Ireland who had had their rents fixed in these years, all round there has been a reduction in the rental of Ireland of about £300,000.

Before I absolutely leave that subject I want to point out one other very important thing. It is sometimes said that all the difficulties and troubles of Ireland arose because landlords fixed exorbitant rents, and that is the reason why tenants are in difficulties. These rents, which have just been reduced by from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 22 per cent., were not fixed by the landlords at all, but by the Land Court itself in 1881 and 1882, and fixed then in the belief that they represented the rent that might be properly

given. The fact is you have to deal in Ireland with an agricultural community with no manufactures to fall back upon. We have got in some of our English counties, in the agricultural counties, difficulties as great, and distress as great as you have in Ireland. In Essex, in Norfolk, and in Suffolk land is actually going out of cultivation. I might mention other counties in England, but I will keep to these, in which land is actually going out of cultivation because it will pay no farmer to come and cultivate it. These counties which are suffering so terribly as this are agricultural counties without great manufactures. In Ireland you have a country almost entirely agricultural, with no great manufactures in the southern and western parts of it which will enable people to tide over their difficulties; and so you have been brought face to face with a distress which the Parliament and people of this country would have always been ready and willing and glad to mitigate and relieve by every means in their power, if unhappily that distress had not been seized upon by those who did not care for the distress, but were rebels against the authority of the Queen, and who have played upon and used the distresses of their fellow-countrymen as the means of advancing their own treasonable ends.

This is the work we have had to do during the last session of Parliament, and we have done it. I am glad to know that order is being restored in Ireland, that crime in that country is diminishing, that the distresses of the people are being relieved, and that industry and capital are gaining a little more confidence now that they feel there is a resolute protection behind them from the people of this country.

Now, sir, that has been our work in the past session of Parliament. What is our outlook as we face the future to-day?

Our outlook as we pass into the coming year, and see what we shall have to meet and what we shall have to do in it, is, I think, a satisfactory outlook. In the first place there is no cloud of trouble between us and any other nation in the world. And, as I think I have said in Plymouth before, it is a remarkable testimony to the way in which Lord Salisbury has conducted the foreign affairs of this country that not the most bitter of our adversaries, through the whole course of the Autumn Campaign, has found one single point to find fault with in Lord Salisbury's administration of our foreign affairs. Since he has been in power we have seen the growing up and strengthening of that central league of peace, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Great Britain—countries which have a perfectly good understanding one with the other, and whose union in the cause of peace may almost be taken as a guarantee that peace will be preserved. And with regard to that other country with whom we are always

desirous of being on terms of the most complete and cordial amity—I mean our neighbours in France—Lord Salisbury has succeeded in removing the only two causes of difficulty or dispute which existed between us. The Convention with regard to the Suez Canal has practically removed one difficulty, and the Convention with regard to the New Hebrides has practically removed another. And, sir, in a country whose people are now so wholly engrossed by industrial pursuits as this country of ours, and whose interests are so closely interwoven with the preservation of peace in Europe, it must be a gratification to all men, in the early days of the new year, to be able to look forward to that year and to feel that so far, at all events, as we at present know, there is no fear, expectation, or dread of the terrible calamity of a European war. Well, sir, we also have the satisfaction of knowing that there is some improvement in trade. My friend, Sir Edward Bates, did not seem to attach very great importance to some of the indications, which we have thought very good, of the improvement of trade. But I believe there is evidence of an improvement of trade in this country, and the returns which have been published during the last few days show that the revenue has taken a very satisfactory course during the past year. The Excise revenue of this country had been flagging and diminishing. Now it has taken a turn, and seems to be on the increase. And its increase is an indication, to a certain extent, of the prosperity of the people at large, and we have every reason to hope, that when the Chancellor of the Exchequer who was an annexation from the Liberal party, but who, I think, is pretty closely united with his present friends, has to make his annual statement to Parliament, he will be able to speak of an increased revenue and of a diminished expenditure—an expenditure which, although diminished, shall have been sufficient for the wants of the people of this country—and with an increased revenue and a diminished expenditure we may hope there may be some alleviation in the burdens upon the people.

Sir, that is the general outlook. The Parliamentary outlook is equally clear and satisfactory. There is no mystery at all as to the measures which the Government will bring forward in Parliament next session. Three of them would have been passed last year if it had not been for the stupid and senseless obstruction that we met in the House of Commons. Sir, that reactionary and old-fashioned branch of the Legislature, the House of Lords, did pass a Land Transfer Bill; it passed a Railway Rates Bill, and it passed a Tithes Bill; and these three bills, although of great importance to the people, could not be entertained by the House of Commons because our friend the enemy had chosen to waste all the early hours of the

session. Well, of course, these bills will be brought in again ; and with regard to the Land Transfer Bill, I may express a great personal satisfaction. I think when I first came here, in one of my earliest speeches here, I said I wanted to see arrangements made by which the transfer of land should be rendered easy and cheap, that the title to land should be rendered more simple and certain, and that I was anxious to see the abolition of that which was a custom, not a statute—the rule of primogeniture. Because I never could understand why, if a man died without leaving a will, and left some landed property, and some personal property, his eldest son should take all the landed property. I long ago advocated the abolition of that rule, and I am very glad to know that the Conservative Lord Chancellor, who has spoken in this hall, Lord Halsbury, last year introduced and passed through the House of Lords a measure which would have the effect of cheapening the transfer of land and of simplifying and rendering certain the title to land, and of doing away with that rule of primogeniture. This Land Transfer Bill, the Railway Rates Bill, and the Tithes Bill will, of course, be brought forward again, and there is another measure to which the Government is pledged—a measure for remodelling county government. I do not enter into details with regard to any of these bills.

There is one thing, I think, Parliament will have to do something more in before it addresses itself to work of that kind, and that is to making some amendments in its procedure which shall remove its liability to the obstruction and difficulties I have referred to. I am not in favour of pushing coercive measures in the House of Commons too far. I am not in favour of carrying too far the principle of the closure, or of giving to a casual majority of the House the right at any moment to stop a discussion. Parliament ought to be a place of speaking and discussion. It has one great purpose—to pass Acts of Parliament ; but it is essential to the passing of good Acts that they should be properly discussed, and discussed, so to speak, in the hearing of the whole people. Bills smuggled through the House in the small hours of the morning, after the reporters have gone away, and when no record is kept of the discussion that takes place, are of very little use ; and it would be a pity so to limit the opportunities of discussion as to take away the actual living interest of the constituencies in what is going on. But subject to that, there are many alterations in the rules of the House which all can see would help much in the transaction of business. I do not want to make myself the fanatic of a particular suggestion ; but the proposal I have made in Parliament, and here, as to the carrying on of business from session to session, is one by which I abide, and I think that in

all circumstances, so far as I have the power, I shall press it forward. In the early part of last year when the Conservative Government was in office, there was a committee appointed, over which Lord Hartington presided, to consider the amendments which might take place in Parliamentary procedure. I wrote to Lord Hartington and offered that I would either attend the committee to advocate before them this alteration, or, if they preferred it, I would submit to them a memorandum in writing on the subject. The committee, however, decided that the proposal was too large for them to entertain, and that it was one which must be dealt with by the House of Commons in general. I do not grumble at that decision of the Committee at all. Of course, as I am situated at present, I am not in a position to press upon the House my individual suggestions, but I will make no secret of the fact that I believe that all other amendments of the proceedings of the House of Commons will be ineffectual unless that satisfactory and straightforward rule of carrying forward discussions from one session to another shall be adopted.

Now, sir, I have referred to the matters which are coming prominently before the House of Commons next session. We have a great opportunity in the House of Commons. The Government is supported, and steadily supported, by a large majority of that House. In the eight most important divisions which took place in the last session of Parliament the Liberal Unionists gave to us from 63 to 70 votes in each division—and the Government, so supported by the moderate men of the Liberal party, is in a position to bring forward measures of the kind that I have referred to, and to bring them forward without being nervous as to its existence as a Government depending upon the party questions which are raised in the House of Commons. It can bring forward substantial measures of public advantage, not associated with party interests but intended for the benefit of all, knowing that there will be a substantial majority in the House of Commons at its back. And, sir, we not only know that we have the opportunity of doing this work, but we know we have no competitors. The Radical party has deferred all intention or hope of doing anything practical for the people of this country for years to come. It has been laid down by the leaders of that party as one of their principles of action that they are not to do anything for the advantage of the people of this country, or of Ireland, or of Scotland, unless and until they have passed their scheme of Home Rule. Why, sir, I have pointed out before that that insane policy postpones for years to come the matters which are of importance to the people of this country. It would involve two or three dissolutions of Parliament ; the rise and fall of Ministries ;

controversies between the two Houses, and the like ; and years would be expended in this controversy before the Liberal party condescended to do anything that could possibly be useful to the people of this country. Sir, as we have no competitors, as we have a strong majority in the House of Commons, as we have a clear view of what the interests of the people require, we shall go forward—and go forward I believe successfully—during the next session of Parliament ; and so long as the alliance continues to exist between the Government and the moderate men of the old Liberal party, so long we shall be able to do, without hesitation and without compromise, substantial service to the people of this country. I am aware that the day may come when that alliance may be dissolved, but I am persuaded that its dissolution will never come until it has completely fulfilled the object for which the alliance is made. It will have taught the permanent lesson that no politician, however long his service, however honoured his name, can hope to escape defeat and shame if he allies himself with a treasonable conspiracy for the purpose of gaining place and power. When that lesson is thoroughly taught the alliance may possibly be dissolved. Other questions will arise to break men away from the party. The old family traditions and connections will probably reassert their influence over some of its members ; but this great Unionist party will not disappear until it has done an imperishable service to the State, until it has not only saved the unity of the empire, but given a conspicuous and enduring evidence of the public spirit which guides English public men.

*Annual Address to the Electors of Plymouth,
at the Guildhall.*

JANUARY 3, 1889.

IT has always been a pleasant duty to me to come here in the early days of each year and to make account of my stewardship in the House of Commons—for the kindness that welcomed me here in 1880 has never failed to give me a cordial reception and a patient hearing in these walls from year to year. But I think there has been no occasion on which I have met my constituents with more thorough satisfaction in reviewing the transactions of the previous year than I do this evening. I will own that it was a matter of great personal pride to me two years ago to come here for the first time as Solicitor-General—and to

address my thanks to the constituency which had given me a seat in Parliament and helped me to that which was a worthy object of the ambition of any man practising my profession. But I have even a pleasanter task to-night, for now I speak not of the prospects of a Government which has lately been formed, or the prospects of the cause to which that Government and the party which it leads had devoted itself. I speak now of the experience of a Government which has succeeded during the last two years—and especially during the year which has just closed—in establishing, I believe, beyond doubt, beyond a shadow of doubt, the ultimate success of that great cause to which I have referred. The Government, I say, has done so still more during the past year than in the twelve months that preceded it. The year 1887 was a year, as you know, of very great anxiety. An alliance was formed unprecedented in our political history, but an alliance for great purposes, and a large proportion of that party which had had the largest share in the Government of the country during the early part of the century broke away from its leaders and allied itself with the leaders of the Tory party, believing that a duty had come upon them which was superior to the demands of party allegiance, and resolved to set aside their own personal and political ambitions in order to strengthen the hands of the Tory leaders.

The year 1887 was an anxious year. It was very doubtful to many whether that alliance would stand the strain of Parliamentary life, and I remember that in the beginning of 1887 it was freely prophesied in the lobbies of the House of Commons that before Easter of that year this alliance would be found to be impracticable in Parliamentary life, and that the Government of which I was a member would be ejected from office. Well, 1887 passed without that alliance showing the least symptom of strain. Not only was it not broken, that would be little to say, but it became cemented and strengthened with all the occurrences of the session. Every Parliamentary incident showed that it was not merely a freak of temper, or a desire to assert personal predominance in party life, but that it was the sincere adhesion to a great cause. And when we reached the end of 1887, and had had to deal with the remedial measures which were passed in that year for Ireland—the twin remedial measures, the one which increased the advantages given in that country to the occupiers of the soil, the other remedial measure that which by establishing speedy and certain punishment for offences, restored liberty to honest men in Ireland, the air was again full of prophecies that “Only wait till you come to dealing with English legislation, and then you will see that the Unionist alliance cannot last.”

We were told that it was very well, indeed, for this alliance to be maintained while we were dealing with Irish questions, because it was upon Irish questions, and for the purpose of dealing with them, that the alliance was originally formed. We were told that it would break to pieces directly we came to try and deal with constructive legislation for this country. Indeed, the leader of the Irish Nationalist party in Parliament was good enough to counsel his followers that they should not obstruct the course of English legislation, because, as he pointed out, in the course of that legislation there might probably be difficulties arising between the Government and the Unionist Liberals who supported them. Well, we have now had a session which has been practically a session for domestic legislation.

The Unionist party has not gone to pieces. The Unionist party is stronger in its cohesion and fellowship in the House of Commons than ever it was before. We know that the Unionist party is gaining strength in this country, and we see here and elsewhere that the tactics of our opponents, who have endeavoured to drive the Liberal Unionists out of the position which they took up by personal taunt and attack, has only had the effect in the House of Commons, as well as here, of putting the Unionist Liberals in even closer alliance with those with whom they have been working.

Two years ago when I was speaking on the prospects of the Government, which was then beginning its work, I mentioned five subjects upon which, if a Conservative Administration were allowed to have a few years of peaceful and prosperous work in the House of Commons, it might be hoped we should have legislation. Of those five subjects two have already been dealt with. Three of them—legislation with regard to land transfer, with reference to our merchant seamen, and with reference to the discipline of the Church of England, are matters which have not been dealt with. But two of great importance have been dealt with, and I do not abandon the hope that before the end of this Administration is seen the other three matters which I have mentioned shall be dealt with.

As to the two which have been the subject of legislation, no one can doubt that they are of great importance. The Railway and Canal Traffic Act is an Act for which men have looked for some years, hoping to complete, to improve—I might almost say to perfect—the work which was set on foot when the Railway Commission was established twelve years ago. The work of controlling and directing the operations of the great railway companies, to which so large privileges have been given—with the care that privileges given by Parliament should not be allowed to be hostile to the interests of the people

but should be so fairly used as to assist and to foster the trade of every part of our country.

The other measure is one that our opponents laughed at the idea of the Conservative party being able to deal with. It is the extension of that municipal government which you have enjoyed in Plymouth for so many, many years—which has been enjoyed by all the great cities of this country—to the counties of England, in order that in every county the people may have a more practical authority in regulating their own concerns, in imposing and administering their own local taxation, than they have had in the years gone by. That was a great work that had to be done. I am quite aware that the old system was in many respects a good system. The old system was justly and fairly and economically administered, and those bodies of county magistrates who, during the last few days, have been holding their closing meetings in the character which they have hitherto held—that of the government of the counties of this country—have the fullest right to congratulate themselves upon the work that they have done, and upon the record of pure and judicious and economical administration which they have left in disappearing from that portion of their duties.

But I have always thought that good administration is not everything that you can wish for. If you can get good administration with regard to which the people themselves have a direct responsibility and a direct authority, then you have the advantage not only of a good government, but of the personal interest of the whole body of the people in the carrying out of that government in its best form. And I hope and believe that the result of the Local Government Act which has been passed—while I do not think, and never have thought, that it will improve in efficiency or in economy the administration of the counties—will be to evoke in every part of the counties of England the same feeling of responsibility, the same public instincts, which have existed in our municipal bodies. If so, I think it will be a great boon and benefit to the whole country in the future, and a work for which the Conservative Government of the year 1888 will always be regarded with gratitude by the country.

I am very glad to notice that those who have in the past helped to administer the county government of this country as magistrates at quarter sessions are not insensible to the duty that falls upon them at this time, of coming forward to ask their fellow-countrymen to accept them as their representatives in the County Councils, and I most sincerely congratulate the people of Devonshire and the people of Cornwall that in all the districts with regard to which I have seen accounts, where County Council elections are shortly to take place, they are finding men

coming forward to represent them who are practically acquainted with the work of County Government, and will be able to start the new machinery in such a way as to secure all the advantages of administration which belong to the old system, and save it from those risks to which it would certainly be exposed if it fell into the hands of untried and inexperienced men. There is great satisfaction in seeing those who are coming forward as candidates for County Councils in the country. I only wish I could say the same in regard to London. I feel great apprehension in regard to London—in regard to those who are coming forward as candidates for the County Council. But, I hope, although it is getting very near now to the time of election, that we shall find other candidates coming forward of a far higher and better class than the majority of those who are now offering themselves for election in that place.

I mentioned two years ago the subject to which Sir Edward Bates has again called attention, and I said then that it would be needful to re-arrange the rules of Parliament in order to carry through legislation. That was done, and certain alterations in the rules of Parliament were made. To a certain extent they have been successful. There has been, as I feared there would be, a greater need for the use of the closure, arising from the fact that the closure was in existence. Whenever you provide a remedy for mischief you encourage mischief to go on until the remedy is applied, and I am afraid that the same observation will have to be made as to some of the remedies which are now proposed. Sir Edward Bates has reminded you that in the House of Commons we have been afflicted by certain members who are in the habit of speaking a good many times in the course, not of the session only, but of one evening of even one debate, and he has suggested that a rule should be adopted by which in committee of the House of Commons a member should only be allowed to speak once, and he should only be allowed to speak ten minutes, unless, indeed—and I confess I think it was a very large and generous exception—he were a member either of the present Ministry or of a past Ministry, and then, I presume, he would be unlimited in the time or number of his speeches. I am afraid such an exception would be much too large to allow the rule to be effectual; but I must confess that I do not see in that direction the best hope of improving our Parliamentary affairs. Suppose we were to make a rule that no member should speak more than once in Committee of Supply, and that he should only speak for ten minutes. If you had twenty members willing to speak they would all speak for their ten minutes; and the fact that there is a ten minutes' limit would be a justification to them for occupying the ten minutes in the observations they would make,

and if you got a series of ten minutes' speeches in Committee of Supply it is absolutely impossible, with our present arrangement for discussing the financial affairs of this country, that you could put any effective limit on the length of discussion at all.

We have coming before the House of Commons volumes of estimates, page after page of items of expenditure by the country, which are all brought under the review of the House of Commons, and all have to be voted by its authority. It is competent to any member of the House to propose, with regard to any item in these votes, whether it be a vote of a million or two for the payment of seamen, or whether it be an item of payment of £25 for the wages of a charwoman at a public office, it is competent to any member to move that the sum be reduced by £20, £10, or £5, as he may think proper, and upon that motion every member would be entitled to make his ten minutes' speech. And I very much fear that by making a procedure of that kind systematic we should rather aggravate than decrease the difficulty we are now in.

Sir, I confess that I think if this matter of dealing with the estimates, and the enormous time occupied by them, is to be dealt with by Parliament at all, it will have to be dealt with in a far more courageous way. The fact is, there is a popular belief that the House of Commons is the protector of the financial interests of the people, and that the House of Commons prevents the people being taxed too much. I assure you it is a great mistake. It is not the House of Commons that keeps down the Estimates. It is the Ministry that does so; and if you take the trouble to read through the discussions which go on in the House of Commons upon the Estimates when the House is in Committee of Supply, you will find that almost every speech that is made, is made in the direction of encouraging a larger expenditure than that which is proposed by the Ministers of the Crown. Those who want to keep down expenditure do not talk; if, indeed, there are any of them. Those who want to enlarge the expenditure, by increasing the vote for particular services, are continually pressing these matters on the attention of the Ministers of the Crown. I had not intended to deal in any detail with this matter to-night, but after the observations that my hon. colleague has made with regard to it, I should like to say a word or two more on this, which, I agree, is a very important subject.

The first duty of the House of Commons undoubtedly is to grant supplies, and in granting those supplies its members are granting not their own money only but the money of the people at large. It is the duty of the House of Commons to be vigilant and watchful, whilst there should be no extravagance on the

part of the Ministry. But, although the Ministry may be extravagant because it is incompetent, because it undertakes tasks which are beyond its strength with the means it has at its disposal, or because its members have not a thorough knowledge of the work which they are entrusted to do, you may depend upon it a Ministry is never extravagant because it desires to spend a good deal of money. It is so unpopular a thing among the constituencies that the last thing a Ministry desires is to increase the amount that it calls for from the people in taxation. But although the House of Commons is entitled to deal with the matter of estimates that have to be voted for the services of the country, it is a very serious question whether a far better plan might not be devised by which the estimates should be considered and revised. I should be very loath myself to allow it to pass from the direct authority of the House of Commons. I would rather run the risk of some expenditure of time which occasionally appears extravagant than allow the estimates to be dealt with in any way which prevented there being a watchful criticism over expenditure. But if any change were to be made at all I confess I think a change should be made in this direction, that there should be a somewhat large committee on public expenditure. That committee should consist of men representative of the different sections of the House of Commons, and contain upon it the present and past representatives of the Treasury—that is to say, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary for the Treasury, and the First Lord of the Treasury for the time being, as also their predecessors in office—but not contain any other Minister in office. And then before that committee the chiefs of the great spending departments might come and be interrogated by the committee as to the reasons for the proposals which they were making for public expenditure. I am sure with regard to any important matter in the Estimates a half-hour's cross-examination by the committee of the Minister who was responsible for the expenditure would be much more effective in checking extravagant proposals, and, what is equally important to the country, in justifying to the country proposals which were seriously and wisely made, than ten hours spent in discussion in the House of Commons, whatever rule with regard to the length of speech might be adopted.

I think it might well be that all the estimates should pass before that committee. But there are one or two things which should be steadily insisted upon. No committee ought to have any power to increase an estimate. If it had power to increase estimates the responsibility would be gone from the Ministry to the committee, and the whole system of Ministerial responsibility would be lost. It should have the power to cut down the

estimates, and in that case, and that case only, should there be any power of appeal to the House of Commons. I think in that way the estimates of the country might be dealt with. But I should not be hasty in proposing the adoption even of that course. There is no other to my mind which is practicable and safe, but I confess I would rather go on running the risk of lengthened debates and the occupation of a good deal of Parliamentary time, than I would allow direct control of the Estimates to pass from the review of every member of the House of Commons.

I think, and I have always thought, that there is another way of dealing with this matter. I do not believe myself in any very great extension of the rules of the House of Commons which imposes punishment on people who are breaking in on our debates and put us to difficulty. The fact is there are too many people in the House of Commons who would think it a creditable thing to be called to order and to be punished, to make the imposition of any such rules of any great value. You know what my view always has been with regard to this matter, and I think always will be. A great deal of this waste of time is not intended simply for the purpose of harassing and vexing the House of Commons. It is intended for the purpose of preventing laws being passed which might be creditable to the Ministry, and by passing which the Ministry might obtain repute in the country. The real source and secret of this obstruction, practised in the House of Commons in past sessions, and which became intolerable in what I may term the permanent session during the year just gone by, is the knowledge on the part of those who so obstruct that if they can only keep bills off until the end of the session in which they are talking, those bills will have disappeared for a time, and will have to be started fresh again in the next session of Parliament.

There never has been an illustration so complete as the last session has given us of the need for that proposal, which I have made over and over again, and will make over and over again, whenever I get the chance, that the bills which we have left unfinished in one session we shall take up and try and finish in the next. And I am sure if those who obstruct our proceedings and waste our time knew that the result of their action would be not to defeat or get rid of the bill, but only to postpone its discussion until the following February, when the House would take up that same bill again, the heart would be gone out of obstruction and we should have got the best solution of the difficulty. Let me give you an instance or two of the importance, as shown during the last session of Parliament, of this proposal. Let me mention one bill. You know very well how often I have referred to the wish that I had when I first went to the House

of Commons, a wish which has strengthened with every year that has since gone by, to put an end to that barbarous system in the administration of our criminal law by which the prisoner who is charged with an offence has his lips closed and is not allowed to give evidence on his own behalf. It is an absolutely and utterly indefensible piece of barbarism, and for the last twenty-two years there has been a growing opinion upon the subject. Parliament and lawyers of any experience and knowledge have come to the unanimous conclusion that it is our duty to do away with this blot upon our administration of justice. Well, we have tried to do it year after year, and what is it that stood in the way? The House of Commons is anxious to accept the bill, has accepted it in principle already. The House of Lords has been urgent in trying to pass the bill, and has sent it twice down to the House of Commons. How is it we have not been able to pass it? Why, we find that the bill, brought in, discussed, and carried through some of its stages, cannot be got through the House of Commons because of the obstruction which takes place upon other matters. It is not a bill so large as to involve the fate of a Ministry, or it would have been passed long ago, nor so small as to escape observation, or else, perhaps, it would have got through like one or two little odds and ends of bills that did scramble through in the last days of the session just gone by. But as it is a bill which does attract attention, but does not involve the fate of a Ministry, it is obstructed, and this bill which we brought in in 1888, to the discussion of which we gave some considerable time, and the second reading of which was accepted by a large majority of the House of Commons, has again gone. And if next session we find an opportunity of introducing it, as we intend to do very early in the session, we shall have the same risk that those who do not oppose that bill, but who want to hinder us in passing other bills, will make that bill the excuse for long and persistent discussion, and so again we may find it postponed to another session and the whole time of Parliament wasted.

That is a strong instance, but let me give you a more remarkable and important instance still. One of the great regrets of the members of the Government in the past session was that we did not succeed in passing the Employers' Liability Bill. There is no bill of greater value to the working people of this country than the Employers' Liability Bill. When I went to the House of Commons first as member for Plymouth I found an Employers' Liability Bill under discussion. I took my share in that discussion, and though, as you know, I was sitting on the Opposition side of the House, I worked then as well as I would have worked if it had been proposed by one of our own leaders, to get that bill passed in a satisfactory form. But I pointed out to

the House of Commons in that discussion, that when you are passing a bill that deals with the interests of working men, that bill ought to be as simple and straightforward as possible. Any complication means going to law, and going to law is the last thing which any wise man should think of, especially if that wise man happens to be poor. Well, the bill was passed, not in so simple a form as I should like to see, but still in a form which was of great advantage to the industrial population of this country. And I am sure that the result is shown in a decrease in the number of accidents from which workmen have suffered, a greater care and anxiety on the part of employers to provide means of protecting their workmen from accidents, and a greater care, also, in employing men who are thoroughly competent.

So far it has been a great advantage. But it has been marred and hindered in its beneficial effect by the necessity of the working man going to law in order to enforce his rights. When an accident happens in a factory, and a poor man has his leg broken and is laid aside for several weeks, his wages are stopped, no means are coming in to him, and it is scarcely possible for him with any hope of success to set a lawsuit on foot against his employer. If he does, the employer very often belongs to an insurance company. The case is handed over to the insurance company, and the officers of that company have legal advice, and know all the technicalities and difficulties of legal procedure; and the consequence has been, that although that Act has had an indirect effect of a very great value in imposing more care upon employers, it has not had nearly so large an effect as I and others hoped it would have in securing the payment of money to the men who are injured. The fact is, a great deal of money disappears between the man who ought to pay it, and the man who ought to receive it, and I leave those present to speculate on the direction in which that missing cash has gone.

I heard of a case the other day where a man brought an action against his employer under the Employers' Liability Act. He succeeded in that action, and got a verdict for £45. The cost to the employer out of pocket was £150. The man himself who brought the action got in his pocket £15. The whole of the rest of the money had gone in legal costs, and my belief is that the best thing that could possibly happen with regard to this is first to reduce the technicalities of the law with which you are dealing, so that there shall be fewer pitfalls into which an experienced lawyer can lure the plaintiff against whom he is retained, and further, and more important still, that you should, as far as possible, try to substitute for the legal liability of the employer the liability of an insurance fund, to which the em-

ployer shall himself contribute. If you have an insurance fund all this difficulty, of legal cost is gone. If a man's leg is broken, and the man belongs to an insurance fund, his allowance will be paid to him without reference to any difficult legal question as to who was responsible for causing the injury. In the bill which was brought in by the Government for the amendment of the Employers' Liability Act we in the first place, in many respects, simplified and improved the procedure. I need not enter into details, but the intention was and the result would have been, to make it less dangerous, less risky for a man to go to law upon this matter. In the next place, we put in this clause. At the present time, as the law now stands, an employer can contract himself out of the Act. If a man goes to him and asks for work an employer can say: "Yes, I will employ you on condition you make an agreement with me that I shall not be liable to you under the Employers' Liability Act." It is not a contract that is very largely made, excepting in certain particular occupations, but as the law now stands that is a contract which can be made. We proposed in one clause of that bill to say that no employer should be allowed to contract himself out of that Act, unless he had subscribed to an insurance fund, in which the man was to be insured, which would provide compensation for all accidents, however occurring, and unless also the subscription of the employer to that fund was equivalent to the liability which would rest upon him if he had been bound by the Employers' Liability Act itself.

That is an extremely difficult clause to frame, but the aim and purpose of it was to improve the administration of the Employers' Liability Act, while allowing to remain in existence such great societies as that society which exists on the London and North-Western Railway, in which all the employés of that line are insured. But what has happened to that bill? It was accepted on its second reading by the House of Commons; it went down to be discussed in Grand Committee, and I had the pleasure of assisting the Home Secretary while the bill was before that Committee. We discussed it for several days, and I believe came to sound and reasonable decisions upon the matters before us. Then it came up again for discussion in the House of Commons, and then objection was made to it. It was opposed; there was a long debate; and the result was that towards the end of the session the Government had to abandon all hope of passing it, and to content themselves with passing a continuance bill, which leaves the old Act, with all its defects, in operation, and we have not even the opportunity of taking that bill up again at the stage of committee when the House of Commons meets again next year. If we want to deal with it we shall have again to introduce the bill, again have it read a first and second

time, and discussed all over again in Grand Committee or in the House itself, at an expenditure of time which, I fear, will be so great as may interfere with the opportunity of passing that bill at all. And that is the result of a rule which treats as waste paper all the work we did not succeed in finishing.

So much with regard to the House of Commons and its work. But there is another part of our work to which, of course, some reference must be made. I have spoken with some satisfaction of the work we have done in the way of legislation. I speak with even more complete and unmixed satisfaction of the work we have done in the administration of Ireland. The history of Irish affairs during the last twelve months has been a history full of satisfaction and reward and encouragement to every member of the Government. Ireland is growing more prosperous. There has been an improvement in the condition of the people in Ireland, which no one can deny. There are better prices being got for produce; there is a better state of things among the people; prices are now for the first time beginning to revive, having reached their lowest in 1885, and now are going up; and an improvement in price means an improvement in the condition of the Irish people. I heard from a member of the House of Commons that a constituent of his in Lincolnshire, a maker of agricultural instruments, had told him that he had made more agricultural implements to send to Ireland during the previous three months than during the two years that had gone before.

And while we are having a more prosperous Ireland, we are having a more peaceful Ireland. Agitation is lurking about in certain corners and places of Ireland, but agitation is being steadily beaten by a firm and courageous administration of the law. Of that firm and satisfactory administration of the law we have seen one good and notable instance during the past fortnight. A member of the House of Commons—and I feel very glad that these proceedings in Ireland should be taken against members of the House of Commons, for I would far rather that they were attacked and punished than that any severity should fall upon the dupes whom they have led on—a member of the House of Commons was charged the other day with an offence against the law. No one denied, he least of all, the fact that it was an offence. It was declared by an Act that Parliament passed that any one who reported the proceedings of a meeting where the National League had been proclaimed in the place where that meeting was held, should be punished. This member of Parliament had done so before; had been convicted and punished. He repeated the offence, and was charged with it and brought to justice. But when the offence was proved against him—and that he had done it he did not at all deny—it was said to him in

court that if he would undertake for the future to obey the law, no punishment whatever would be asked for or inflicted. He declared that he would give no such undertaking. Whatever the law may be, that law must be enforced, or there is an end of the authority of the law. And I do not think that sentence was one week too long as a sentence inflicted upon one who was present in the House, and a member of the House, which passed that law, who knew perfectly well what the law was, and who in the face of the country would give no undertaking that he would obey it in future.

There is another notable incident that has occurred during the past few weeks—an unexpected incident. In 1887 a bill was passed by Parliament with the object of relieving some of the grievances which remained to the Irish occupiers of the soil. Certain judicial rents had been fixed by the Land Commissioners in the years 1881-2-3, and at the time those rents were fixed the Land Commissioners seemed to think that they were dealing with a permanent state of things—that prices would not fall any lower. Unhappily, they did fall lower, and in 1884-5 the rents which were fixed by the same Commissioners in respect of the same holdings were lower than those fixed in 1881-2-3, and those who had their rents fixed earlier said this was a hardship—that they who had been the first to take the advantage of the machinery Parliament had provided, should be punished by being fixed at higher rents than their fellows who came later. Well, we passed a bill through the House which had this provision—that the Land Commissioners were allowed to deal with districts in Ireland, and having regard to the change in the price of produce, to revise the judicial rents fixed during those years, according to a schedule decreasing or increasing them in a particular district so much per cent. Hitherto the Land Commissioners had varied the rents by reducing them, but two or three weeks ago they issued a schedule in which they had to deal with the rents of 1885, and they found that in order to make the judicial rents of 1885 fair at the present time, they had not to reduce them, but to increase them by some six per cent.

That has been a startling revelation to the people of Ireland. No one could dispute the justice of it. If a tenant wishes to have a produce-rent, and to pay his landlord according to the price of produce, he is entitled to have his rent reduced if the price of produce goes down; but in all fairness is liable to have the rent raised if the price of produce goes up. Rent is bound to follow the price of produce if it be fixed in relation to it, and it has been a great revelation to the Irish occupiers to find that it was within the competence of the Land Commissioners to revise the rent where prices were improving; and I confess I think that to be an intimation to the Irish people that

rents have touched bottom, and that they are now improving upon the rents of 1885, and will be a strong inducement to the people of Ireland to be on peaceable and fair terms with their landlords, and to take advantage of that indulgent and fair treatment which, so far as I can see, they have received from almost every landlord to be found in the different parts of Ireland.

Now, I am quite sure that this state of things in Ireland has been largely brought about by the firm administration of the Government. But it is not to the Government, as a whole, that the praise should be given so much as to that one member of the Government, without the mention of whose name a speech upon this subject would be incomplete. I mean that courageous young member of the Government, Mr. Arthur Balfour, to whom his opponents pay the involuntary compliment of a very bitter hatred, and for whom we feel intense admiration, as a man who, having to discharge very difficult and dangerous duties, has discharged them with a temper, with a fairness, with a courage, beyond all praise.

Now, I believe I have justified what I began with, when I said I was speaking to-night with great satisfaction of the year that has gone by, and I believe that all those who are on this platform to-night, whether they are men who have worked with us politically hitherto, or whether they are those who, under the stress and pressure of their duty to their county, have come to an alliance with the Conservative party, I believe they are all of them quite satisfied with the work of the year that has gone by. I hope it may be given to this Government to continue to do that work in the interest of the country for years yet to come. There is no sign of change of mind in the constituencies. There is, as far as ourselves and our allies are concerned, a strengthening and hardening of purpose and will to go forward with this work; and I hope, and I confidently believe, that if we have, for the next two years at least, the opportunity of steadily carrying out the principles and the policy which we have shown to be our guides during the work of the last two years, we shall secure not only a restored peace, and happiness, and tranquillity to Ireland, but we shall leave behind us when this Ministry passes away the recollection of good and faithful service done to every part of the United Kingdom.

*Annual Address to the Electors of Plymouth,
at the Guildhall.*

JANUARY 6, 1890.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I face my constituents to-night in Plymouth with especial pleasure, for in one respect to-night closes a period in my life to which I looked forward with much hope, and which I have enjoyed with great pride and satisfaction. Eleven years ago—and I think I have told the story in Plymouth before to-night—there was offered to me a post which meant that in a few years' time, long before the period we have now reached, I should almost certainly have taken a seat on the judicial bench, and when I refused it I was asked, "Why, whatever, sir, do you want?" My reply was, that I should like to have ten years in the House of Commons, and that I should like to be Solicitor-General. I did not know, sir, that both my wishes would be so completely and so soon fulfilled. Eleven years have not yet passed since the day that I said that. I have had ten years of work in the House of Commons; I have been Solicitor-General for far longer than the average tenure of that office; and now I am very glad that at the end of ten years, practically, of public life, I find myself addressing my constituents without being compelled to the controversial discussion of special topics which are before the country. Because I should like to speak a little in generalities of what has passed during those ten years, and of what we in public life may have to do in the years which are immediately before us.

Those ten years have made a great and a most valuable change in the Parliamentary institution of this country. I think that, looking to the permanent effect of legislation, the three matters which during the last ten years have been of greatest importance in the work of the Parliament of this country, have been the Corrupt Practices Bill, the Reform Bill, with its extension of the franchise and its redistribution of political power, and in the third place, that great extension which has recently taken place of the institutions of local government, by which, completed as I hope it soon will be by the other arrangement of District Councils, which is necessary for its effect, the actual work of the administration of the country will be brought home to the mind and knowledge of every inhabitant of this country. These measures have been far-reaching and important measures. The Corrupt Practices Act has redeemed this country from the reproach which lay upon it before the

year 1883, that, in too many cases, it was not the opinion of the constituencies that was speaking, but influences of a corrupt and improper kind bearing upon voters. We have been redeemed from that, our elections are now pure throughout the country, we have the expression of the mind of the people. And I am glad to remember that we are indebted for that measure—fought as it was in the House of Commons with great ability and with great perseverance—to a distinguished Liberal Unionist friend of mine, Sir Henry James. The extension of the franchise and the redistribution of political power was also a far-reaching change. It was, fortunately for the country, done in a single measure. We did not have the extension of the franchise, and then have the manipulation of political power by the readjustment of the constituencies. In one measure, practically, the work was done, and now we have in the House of Commons, whatever else may be said of it, or whatever judgment you may form as to the wisdom of its decisions, a far truer representation of the mind and feeling of the people than you ever had in the House of Commons until within the last four or five years.

Now, we have the other great change of which I have spoken, a change which I spoke of years ago, before it was carried by our Government, and which I have advocated from this platform over and over again. The Government of counties has passed into the hands of locally elected councils. Those councils require to be assisted in their work, and supplemented in their powers by smaller and district bodies dealing more directly with the small matters of local administration. But that a good change has passed over the public life of England in the extension of those principles of local self-government, I think no one who sees their operation at the present time, in every place except London, can have any doubt at all. Now, these are, as I think, the three great and far-reaching matters with which Parliament has dealt within the last ten years.

It has been my duty within the last two or three weeks, for a purpose which I hope will presently be of interest to my constituents, to look over the speeches which I have delivered in Plymouth and elsewhere during the course of the ten years. And the two questions—apart from matters of domestic policy such as those that I am referring to—which I find I have been called upon again and again to discuss are the questions of Ireland and of Egypt.

I am not going, there is not the smallest occasion for it, to enter into any detailed speech to-night with regard to the condition or the prospects of Ireland. As to the condition of Ireland we all know, and we all are thankful to know, what it is at present.

During the last three years there has been a constant and a

rapidly increasing progress in the prosperity and contentment of Ireland. Crime has diminished, trade has extended, wealth has increased, farms have found occupiers, occupiers have found the rents, and finding the rents and working their farms they find themselves now in a satisfactory condition in Ireland. I don't wonder, sir, that the Irish campaign has practically broken down in this country. No advocacy of political theories can possibly stand against the evidence that those three years, and especially this last year, have given of the improvement that is taking place in the condition of Ireland. Perhaps the most remarkable circumstance that has followed from this altered condition of Ireland is that in the mouths of the chief advocates of that policy against which we successfully fought three years ago the argument has taken an entirely different shape. The leader of the Irish party spoke at Nottingham not long ago—and I am very glad to be assured that his later speech upon this subject is approved by those who follow him in this country, because it differs altogether from the speeches of earlier years. In earlier years, only three or four years ago, we were told that Ireland wanted Grattan's Parliament, and would accept nothing else, that she could not under present Constitutional circumstances ask for more, but that she would take nothing less, and that no man had a right to set a limit to the future aspirations of a nation. At Nottingham the astonished audience listened to a demonstration that the characteristics of Grattan's Parliament were dangerous to the integrity of the empire, and the very man who declared that Ireland had been robbed of its Parliament, and that it insisted on having Grattan's Parliament back again, showed at Nottingham in sentences which are well worth reading—though I am afraid that his friends there cheer him more than they read him—how dangerous to the integrity of the empire was the existence of a Parliament with the attributes and characteristics that Grattan's Parliament had. Well, if this change is taking place we can wait, and well afford to wait, to see its development.

We are told now that the whole question is one of developing the industries of Ireland. That is a most admirable object. Ireland has always suffered, I am afraid she will always suffer, because no legislation by any Parliament that the world can imagine can undo the results of natural causes such as those which make Ireland chiefly an agricultural country and dependent on agriculture. But Ireland has suffered in a great degree from the want of industries among her people, and it is desirable undoubtedly that if those industries can be nourished and strengthened that everything should be done to help them. We shall not, however, forget the remedy for the condition of Irish industry which was suggested not very long ago by

the same speaker. He suggested as his remedy for the distress of Irish industries and the lack of those industries among her people that there should be an Irish Parliament, with power to put into force protective laws to protect Irish industries against English competition, and he wrote a letter in which he suggested that, in default of protective laws, the best thing would be for Ireland to buy American goods instead of the English goods which they were in the habit of getting. These things are very interesting ; we will leave them for development among those who are going to ask the country to accept such a programme. At present there is no reality in them at all. There is nothing we need trouble ourselves about in the Home Rule controversy at the present time. The project has been defeated, and success has justified the position we took up three years ago.

Now, there was another question to which I have referred again and again, and that is the question of Egypt. The difficulties which we have had to meet in Egypt were not difficulties of our creation, but they are difficulties which have been steadily reduced and minimised by the policy which has been adopted by Her Majesty's Government. The burden of Egypt upon this country is less than it was. The burdens upon the Egyptian people themselves have been greatly lightened. Justice is better administered in Egypt, the people are free from many of the cruel obligations that have pressed upon them in past times ; and, more than that, while the Suez Canal question with all its very difficult surroundings has practically been settled by the Suez Convention, we have escaped those difficulties with other European countries in respect of Egyptian policy, which at one moment threatened to be extremely serious ; and I have great hope that at an early date the conversion of the Egyptian debt will again to a great extent lighten the burden upon that people, and to some extent lighten the burden which still rests upon this country. But one of the most interesting of the events that have happened within the last month or two has brought back to some of us pretty sharply the sad consequences of a part of our mismanagement of Egyptian affairs. There will never be read a more touching story in history than the story of the desertion and death of General Gordon. Unfortunately, we are only now seeing what the evil results of the conduct of the English Government in abandoning him must be. Within the last few weeks we have been following with great interest the account of the travels of Stanley. We have read how with amazing courage, and meeting with extraordinary difficulties, he made his way and joined Emin Pasha, and succeeded in bringing Emin Pasha with him to Zanzibar, and we hope will restore him to European society and give to us all the experience and knowledge that Emin Pasha has gained. But what is it that the withdrawal of Emin Pasha means. He was

the servant, the follower, the friend of General Gordon. He was a man who for twelve years, in the interior of Africa, not working by military power or by sheer force, but by the ascendancy of a great nature endeavouring to give civilization to an uncivilised people, established himself and made the place over which he ruled like the place over which Gordon ruled in times gone by—an oasis of civilization in the great desert of Africa. The desertion of Gordon meant the destruction of Emin Pasha's work; and now he is withdrawn from the interior of Africa, where that work was carried on, the mischief of Gordon's betrayal is fully seen, because the work that Gordon has done, and that Emin Pasha has done, has been absolutely wiped out from that part of the African continent, and no one knows by how much expenditure of valuable lives we may have to try and renew the work that has been so undone.

These two questions, however, of which I have spoken have, to a certain extent, passed out of the imperative and necessary discussion of to-day, and it is curious to see—I will ask the reason for it presently—what other questions have taken their place. Suppose one, knowing the sort of questions that were under debate fifteen or twenty years ago, had speculated what the new questions would be that would come to the front at such a time as this, he might have said: Oh, the Disestablishment of the Church. He might have said: The Abolition of the House of Lords. He might have said: Local Option. These were all favourite subjects sometime ago, but they are of no use now. No political party now would venture to raise or dream of raising the cry of Disestablishment or Disendowment of the Church. The abolition of the House of Lords is a frenzied eccentricity on the part of some grotesque members of Parliament, and with regard to local option, well local option has been decently buried. Why is it that these questions have not come to the front? I believe the reason is that we are passing through a time of great industrial and commercial prosperity, and prosperity, like education, is always Conservative. If you have a time when people are suffering from bad trade, and find themselves harassed and depressed by commercial difficulties, they are very prone indeed to attribute some of the mischiefs from which they suffer to the constitutional arrangements of the Government under which they live. But when in this country, or in any country, you come upon a time of industrial and commercial prosperity, people don't want so much to abolish institutions or to attack political institutions. What they want, and rightly want, is to make the best use for the benefit of the people of the prosperity which they have. That is the reason why it is not the political questions that are coming to the front, but the social and industrial questions, and

I propose to address myself to those questions particularly in the rest of what I have to say.

I do not mean to say that the great political questions to which I have referred—such questions as affect the Church Establishment or the hereditary character of the House of Lords—have disappeared never to revive. When we get another time of bad trade and of suffering among our people some political institution will be singled out as the object of attack, and very likely you will have questions of this kind again raised and brought into prominence. And what I am anxious for is this, that during the time of industrial prosperity, while the people turn their attention rather to measures of social improvement and social reform than to interference with political institutions, those who are interested in the maintenance of those institutions should not be idle, but should make such reform and amendment in them as may commend them to the permanent support of the country. I am not afraid at all of the political attack upon the two institutions I have mentioned. But I believe that when an attack shall again be made upon the Church Establishment or upon the hereditary character of the House of Lords, it will not be made because of any objection on the part of the people to the principles which those bodies represent, but it will be made and strengthened, if made at all, by objections to practices which offend the judgment and outrage the consciences of the people. The true defenders of the House of Lords and of the Church should now be the peers themselves and the bishops and clergy of the Church. If the peers of this country avail themselves—as, fortunately for Plymouth and its neighbourhood, the peers near here do—of their great position and privileges to do public service, with the real desire to make the House of Lords conducive to the welfare of the country, there need be no fear for the permanence of the House of Lords. But if young peers take to outraging the conscience of the people by getting up prize-fights on Sunday evenings, they are striking a greater blow at the hereditary peerage of this country than can be undone by any amount of public speaking, or even by the most conspicuous example of public virtue that we may have before us. And I should like, sir, to go on to say this, that if bishops are seen to be too old or too ill to perform the duties of their position, and cling with tremulous hand to emoluments which they do not earn, and to dignities which they can no longer support; if the clergy are found neglecting the interests of their people and giving themselves over to other occupations or enjoyments, and leaving the wants of the people unattended to; or, still worse, perhaps, spending their time in quarrelling over things which they all recognise as non-essential, but about which strong

passion and strong feeling have existed ; it is in those things that the Church Establishment will, in every part of the country, be weakened, because it is no use by argument defending an institution, if there is a conscientious feeling in the mind of the people that those who belong to that institution are not discharging their duties. That is a word of most friendly suggestion on my part, because I am one who believes in the benefit to this country both of the hereditary principle of the peerage and of the Church Establishment. It is because I desire, and most earnestly desire, to secure the permanent influence among our people of those great institutions, that I say these candid words as to the way in which the members of the House of Lords and the ministers of the Church should themselves endeavour to defend the institutions to which they belong.

Well, sir, I said that we were dealing now mostly with social questions, and undoubtedly the whole country from end to end is full of the question, raising many difficulties and discussed from many sides, of the condition of the industrial population of this country. This time of prosperity, which puts for the moment out of view the strictly political controversies of the day, brings into immediate prominence the question of the condition of the industrial classes of our people. It was so fifteen years ago. There is much talk now about the Act that was passed in 1875, by which a liberty of combination for trade purposes was secured to the working men of this country, and a great many of our friends, under pressure of some difficulties in London and elsewhere, are beginning timidly to ask whether that Act was not a mistake, whether it was not too strong in the liberty which it gave of combination to the people. Sir, it was not in the least degree too strong. It gave a freedom of combination which I believe has been of benefit to the people in the past, and which I believe will be of benefit to the people in the future. And we must remember that when we are dealing with questions of this kind it is no use timidly to try to retrace a step once taken. In 1875 we had to deal with a time of prosperity. Working men claimed, and rightly claimed, that they should share in that prosperity. Their methods of trying to enforce their claims in times before 1875 had been methods which brought them into sharp conflict with the law of this country, and in 1875 freedom of combination was given to the working men. Now, we are in a condition again of prosperity. We have passed through a time of industrial and commercial trouble since 1875, and now prosperity has come to us again, and labour throughout the country is claiming its share of the prosperity, is claiming a larger proportion of the rewards which come from the carrying on of that industry. Now, sir, I think that claim is a just and fair one, and I do not believe in the

various means by which a number of political charlatans are trying to evade the real question that arises. We hear a great deal about free schools, free dinners, free libraries, about legislation that no man shall work more than eight hours in the day, about legislation that it is suggested will improve the condition of the working men of this country, and that Parliament ought to at once address itself to. The real thing that will improve the condition of the working men of this country is a general rise in wages. I am quite sure if one comes to look at the conditions of the problem, the most timid of capitalists need not be afraid of the prospect. The fact is, that capital in this country is increasing to an enormous extent. I do not entirely trust Mr. Robert Giffen's figures, but he has endeavoured to prove by elaborate statistical calculations that during the ten years that ended in 1885 the capital of this country increased by no less than 40 per cent, and that it now represents a total sum of ten thousand millions of money, or a capital value of over £300 for every individual in England. Now, I say I do not accept these calculations in full, but no one can doubt that the last twenty years have given England an enormous increase in accumulated capital; and when people talk of the relations between capital and labour, and say that in dealing with labour you must always be guided by the laws of supply and demand, and that if there is plenty of labour wages will be low, and that if there is little, wages will be high, this position is equally true, that where there is much capital looking for investment, capital must be content with a small profit, and that the larger the amount of capital that this country has invested the smaller the profit that the capitalist will get. (Hear, hear, and a VOICE: "That is good Radical talk.") (laughter). It is good sound talk, and therefore, Tory.

Now, gentlemen, we have not yet quite seen the full significance and the full result of the change that was made in the conversion of the National Debt some time ago. That was at once a result and a cause. It was a result, because it was only through having large amounts of capital seeking for investment, and unable to get a very profitable investment, that Mr. Goschen was able to do what he did. But it was also a cause. Directly the interest upon the National Debt was changed, and people could not get 3 per cent. for their money, the rate of percentage upon capital in other occupations was at once reduced. Unfortunately, many of those who are connected with the great establishments of this country do not seem to have taken this lesson to heart. They think that organised capital which finds its representation in great companies and great establishments is to have its old rate of profit. It never can get it again. There is more capital wanting investment, and the reward of capital, and

the interest upon capital, must necessarily go down. A great many people are afraid of what the action of the working men of this country will be in the trades' unions which are growing so strong among us, and which appear to be governed with so absolute an authority by those who are the leaders of the men. I do not myself believe that there is any need for alarm or for despair upon this matter. If you have a great number of men who feel themselves entitled to claim a larger reward for their labour, it is a good thing, and not a bad thing, that they should pick out the most intelligent men among them, and trust to them to argue out and carry on the conflict. Leaders of trades' unions are very often spoken of as if they were, all of them, men who had objects to serve other than the welfare of the men who are following them. Sir, I do not believe it. There have been trades' union leaders in this country who, in my belief, have not fairly and honestly led the men who trusted in them, but in the main you must trust the workmen of a great trade to pick out for themselves the intelligent man who is to represent their views. And this I know, that if they do have men they can trust at the head of their organisation the interest of those men is not to bring about a strike, but to prevent a strike. I believe there are no men in England who are more anxious to prevent strikes among the men with whom they are connected than Mr. Burt and Mr. Fenwick, who have sat, as you know, for some time in the House of Commons. I do not mention other names because they may be too closely connected with controversies with which we are dealing at the present time. But I do believe that it is a guarantee to the public, and for the interests of the people, and not a disadvantage, that the working men shall be led by those whom they recognise as the best exponents of their views, and whose own position and leadership of the working men would suffer, and perhaps be destroyed, if they were to lead those men into an unavailing and useless strike.

There is, I know, in London, and there has been in other parts of the country, great alarm as to the consequence of the strikes that are going on. So far, I think that the nett result that has been obtained is a satisfactory result. I have already said in Plymouth that I thought the result of the dock labourers' strike was a good and a satisfactory result; that it was a great public misfortune that there should be a large class of men not only ill-paid, but paid upon methods and under circumstances which made it extremely doubtful from week to week whether they would get any pay at all. And it is much better that that employment should be placed upon the footing which it has occupied since that strike took place. Now, we have had another great strike in London, which has illustrated the strength and the

weakness of the attitude of the trades' unions. We have had a great strike at the South Metropolitan Gasworks. It is hardly fair to call that a strike, for the men did not go out because they wanted higher wages, but they went out because they objected to the acceptance on the works of a particular form of agreement which would limit, as they contended, their freedom of action in the future. Now, just see what the difference was with regard to that strike as compared with the dock strike. When the dock strike took place the whole of London was in favour of the strikers, money poured in from all parts of the country to help them, and the success of that strike was due as much, at least, to the sympathy displayed by the public outside as to the action of the men themselves. Now, what has been the case with the gas strikers at the South Metropolitan Gasworks? They have not commanded the sympathy of the public in the same way, public opinion has not upheld them in the same manner, nor has public sympathy expressed itself with the same readiness in their favour. The result, so far as one can see at present, is that they seem to have failed, and they will probably find room again, in employment at the South Metropolitan Gasworks—or a great many of them will—under a modified form of the agreement which the South Metropolitan Gas Company has set up.

Now, here is an instance of two strikes, one supported by public sympathy and one in antagonism with public feeling; and public feeling has expressed itself so strongly that the results have been different. There has been a great scare in London, and I think we owe that scare chiefly to the newspapers. Two years or more ago there was a very serious disturbance in London, in connection with meetings at Trafalgar Square, but there would have been very little difficulty then if it had not been for newspaper articles and letters. During the last two or three weeks also foolish articles and letters have appeared in the London newspapers and elsewhere, and have very nearly brought upon us a very great disaster in London. I do not believe that any real disaster threatens us. I believe the men are better advised, and I, for my part, see nothing whatever in what has taken place up to to-day to interfere with the opinion I formed long ago, and hold most firmly now, that the best security for putting the industrial relations of labour and capital upon a true and sound footing is to leave to the men that complete freedom of combination with regard to their work and their labour which was given to them by the Conservative party in the year 1875.

Now, I have left myself time for but very few words more. I find I have spoken much longer than I intended. But there are one or two things about which I desire to add a word before

closing. I mentioned free education, free dinners, free libraries, and the like. Now, I confess I resent the idea that directly the industrial population of this country makes clear its desire, or shows its want for any particular thing, that one should always resort to private charity, however splendid, or to the easy resort of the rates or the taxes of the country. I am told that 43,000 children in London come hungry to their morning school, because the parents have not got the means to feed them, and then naturally and spontaneously there rises a desire to provide tables at which these little ones may feed, and private charity hurries to help them, and those who do not feel inclined to subscribe their own money loudly call out the State should pay for it. All this is very well. But that is not what the working classes want. The working man wants to feed his own children, and I believe it all comes back to the question of wages. Private charity, however splendid, and public expenditure, however lavish, will never properly replace the individual capacity of providing for the children and for the home. Lord Beaconsfield said long ago that the greatest security for the national welfare was to be found in the homes of the people, and it was from the home, as from the centre, that there went out all the private virtues and all the public spirit which made men into a great community. Let us follow that now. Do not let us be content with gifts to the people from charity or from taxation, but let us recognise a little more freely that labour is very often terribly underpaid, and that labour is quite entitled to work together to try and get that pay raised. We had the other day—I don't want to speak grudgingly or unfairly of a great act of beneficence—we had a great present of £250,000 given by Sir Edward Guinness towards the improvement of the homes of the people; and I read lately in one of our periodicals the particulars of what is called the new gospel of wealth. An American millionaire preaches the doctrine that the most desirable arrangement for the people is that there should be some exceedingly rich men among them able to give very large sums to establish public institutions. That is a very good gospel—for the millionaire—but I do not care for it, and while we must be glad that Sir Edward Guinness has given a quarter of a million of money for a useful purpose, a great many of us cannot help thinking it would be better if that quarter of a million had been in the pockets of his work-people instead.

These are the questions we have to face in the future. What form they may take at any particular time no one can tell. What sort of a proposal it may be that will come before Parliament or the country no one can exactly tell. The nonsensical proposal of an eight hours' bill may be dismissed at once as frivolous. The working men themselves have practically dis-

missed it. The thing to look for is not private charity or State endowment; but it is to get, if possible, an improvement in the condition of the people which will enable the individual to establish and keep the home that he has among us. We shall have to deal with these matters, upon principles, which, I hope, will be sound; and I trust before another period of ill-fortune shall come upon the country we shall find that the condition of the industrial classes among our people shall have substantially and satisfactorily improved. We know that if the people get the home they are getting every year more worthy of governing and enjoying it. We know our people are getting better educated, more thrifty, more sober, year by year, as the years go by. It is for us to hope that this time of public prosperity may enable the industrial classes to be lifted a little higher in the scale of comfort, and have a better capacity for keeping their homes and discharging their duties among us.

Sir, there is only a word or two more that I will utter before I sit down. I spoke at the beginning of the evening of having had ten years of public life, and of having looked forward to that period, and some of you may have thought that in that phrase there was a sort of contentment, as if I had fulfilled and completed one of the purposes of my life. I am not so content. There has been some disappointment in the work of those ten years. There are many things that I hoped at its beginning to do, and soon to do, that remain unaccomplished. It is always so —

“ Our highest hope is unfulfilled,
The promise still outruns the deed,
The tower, but not the spire we build.”

I am not content to rest. Others have often on this platform and elsewhere indulged in kindly prophecy as to my future, as to what I may be in the years that are coming. But if I had to choose now what my lot should be during the next ten years I should elect to sit a member of the House of Commons. I see no higher sphere of public duty. I know no place in which I could hope better to render public service. I desire, of course, that as long as I am allowed to go to the House of Commons I shall go with the trust and sympathy of this constituency. And starting, as we do now, on what I hope will be a happy new year, fortunately for us with peace in all the earth, we have many tasks to accomplish, many difficulties to vanquish, but I believe we shall be assured of success if it is with good will to all men that we set our hands to the task.

SPEECHES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Local Option.

MARCH 5, 1880.—(MAIDEN SPEECH.)

[The following speech was delivered in the debate upon a Resolution proposed by Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Bart., in the following terms:—"That, inasmuch as the ancient favoured object of licensing the sale of intoxicating liquors is to supply a supposed public want without detriment to the public welfare, this House is of opinion that a legal power of restraining the issue or renewal of licenses should be placed in the hands of the persons most interested and affected—namely, the inhabitants themselves, who are entitled to protection from the injurious consequences of the present system by some efficient measure of local option." Upon a division the Resolution was rejected by 248 votes, against 134.]

MR. SPEAKER, I trust the House will grant me that indulgence which is traditionally extended to new members; and I feel that I am specially in need of that indulgence from both sides, under the circumstances of the present debate, when I must appear to be guilty of some presumption in speaking immediately after one of the ornaments of the House (Mr. Bright). The right honourable gentleman has justified the bringing forward of this resolution, and I confess that to describe it as an abstract resolution is not a criticism which appears to me to be conclusive against it. This House has often accepted abstract resolutions; but I believe it has usually done so, either when the Government alone had the power of carrying the resolution into effect,

and required to be instructed to carry out the will of the House ; or when upon some great subject of public interest some member desired by an abstract resolution to convey clearly to the constituencies and the world the mind and purpose of the House. Neither of these circumstances can be found in the present case. This is a question on which the Government has no information and no means of action that are not equally open to both sides of the House ; it is a matter on which all assistance can be got from the country by the strong and vigorous organisation that is at the back of the hon. baronet. There is nothing to hinder the great organisation with which the hon. baronet is connected from making the fullest inquiry into the circumstances of the case, and suggesting the best remedy for the evils that exist. And, indeed, a Bill was brought forward and discussed in this House year after year, and after having had an ignominious defeat year after year, and having been withdrawn by its author, it now receives the emphatic censure of the right hon. member for Birmingham. But if the Permissive Bill did not express the mind and purpose of the House, still less does this resolution. Mind and purpose ! There are two minds and purposes. There is the mind and purpose of the hon. baronet the member for Carlisle, and the mind and purpose of the hon. member for Huddersfield. They are absolutely distinct, they are contrary ; for while one desires to suppress altogether as a nuisance a great trade in this country, the other desires to take securities for the better regulation and carrying on of that trade. And when the right hon. gentleman the member for Birmingham objected to the Resolution being described as a mystification, I could not help regretting that the right hon. gentleman had not delivered his speech at an earlier period of the evening, when the right hon. gentleman the member for Greenwich (Mr. Gladstone) was in the House, for nothing could more clearly have established the mystification than the way in which, with balanced reason swaying to and fro, the right hon. gentleman the member for Greenwich discussed this important subject. Nothing, I should think, would satisfy hon. gentlemen opposite more distinctly of the mystification that has arisen upon the matter than the fact that the right hon. member for Greenwich has deserted the council of the nation to-night, and has declined to record his vote either for or against the motion. Sir, I do not wish to trespass upon the kindly patience of the House by discussing in detail the terms of this Resolution, but I confess that when I find the power of the rate-payers is to be only a power "to restrain the issue or renewal" of licenses I have some difficulty in understanding what local option really means. Does it mean that the people of a particular district are to say how many or how few public-houses they will have in their district ? If so, I am

quite satisfied there would be in many districts a multiplication of the present number of public-houses. If the Resolution means that, the principle is distinct and logical. But if it is a local option that has no choice but to restrain, then it is like the Permissive Bill, that happily defunct Bill with regard to which the right hon. member for Greenwich was not quite clear whether it was permissive or prohibitory, or which was the most important part, the prohibitory or the permissive. Although this Resolution is to a certain extent mystifying, there is no doubt whatever as to the meaning of the hon. baronet the member for Carlisle. There cannot be the slightest doubt as to the purpose and intention of the Resolution, which has brought crowds to the lobbies, and crowds of members to both sides of the House, and which has exposed members to those threats of which the hon. member for Birmingham has spoken so pathetically. It is the Permissive Bill, and is meant to be the Permissive Bill. If it were a mere question of regulating the number of licenses, then the House would have been spared all the excitement and agitation there have been upon this question. The hon. baronet and those who act with him know that the number of licenses does not affect the question they have at heart. I do not yield to the hon. baronet in anxiety to promote temperance in this country. As far as I am concerned, I should like to see the promotion of temperance by legislation, if that legislation was founded upon a right principle and not likely to do greater mischief than it cured. That is the great object present to members on both sides of the House. But it has been conclusively proved that there is no relation between the number of public-houses and the amount of drunkenness. The figures given to-night by the right hon. gentleman the member for Greenwich, the statement of the hon. member for Norwich as to the town he represents, and still more, some remarkable figures stated by the hon. member for Birmingham (Mr. Chamberlain), in an article which he published in the *Nineteenth Century* for February, 1877, all establish that there is no discernible relation between the number of public-houses and the number of convictions for drunkenness. If that be so, then all this agitation finds no scope or object in the election of members to a local tribunal for regulating the number of houses. If this were the question then there ought to be some practical measure and not a mere abstract Resolution. It has been assumed, and unnecessarily assumed, that there are defects in the licensing system. But I have had some practical experience of that system; indeed, I have, on entering the House, sacrificed some part of my professional income, derived from that system, rather than be under the suspicion that I am personally interested in the question; and, speaking from an experience of

the licensing system as it exists in the great county of Surrey, I do not think an authority could be invented that would deal more fairly with licenses than the existing tribunal. They are gentlemen who, as justices of the peace, have seen the sad effects that result from intemperance; they are interested in the prosperity of the county; it is their duty to preserve its peace and order; they are absolutely free from the suspicion of improper influence, and I am not sure that the same could be said of any tribunal which had to be elected. What would be the result of local option? The conflict that is now raging about this House in regard to this matter would be transferred to each locality, and the result would be a tribunal which could exercise no discretion, and whose decisions could be absolutely predicated by counting the number of candidates which each association had returned. But it is not an amendment of the licensing system that is wanted. The real secret of all this is the Permissive Bill which is put forward frankly by the hon. baronet. The hon. baronet has instanced some landowners who have refused to have public-houses on their estates, and he wants to give the same power of prohibition to local authorities. That is the Permissive Bill, and the Permissive Bill without a compensation clause. It has been admitted by the right hon. member for Greenwich that compensation, and full compensation, must be paid to persons whose trade is taken away. And the principle has been admitted by the hon. baronet, the member for Carlisle, although, certainly if I were possessed of property of this description, I should not be very willing to trust myself to him in the matter of compensation. But if this plan is carried out, there must be a popular vote by people in a district as to whether they will close all licensed houses in that district or not, and people who make no contribution to the rates will be allowed to exercise their vote and close public-houses. That vote will pledge the district to pay compensation for a very doubtful experiment; for supposing public-houses are closed, that will not suppress or prohibit drinking. Drinking will, of course, be found in private houses, and it will certainly be found in those clubs which the working men will establish in every district in the country, and in which working men, who have paid their 5s., will have just as much right to enjoy themselves as members of the Carlton or Reform, who pay their ten guineas a year. Then these clubs will not be subjected to the restrictions that are now placed upon licensed houses. It is therefore possible that in a district where public-houses have been abolished the experiment will break down, and the whole district might consent—as in some parts of Canada has been the case—to restore them, and in that case a large amount of compensation would have been paid for an unsuccessful experiment. Another point

is that compensation will have to be paid by the people, who are at the same time protesting that they are being deprived of their personal rights by the closing of public-houses. To open a licensed house near the house of a man who does not want to go to it would be less a hardship than to shut a licensed house against the man who does want to go to it. The parallel would be complete if it were proposed to introduce a Bill under which the hon. members for Carlisle and Morpeth were compelled every day to drink a certain quantity of ardent spirits. In that case they would protest against a tyrannical law. The hon. member for Carlisle would say: "This is contrary to the habits of my life, and I believe it will be injurious to my health." Precisely the same words might be used, and used with perfect truth, by the man who used public-houses, which, under this local option resolution, might possibly be taken away. He would say: "You are doing that which I believe will be injurious to my health," and I cannot see the difference between the tyranny which would force the hon. baronet and his supporters to drink whisky and water of an evening and the tyranny which would prevent a moderate drinker from taking that which he has been in the habit of taking. I confess I think there is something a little unreal about the debate which has taken place. It seems to be assumed that there is an enormous amount of drunkenness in the country, and that it exists amongst a class of which those in this House speak as if they were people of a different country and race to themselves. I do not believe that there does exist the amount of drunkenness which has been spoken of. The right hon. gentleman the member for Birmingham said that the facts were indisputable. If he meant it was indisputable that drunkenness produces great mischief to the community I agree with the proposition; but if he meant it was indisputable that drunkenness is largely prevalent amongst the working classes of this country, I deny that proposition absolutely. I am well acquainted with a very large working class population, and I venture to say that amongst the working classes of this country 19 out of 20 men would think it as degrading in them to give way to drunkenness as would any hon. member on the opposite side of the House. But they have their opportunities of drinking and obtaining refreshments, and though they differ in character from those which are open to members of this House, they do not differ in principle. The club is the rich man's public-house; the public-house is the poor man's club; and I confess I do not see any difference between them, except this, that the rich man can, at any hour of the day and night, and any day of the week obtain what he wants at his club, whereas the poor man's club is fettered and regulated—and properly regulated—as to hours of opening and

closing on particular days of the week. I protest against this resolution in the name of the working classes of this country for a very considerable number of whom I am proud to speak in this House. It is time to protest that they are not, as a class, the drunken creatures who have been spoken of in the course of this debate, and to protest that it is a monstrous thing to interfere with that moderate use of stimulants which they enjoy in common with nineteen-twentieths of the members of this House. It is monstrous to suggest that stimulants should be taken away from them, because one in twenty of their class occasionally drinks to excess, or because the sight of an open public-house door is too severe a trial for the feeble virtues of the friends of the hon. baronet opposite. The hon. baronet has kindly referred to me personally, and has suggested that I owe my entrance to this House to the support of a particular trade—(Sir W. Lawson—hear, hear). I am glad to see that the interpretation I have put upon it is correct. Sir, during the last fortnight I have been reading with great impartiality the attempts, arithmetical and otherwise, which have been made by hon. gentlemen, and even right hon. gentlemen, on the other side of the House to explain the great misfortune of my having obtained an entry into this assembly. I am bound to say that in this matter I am quite content with the distribution of the parts; and while I am entitled to speak in this House for a large constituency—and I am sent here by the mandate of a larger proportion of that constituency than ever before voted for a single candidate—while I enjoy that position it would be cruel to deprive hon. and right hon. gentlemen of the satisfaction they may find in those explanations. With regard to the suggestion that I have found this particular trade a great assistance to me in my contest of the borough of Southwark, I answer at once that I did so find it, and I should be ashamed to speak otherwise of service which was freely and most generously rendered to me—a service to which, with that of other classes and trades, I owe my position in this House. But in avowing that, I can say that that service was not purchased by any pledge on my part, but was obtained solely by the exposition of opinions which I venture at the earliest time after my return to put before this House. I am very sorry that this question should ever have become a political question. It is not the fault of this side of the House. When honourable members opposite remember the threats, menaces, and cajolements to which they have been subjected on the part of a small, but probably influential, and certainly energetic section of their constituents, to support the hon. baronet, the member for Carlisle, I would ask whether the total abstainers only are to be allowed to subordinate every political consideration to one special question. It is hard to attack, as the seconder

of the resolution has done, the publicans, who found their interests actually threatened with confiscation, because they banded themselves together in order to avert these threatened evils. I am very sensible of the indulgence the House has given me, and thank them for their kindness. I hope they will, by a decisive majority, reject the proposition, which it has already been shown cannot be carried into practical legislation, and which I believe in principle to be hostile to personal liberty.

Parliamentary Procedure.

FEBRUARY 21, 1882.

[The following resolution was moved by Mr. Edward Clarke :—

“That it is desirable that the practice of this House should be so amended that the consideration of Bills which have passed a second reading, but have not become law, shall be resumed in the succeeding session of the same Parliament at the stage of committee.”

It was seconded and supported by Mr. H. S. Northcote, and was opposed by Mr. Beresford Hope, Mr. Sclater-Booth, Mr. Dodson, and Mr. J. Lowther. Upon a division, the motion was rejected by 126 against 61.]

SIR,—It is hardly possible to expect that, after the exciting scenes of the last hour and a half (the incident of Mr. Bradlaugh going through the form of taking an oath and the debate thereupon), the House will readily address itself to the motion I have put on the paper. I will venture to say that a great deal of what I should otherwise have to urge on the House in justification of the present motion has been rendered unnecessary, because last evening the House addressed itself to another part of the great question to which the present motion is directed. We have already had the advantage of the Prime Minister's powerful arguments bearing upon the subject—of the defects of our present rules of procedure—arguments based upon half a century's experience of the House. The question is one of so much importance to the public interests that it is, I believe, the duty of all parties, whether Liberal or Conservative, to endeavour to effect some remedy for the difficulties that beset the House at the present time. The Prime Minister has dwelt on only one of the evils that beset public business; he spoke of the manner in which the progress of legislation was being impeded. He

pointed out that many Bills of great importance, after having been carried forward several stages, are ultimately lost on account of the pressure on the time at the disposal of the House. It is a great misfortune for the country that many measures that have been fully debated and thoroughly well considered are ultimately thrown away on account of the impossibility of finding time to proceed with them. But there is another matter of almost equal importance. The mode in which the work of this House is done frequently causes measures to be passed in so hurried and haphazard a manner that Acts are left on the Statute Book which have not only been insufficiently considered, but are so badly expressed, that costly litigation is needed before their meaning is ascertained and very often that is not the meaning which their authors wished them to have. I have, sir, heard it said that the House of Commons ought not to do much in the way of legislation. It is sometimes cynically remarked that the less the number of Bills that are passed the better it will be for the country, and it has been suggested that no change is advisable that would lead to more legislation. But in the present system of elaborate social relations there must be change, and all change involves and requires legislation. It is my firm belief that many a measure which, while in progress, produces Radical agitation, when it once becomes law constitutes an element of Conservative strength, through the feeling of relief that the particular questions dealt with by it have at last been settled. Mischiefs exist that have to be removed. There are very few men in the House of Commons who have a thorough acquaintance with, say, a particular trade or profession, or with a particular portion of society, who, in objecting to further legislation, do not make a reservation in favour of some one measure affecting the subject with which they are themselves familiar. Sir, no one can deny the existence of a widely spread and well founded belief that Parliament is unable to do its work. Look at the present state of the Bankruptcy Laws. I do not know any Act that was so much wanted as a new Bankruptcy Act. All persons conversant with the Bankruptcy Laws are at one as to the necessity for an amendment of the law, yet year by year a minister of the Crown comes forward and introduces a Bankruptcy Bill, the necessity for which has been declared in Her Majesty's gracious speech, and then when the end of the session comes, he gives notice that the Bill will not be further proceeded with; he puts it in his despatch box, and preserves it carefully for the next session; when the same farce is repeated. I will give another instance. Last session the hon. baronet the member for the University of London (Sir John Lubbock), brought in a Bill which was intended to consolidate the law on Bills of Exchange. It was a

thoroughly commercial question, and a question that had been fully considered by the various chambers of commerce throughout the country. I read the Bill myself, and found it was drawn in almost the exact words of a judgment of one of the superior courts of law. But what took place with regard to that Bill? The hon. baronet moved the second reading, and the second reading was allowed on the understanding that the Bill should not be carried further, the hon. baronet being congratulated on its having advanced so far. So the House went through the solemn farce of reading the Bill a second time, without any intention of passing it, and knowing that the same steps would have to be gone all over again the following session. All this is calculated to wear out the patience of the public. The Conveyancing Bill of Lord Cairns, which was passed last session, was a very important measure. It contained over seventy clauses; it came down to the House towards the end of the session, and there was, I may say, a conspiracy of silence on the part of members in order to make it possible that the Bill should pass. I was entreated not to read the Bill, because, if any discussion should arise, a single night's debate would make it impossible for it to get through the House that session. The measure only got through by the sacrifice of certain clauses comprising somewhat debatable matter, and which I think were introduced last night in a separate Bill in "another place." However, that Bill passed, and I do not believe that twenty members of the House ever read it before it became law. It was, I believe, a good Bill; but it is not satisfactory that even a good Bill should pass without the knowledge and discussion and approval of the representatives sent here by the constituencies to discuss and decide these matters. Again, there was the Registration of Voters Bill of 1878, which in its practical result has been of immense importance. It has largely increased a great many of the constituencies of the country. My own constituency, which was last year 5,600 in number, is now, since last year's revision, 13,600, showing a greater increase than that made by the Reform Act of 1867. What, sir, happened with regard to the passing of that Bill? In 1878 the Bill had been before a committee, and it came for report before this House. Sections 1 to 21 were gone through without any opposition or comment. Sir William Charley, then a member of the House, objected that the Bill had only just been printed, and asked that there might be some delay before its discussion was continued. He interposed exactly at the right point, for sections 22 and 23 were those which have given so much difficulty to the courts, and have, under the interpretation now given to them, so materially affected the constituencies. The then member for Cambridge (Mr. Martin), on the one side, and the hon. baronet, the member

for Chelsea (Sir Charles W. Dilke), on the other, assured Sir William Charley that no considerable change was made by the provisions of the Bill. Their appeal was listened to; the whole of the sections were gone through that evening; the third reading was taken on the following night; the Bill went up to the House of Lords, where, as it dealt with the registration of voters for members of the House of Commons, no great amount of attention was paid to it; and the result has been an entirely unexpected extension of the franchise, which, whatever its merits, ought not to have been made in that way, but, if made at all, should have been made deliberately by Parliament, with a full consciousness of what it was doing. But, sir, there is another, and a very serious mischief in our present system, and that is the tremendous strain that is thrown upon the members of the House themselves. A great many of them are actively engaged in commercial and professional life, and to them, of course, the strain of the long hours the House is kept sitting, night after night, is enormous. But that is almost insignificant compared with the mischief of the burden upon ministers of the crown. Is it not a monstrous thing that Her Majesty's ministers, who are expected to perform the responsible duties of their offices during the day, should be expected to attend this House from four o'clock in the afternoon until three or four in the following morning? The marvel is that anyone should be endowed with vitality and energy sufficient to enable him to continue for years in this splendid slavery. One of the great advantages which would be likely to follow from the adoption by the House of the resolution I am offering to its acceptance is that there would be no necessity for the House to continue sitting after 12 or half-past 12 at night, which would be a reasonable time for the limit of our debates. Moreover, sir, not only do our present late hours heavily tax the endurance of ministers and private members, but they cause business to be done badly, and in a manner which is by no means creditable to a legislative assembly. At 2 or 3 in the morning there is no pretence of adequate discussion of the questions that come before the House; and, worse than all, our debates are almost wholly unreported. Practically, the proceedings of the House cannot now be reported after one in the morning, and within the last few days, as we have seen, it was only owing to the enterprise of one great newspaper (the *Times*) that we were able to have a full report a day later of the speech delivered by the leader of the Opposition, and the reply of the noble Marquis the Secretary of State for India at the close of the debate on the Address. Now, sir, my proposal would deal practically with all the mischiefs that I have indicated. The real difficulty of the House is that we are all, whether ministers or private members,

competing just to get past a certain point. If that point is passed, the Bill in which we are interested becomes law. If we come short of that point, the whole of our labour has to begin over again. There is one indefensible but very common species of obstruction to which the Prime Minister did not advert last evening—namely, the persistent discussion of matters which nobody cares about, in order to prevent other matters which it is desired to impede from coming on. Valuable time is deliberately and purposely wasted in order to keep up a debate until a quarter to six on a Wednesday, when no decision can be come to; and on many a dreary evening speakers go on repeating themselves again and again, until the magic hour of half-past twelve arrives, when nothing fresh can be entered upon. We should put an end to that kind of obstruction by doing away with the temptation to practise it. If we once provided that the House should be free to deal with a Bill so obstructed when Parliament met again in February, this kind of obstruction would practically be destroyed. For conduct such as I have described excuse may in some circumstances be found, but, sir, I see no defence for the action of those who deliberately waste the time of the House for the purpose of preventing Parliament passing any measure at all. And I venture to urge upon the House that these are valid reasons for adopting a substantial reform. I would also call the attention of the House to the fact that every Parliament proceeds by jerks; that it is cut up into separate sessions, as though when we have finished our work in July we had done with the whole matter. So long as the machinery of legislation goes on in that spasmodic, jerky way, a very great waste of time is inevitable. I will take, by way of example, the Bankruptcy Bill, to the repeated promise and postponement of which I have before referred. There is the Bankruptcy Bill which the President of the Board of Trade introduced last session, and which we expected this session. There is no security whatever that his present Bill will be in the form which it took last year, and I will point out to the House this most inconvenient result. Some two or three months ago, the Associated Chambers of Commerce held their meeting, and one of the subjects they discussed was the Bankruptcy Bill. If it had been known that we would have the same Bill before us as in the previous year, the Associated Chambers of Commerce would, no doubt, have discussed the measure and proposed amendments which would have been of great service to us in framing that enactment. But the President of the Board of Trade said that he knew the Bill going to be introduced would differ in some respects from the last one, and thus the whole of what I might call the consultative power of the country was thrown away. That was the case with the Asso-

ciated Chambers of Commerce. But let us take another instance—the Rivers Conservancy Bill. That is a measure of very great interest to the Chambers of Agriculture, and county members of this House going back in the autumn to their places in the country would have the advantage of hearing the opinion of their neighbours on the subject; but, although I believe that the proposed Bill is to be the same as that formerly introduced, we have no assurance of that, and without such assurance we never can obtain that advantage of local discussion and popular opinion. I think, sir, it would be a very good thing if any Bill dealing with a subject of general importance were brought in in one session and passed in the next, for then hon. members would have an opportunity of conferring with their constituents, and in the following session they would be enabled to bring their ripened opinion—their completed knowledge—to the discussion of the measure. The proposal that Bills should not require to be introduced afresh each session is not a new one, or one for which I am originally responsible. In 1848, and again in 1861, this question came before the House and before a Committee of the House of Commons, as well as before the House of Lords. And here I would venture for a moment to digress in order to say that, in my belief, it is of the greatest moment to the country that the position of the House of Lords should be properly appreciated as an integral part of the legislative body. I do not understand the jealousy which exists between the two Houses, or why there should be jealousy at all. It is perfectly well known that the House of Lords contains men who have served their apprenticeship in the House of Commons; but the House of Lords is discouraged, systematically discouraged, by the action of the House of Commons towards it. Take the course pursued by the Government with respect to the Rivers Conservancy Bill, upon which the other House bestowed a great deal of trouble. This complaint has been made and repeated over and over again, and the other House is deterred from beginning legislation, because it is probable that in the helter-skelter of July their labours will be sacrificed; while, on the other hand, in July, Bills are sent up to them by dozens when it is impossible for them to give them proper attention. Well, in 1848, a Bill was introduced in terms somewhat similar to my own resolutions, enabling Bills discussed in one session to be proceeded with in the next by the other House, subject always to this restriction—that when a measure had passed both Chambers it should be sent back to that from which it originated, so that if opinion respecting it had changed in the meantime that Chamber might have an opportunity of recording that change. That Bill received the support of the late Lord Derby; on the 5th of July, 1848, it was

read a second time in the House of Commons, and Lord John Russell, who was then the leader of the Liberal Party in this House, suggested that the Bill should only be a temporary one, because in case it did not prove effectual for the purpose desired, it would otherwise be impossible to rescind the Rule without the assent of both Houses of Parliament. The Committee reported as late as the 11th of August that they did not advise the acceptance of that Bill ; but they put their advice on this ground—that it would introduce a material change, and, as the session was drawing to a close, they had not time to consider the effect of material changes in the procedure of the House. Again, in 1869, a proposal on the subject was made in “another place.” On that occasion the Marquis of Salisbury made a speech to an extract from which I invite the attention of the House.

“Owing,” said he, “to a rule of the Constitution, the origin of which nobody can discover, and of which it is impossible to say more than that we find it here, if when August comes your labours have not advanced beyond a certain point, those labours must be abandoned as far as legislation is concerned. All that you have done goes for nothing. If a Bill has been considered in great detail by a Select Committee, the Committee must sit and go through the details again ; if it had to face a powerful opposition, all that opposition must be faced again. All the works, all the debates, all the enormous labour which attends the passing of any change, however small, in the laws which govern us must be gone through again, in order to reach the goal which you had nearly reached when the prorogation arrived. Now is there in the nature of things any reason for this practice ? Does it commend itself to any man’s common sense ? Do we act in this manner in any other department of life ? Supposing you made it a rule to give up writing letters at a certain hour, would you throw all unfinished ones into the fire, or begin next morning at the point where you left off ? Is there anybody of men, in any kind of business, that adopt what I must call this senseless practice, that whatever you have not finished by a certain time you must begin again next year ? I have never heard any reason for such a rule. There is nothing but the bare inert weight of unmeaning custom to justify a principle which wastes so much of the labour and utility of Parliament.”

Sir, the plan which I put before the House is already in operation in France. It is subject to certain conditions there, and perhaps limitations may also be required here, though I confess I do not perceive any necessity for them. My plan is that a Parliament should be treated in all its sessions as one Parliament ; and not as a series of separate Parliaments, or as if the sessions were water-tight compartments, designed to prevent Bills getting from one to the other.

I think, sir, that the Bills which this House has to deal with may be divided into three classes, first, there are the political Bills; secondly, the Departmental Bills; and, thirdly, private Members' Bills. Political Bills, like the Irish Church Bill, for example, are usually introduced by a Government with a strong majority at their back, and, consequently, such measures can be forced through Parliament in the course of a single session. My proposal would therefore not affect in the least degree measures with which the existence of the Government of the day was bound up. Departmental Bills are for the most part independent of Party considerations, and they are, in point of fact, practically prepared for the most part by the permanent officials of the various departments. These bills would be assisted most substantially by the adoption of my proposal. At present we are reduced to the necessity of putting on the Statute Book a series of fragmentary Acts of Parliament. We are obliged to do so, because if the Minister were to consolidate the laws on any subject into a new Statute he would have a Bill so considerable in its dimensions and giving rise to so much debate that there would be very little chance of squeezing it through in a single session. As an instance of this, I may advert to the criminal code, although that cannot properly be styled a departmental measure. The late Attorney General (Sir John Holker) took a great interest in it; three of the best lawyers in England were for a long time engaged in getting it into shape; but it is almost hopeless to expect that any measure of that importance and magnitude can be passed through the House of Commons unless there is a power of continuing legislation from session to session. With regard to the Bills of private members, no doubt many of them are trivial, and ought never to be entertained by the House. I hope, therefore, that if my proposal were adopted the House would revert to the old practice of considering very carefully whether leave should be given to a private member to introduce a Bill. There would be no hardship in requiring a member to explain the provisions of his Bill in the first instance. One objection urged against my plan is that it would cause a great number of Bills to be introduced, and that there would be a great deal too much legislation. My answer to that objection is that I do not think there need be any fear of that result. The English people are not likely to submit to too much legislation. We had a remarkable proof of this at the election, which changed for a time the position of political parties, in the year 1874. It was the impatience of legislation which sapped, undermined, and eventually destroyed, the power of a Government which came into office with so great a majority in 1868. I do not think it has ever been suggested that there was any real reason for the withdrawal of the confidence of the country from that Govern-

ment except the rapidity with which it had proceeded with legislation. The legislation required by the country is really Conservative in its tendency; but, as matters now stand, people are irritated at the defective machinery which delays legislation on questions that ought to have been dealt with long ago. I will not particularize any Bills which have been so delayed, because it would divert the discussion from the general issue. But of this I am quite certain, that there are at least half a dozen Bills which have been accepted by the House in principle over and over again, and which some day must become law, but the delay in the passing of which is causing great irritation to the country, and is a source of weakness to the Conservative party. It would be desirable, as well in the interest of political parties as in that of the country, that those Bills should be passed, and come into operation with the least possible delay. It so happens that I am submitting my proposal immediately after the discussion of other resolutions with regard to procedure. I must not, of course, revert to arguments which have been used in that discussion but I believe that if my resolution were adopted it would make quite needless the more stringent measures which are now proposed. Private Bill legislation is included within the terms of this motion, but I am aware that there are difficulties with regard to that. My experience of Private Bill legislation is that it is extremely well done, and that the tribunals which deal with Private Bills are quite competent and decide with great fairness and promptitude. But instances are constantly occurring in which promoters are obliged to submit to clauses, and make compromises, enormously expensive, and which seriously interfere with the benefit of the works proposed, in consequence of the knowledge that a few days' delay would destroy the benefit of all the work done during the session. However, sir, for the moment I wish to rest this proposition on the larger issue, that it would be of benefit to public legislation. One great merit it has is its simplicity. If it should become necessary to fight the question of Parliamentary Procedure before the constituencies, there is no question upon which I would more gladly challenge their judgment than upon the merits of the proposal I now make. It possesses the great advantage of neither disturbing nor interfering with the traditions of the House. It would not require that the Government, or any other authority, should be entrusted with any extreme or exceptional powers; and, above all, it has that merit which cannot justly be attributed to the other proposals which have been submitted to the House, that it is pre-eminently simple and intelligible. I beg, sir, now to move the resolution which stands in my name.

Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister.

MAY 6, 1884.

[On the 6th of May, 1884, the following resolution was moved in the House of Commons by Mr. Broadhurst, and seconded by Mr. Heneage :—"That in view of the painful and unnecessary hardships inflicted upon large numbers of people in this country by the law prohibiting marriage with a deceased wife's sister, it is the opinion of this House that a measure of relief is urgently called for."

To this an amendment was moved by Colonel Makins, and seconded by Colonel Milne Holme, in the following terms : "That an humble address be presented to Her Majesty praying Her Majesty to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the laws relating to marriages within the prohibited degrees."

The following speech was delivered in support of the resolution, which was carried upon a division by a majority of 111, the numbers being, for the resolution 238, against 127.]

SIR, I suppose it is not expected that we should discuss in detail the amendment which my hon. and gallant friend has proposed, It is an evasive and dilatory amendment asking the House to decline to pass an opinion on the main subject of discussion, and an amendment which I think he would be the very last man to put forward as a substantive motion for its acceptance. I do not think there is anyone in the House who would be more reluctant than he to throw open the whole question of the prohibited degrees in the marriage law. I turn at once from that large subject to the single question contained in the resolution. With the indulgence of the House I will give a few reasons why I intend to vote in support of that resolution. It has been practically conceded that so far as the maintenance of this restriction finds its authority in an appeal to Scriptural rules, there is no ground for the restriction. ("No, no.") It is of no use to contradict me by "No, no." It was practically conceded by the mover of the amendment, and it is conceded in terms by the hon. and gallant member for Berwick. I think there is no more remarkable example of the slavery into which the intellect is sometimes brought by the will and the sentiment than the fact that there are people to be found in this country, honest and intelligent people, who contend that these marriages are forbidden by Holy Scripture. There is no difficulty with regard to the argument. The prohibition is generally supposed to be found

in a single verse of Leviticus. As to that verse there is no material discrepancy or dispute respecting translation, and there is no ambiguity in its phrases. If it be interpreted by those rules which all men, with one accord, would apply to the construction of any other authority in any other verse, it clearly gives, not a prohibition, but a permission of these marriages. A marriage is not to be contracted during the lifetime of the sister, and it follows that such a marriage is permissible when that life is at an end. But, sir, my hon. friends around me rather rely upon the interpretation of another text to be found in the Old Testament, and to be found twice in the New Testament, a text in metaphorical language, which speaks of the twain being one flesh. It is scarcely possible, sir, with due reverence and propriety, to discuss and point out the consequences of such a construction as is put upon that text, and I would content myself with this answer, which I confess appears to me overwhelming, that to say that text was meant to convey a prohibition of a marriage of this kind is to be guilty of the grossest disrespect and irreverence to the writer of the sacred book; it is to contend that a prohibition was intended to be conveyed to the world, but that the inspired writer so ill set down the command which it was his duty to convey that for two thousand years the people to whom the command was supposed to be addressed unanimously misunderstood it and disobeyed it. It is impossible to find any other texts than these.

But, sir, we are told that we find further prohibition in the social conditions of life, and in the mischief that would follow from permission of these marriages. I think it is forgotten that the existence of this prohibition is a cause of very serious social mischief. When my hon. and gallant friend behind me quotes a return as speaking of sixteen hundred marriages of this class in a certain time amongst wealthy persons, while there were only forty amongst the poorer classes of the community, I want to know what is the explanation of that? Is it supposed that in the class where the reasons for such a union are far stronger than they are in the classes to which hon. members of this House belong, is it to be supposed that where circumstances press most strongly in support of such marriages the alliances are not made? The explanation is, I fear, a different one. The wealthy man can take the second wife of his choice to be married to her abroad, and, as one knows in the circle of one's own acquaintance, he brings her back to undiminished respect. I do not believe there is a member of this House who does not know, within the circle of his own acquaintance, at least two or three instances in which such marriages have taken place. The rich man can do that, but the poor man cannot. I believe the result is too often, not that the union does not take place,

but that the union takes place unhallowed by any ceremony of marriage whatever.

Now, it is said there will be serious social mischiefs if this alteration is made. Sir, I confess it seems to me that my hon. friends who are putting this argument forward are giving a most strange and grotesque representation of the social and domestic life of the English people. The ideal state of things seems to be this : that the wife throughout the marriage life is anxious and suspicious, watching any woman who comes into the circle of the home life with a fear, not that the affection of the husband may presently go out to her and result in unfaithfulness, but that at some future time, when the wife herself has gone, he may contract with her a second marriage ; that the wife is so keenly jealous and suspicious, and has so little confidence in her husband's love, that she cannot reconcile herself to the presence of her own sister in the home, but for the consolation that she finds in the fact that in 1835, almost by an accident, this prohibition was put upon the Statute Book. I say, sir, almost by an accident, for in Committee of the House in 1835 the only division which took place on the subject was one in which the majority was against the prohibition of these marriages ; but those who were then pressing forward the Bill pleaded that the clause might be allowed to pass in the form which had been arranged, and suggested that an amending Bill permitting these marriages should be brought in the following year.

Sir, it seems to me that the view which has been taken involves an entire misapprehension of the conditions of domestic life among us. We should be in pitiful case indeed if that life of suspicion and jealousy were the life of the English home.

“ In love, if love be love, if love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers.
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.”

I do not believe there is this constant haunting suspicion on the wife's part that at some future day, when she is dead, the husband will marry another. There is a time when feeling becomes deeper. There comes a time to many women when they know their sentence, when they know that they are going from the husband they love and the children they have taken care of, and when there comes an interval between the season of active joyous interest in life and the time when the final parting is made. What is the feeling of a woman at that time? I do not believe it is jealousy of the sister who may take her place. Women are not so selfish as men are. A woman would not do the cruel and wicked acts that men are every day committing when they, by the terms of their wills, endeavour to

prevent the wife from ever being happy again in married life. I believe to the woman it would be a consolation, and not an affliction or sorrow, to think the children she has loved would find their most appropriate protector and the husband find his best companion in one who should bring back to husband and to children the memories of her who had gone.

Well, sir, on this question I should like to say a word on an allusion which was made to the question of the Canons of the Church, and on the observations made by my hon. and gallant friend as to the retrospective effect it is proposed to give to the Bill. Assuming it is intended by Parliament to pass this Bill, it will be on this only ground, that the prohibition ought never to have existed. If Parliament found the prohibition should never have existed, and ought to be removed, it would be a monstrous thing to leave the stain of illegitimacy upon hundreds and thousands of persons with regard to whose parents we should ourselves have to admit that their marriage was not forbidden by the law of God. It is said it is forbidden by the Canons of the Church, and no doubt one of the Canons Ecclesiastical does contain a prohibition in a very peculiar form. It declares that these marriages are forbidden by the word of God, and declares that, as I believe, without the smallest foundation. The Canons are orders issued by authority of the Crown, with the concurrence and advice of the Convocations of Canterbury and York, and they are not binding by law upon the laity of England at all. They are constantly and habitually disregarded by the bishops and clergy themselves. The 99th Canon, which is referred to, comes in the middle of a number of others which are simply concerned with the procedure of the Ecclesiastical Courts; and the only reason why these Canons have been allowed to exist to this day, and to remain in what I suppose I must call the rule of the Church of England, is that the clergy have habitually disobeyed the Royal Order which was made when these Canons were promulgated, namely, that every minister is to read them once a year at the afternoon service, one half of them on one day and the other half on the next. If, sir, the clergy obeyed that rule, I undertake to say these Canons would not remain in existence twelve months.

There is one other point on which I ask the House to allow me to say a word, and it touches a part of the question which seems to me of most serious importance. I have been reminded, sitting here and seeing the Prime Minister in his place, of a very remarkable letter he wrote in the year 1863 to the late Bishop of Winchester, in which he spoke at some length to that illustrious prelate of the position the Church of England ought to take with reference to matters which affect Nonconformists in this country. I have always thought the right hon. gentle-

man gave counsel so wise that that letter, if it stood alone, would justify the confidence habitually placed in him by large bodies of Churchmen. Sir, I am very anxious now with regard to the relations of this Motion to the character and position of the Church of England. I am a Churchman, a Churchman bound to that Church by ties of allegiance a great deal deeper and a great deal stronger than those which attach me to my political party. The Church is the greatest institution we have in this country. It is higher in authority than parliaments or thrones, and it will survive them all. I think with great anxiety of the future of the Church, and its relations to the State. I believe that disestablishment would be a national disaster, and disendowment a national crime. But there is one event possible, which would be far worse for the nation and for the Church than disestablishment, however complete, and disendowment, however rapacious; and that is for the Church to be degraded into a department of the State, to be subject to the control of Parliament, and to be under the supervision of an Erastian Home Secretary. I confess I think that is the direction in which those who are professing to lead Churchmen on this matter are, without knowing it, steadily going, when they assert a claim to make the law of the Church the law of the land, and when they claim that those who do not belong to the Church shall yield obedience to that law simply because it is the Church's law, and because in theory every man in the nation is a member of the Church. They forget that the natural and necessary consequence and corollary of that claim on their part is that the people over whose unwilling consciences they are attempting to place this yoke are entitled to turn round, and will turn round, and say: "You insist that we in theory are members of the Church, and because you insist upon that, and that we are bound by this law, we in our Parliament will regulate the rules, the ritual, and the doctrine of the Church itself:" and in attempting to stretch the authority of its own rules over the people at large the Church will have succeeded in reducing itself to a position which I think will be disastrous to both the nation and the Church.

Now, sir, I have not made these observations without a feeling of deep responsibility. There has been no personal interest or private influence pressing me in the direction in which I am going. On the other hand, I have been warned by those whom I count among my best friends, and who are perfectly capable, if they choose, of giving effect to the warning, that the action I am about to take will be perilous to my future political career. (Ministerial cries of "No.") Well, I say that this is what I have been warned, and hon. gentleman on that side of the House may not be as well able to judge of the force of that

warning as hon. gentlemen on this—but a matter of that kind is one with which I have nothing whatever to do. Whatever may happen with regard to that, I have striven to study the question, and to come to a clear and conscientious result upon it. I have come to a definite determination. When I give my vote in support of the Motion, I shall do so believing that I shall do nothing to derogate from the authority of the Divine law among the people of this country, that I shall assist in the social purity and domestic happiness of the people, and still more, that I shall be rendering true and loyal service to that Church which I desire most faithfully to serve, and whose works and whose influence are in my belief the most precious of our national possessions.

Egypt (Vote of Censure).

FEBRUARY 27, 1885.

[On February 23, 1885, Sir Stafford Northcote moved the following resolution: "That an humble address be presented to the Queen, humbly representing to Her Majesty that the course pursued by Her Majesty's Government in respect of the affairs of Egypt and the Soudan, has involved a great sacrifice of valuable lives and a heavy expenditure without any beneficial result and has rendered it imperatively necessary in the interests of the British Empire and of the Egyptian people that Her Majesty's Government should distinctly recognize and take decided measures to fulfil the special responsibilities now incumbent upon them to assure a good and stable Government to Egypt and to those parts of the Soudan which are necessary to its security."

To this resolution Mr. John Morley, M. P., for Newcastle, moved the following amendment: "That this House while refraining from expressing an opinion on the policy pursued by Her Majesty's Government in respect of the affairs of Egypt and the Soudan regrets the decision of Her Majesty's Government to employ the forces of the Crown for the overthrow of the power of the Mahdi."

The following speech was delivered on the fourth and last night of the Debate which resulted in the rejection of the motion by 302-288, majority for the Government 14.]

SIR,—It is making a great claim on the indulgence of the House to address it on a night of this kind and at this hour, but I assure the House I will not interpose longer than ten minutes between

it and the member for Bradford. I do not know if any serious answer ought to be given to the speech which has been delivered to the House by that very impracticable politician, the member for Northampton (Mr. Labouchere). It was supposed to be a speech in defence of Her Majesty's Government, but it has been a characteristic of this debate that the only difference between us on this side and those who sit below the gangway on the other side is this, whereas we attack Her Majesty's Government, those who sit below the gangway on that side reserve all their attacks for the Prime Minister himself. We have heard speech after speech in which the Prime Minister has been denounced as a man who might, if he chose, have saved the country from a policy of wickedness and disgrace, and has not used his power to save the people from the wickedness and shame of this policy. The fact that there are four amendments in the name of hon. gentlemen below the gangway shews that there is not one of the Liberal party sitting there who can formulate a motion with which his neighbours will agree. With all the comment that is made upon the resolution of the leader of the Opposition, there is this about the resolution. It is accurate, it is intelligible, and it will serve its purpose if it be passed. Her Majesty's Government could not continue to sit upon those benches and still enjoy the respect of the only body of people who now respect them—I mean of course themselves. As to the amendment of the member for Newcastle it is a sham amendment. He knows perfectly well the sort of people among whom he is sitting. He knows they have not the courage for a real rebellion, so he proposes an amendment in which he says: "We will refrain from expressing an opinion on the conduct of Her Majesty's Government." Why does he refrain from expressing that opinion if he can express an opinion in favour of the Government? Sir, if he thought there were fifty members of this House who would support him in that opinion he would be delighted to recognize those public and private ties of which he spoke so feelingly on Monday last. It may be that he does not himself approve of the conduct of the Government; but if he does not approve it, why does he not say so? Because he knows the sort of party by whom he is surrounded. The fact is, this is a sham amendment. It is said, and I believe with some truth, that the intention of some members of the Radical section is to vote for this amendment, which they are quite sure will be defeated, and then to vote for the Government against the resolution of the right hon. baronet—one vote for their consciences, which they take care shall have no effect, and one for their party; so that they will secure the continuance in power of a Government which, so far as we know, is committed to a course of wanton and objectless bloodshed—and having by their votes

made it possible that this course should be pursued, they can go down to their country constituents proudly claiming to be the friends of peace and freedom, and appeal for their justification to the division list which records their votes on this futile amendment. I said that if they take this course they will leave the Government to pursue a course of wanton bloodshed. I mean these words in the fullest extent. I believe that the course which has been indicated in the speech of the right hon. gentleman, the Home Secretary, would be a most disastrous, and, I think, a wicked course. If we are going to Khartoum, there to do the work of civilization and put some government there which will utilize the magnificent position and opportunities of that city, and establish an outwork of western civilization—if you can do that without too great a sacrifice and expenditure, then do it. But to go to Khartoum to fight the Mahdi if he be there, and if he be not there, then to abandon Khartoum to some imitation king that you may set up, whether in the person of an Egyptian Prince or anyone else, is a wild and wicked enterprise, and one to which I believe the country will never consent. Sir, this debate was relieved the night before last by a most interesting account by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Sir G. Trevelyan) of his studies in military science. He told us about the retreat of Sir John Moore, about the retreat of the Duke of Wellington on the lines of Torres Vedras, and he told us nobody should leave any position he was in until he had a perfectly safe place to fall back upon. Sir, he has taught a lesson to his predecessor in one of the offices he has occupied. The moral is that when a man is Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland he should not leave that post unless he has the Chancellorship of the Duchy to fall back upon. Sir, it is not here possible that we can discuss the question of military strategy. The conclusive condemnation of the Government on this matter is this : They have declared that they are going to Khartoum for military objects, and they have not produced a syllable of evidence that either Lord Wolseley, or anyone else of capacity to judge military matters, has shown that that movement is necessary ; and not having done that, I say that the movement upon Khartoum, unless they pledge themselves to utilize it for the establishment of a government, is a movement nothing can justify. We have been told by the Prime Minister that great difficulties have been in the way of the Government. Well, sir, to the feeble knees every hill is steep, and these difficulties which have existed have been made by the Government. They have never had a policy with regard to Egypt since the death of M. Gambetta. They put in a joint note by advice of M. Gambetta, which was a fatal step—and the next step was that

which led them into this mischief—a step which Lord Granville declared in his own name, and that of the Prime Minister, when the fleets were going to Alexandria, he believed to be a mistake. On the 15th of May, 1881, Lord Granville wrote a despatch to our representatives abroad announcing that the fleets were going to Alexandria; and a curious departure was adopted from the ordinary practice in diplomatic documents. He mentioned the name of the Prime Minister. He said he and Mr. Gladstone alike thought it would have been desirable to have had the concert of the other powers, but as France had gone so far with us in other matters this was not pressed. From that time to this it has been a course abounding in difficulties, which if Ministers had gone forward with a clear eye and resolute step, I believe they would have trodden down; but they have been stumbling forward on the path, always with their eyes turned back to see if a majority of the House of Commons was being led in a web behind them, following and supporting them.

Sir, as I listened to the right hon. gentleman on Monday evening I wondered if his memory reminded him that it was the anniversary of a notable event in his life. On the 23rd of February, 1855, the right hon. gentleman announced in the House of Commons the reason for which he had left the Cabinet of which he had been a member. It was a Cabinet that is now remembered by Englishmen with neither gratitude nor respect. In the year 1854 the weakness of the Government led us into a wholly unnecessary war, and the mismanagement of the Government almost destroyed an English army. And now I think there is no division of opinion among Englishmen as to the merits of that Government. All Englishmen reproach it for the feebleness and incompetence which involved us in such heavy sacrifices. Sir, I believe that thirty years hence all Englishmen, without distinction of party, will look back with reproach and indignation upon the Cabinet of 1854, which used a brilliant soldier that his name might cover and shield an imperilled Ministry, and directly he had served that party purpose refused his appeals, neglected his counsels, and left him abandoned to perish. Sir, there is one man and one man alone upon whom the reproach of both these Ministries will fall. The Prime Minister shared the weakness of 1854. To him I believe are in the main attributable the disasters which we now deplore. But there is one thing more, and it is the darkest line that can be added to this picture. The Prime Minister has more than once, here in this House, endeavoured to palliate the conduct of the Ministry by suggesting that the officer who at their request accepted the post of honourable danger might, if he had so pleased, have found an opportunity to run away. Sir, in the debate of the 23rd of February 1855, the right hon. gentle-

man used these words: "The fault of our Constitution now, if it be a fault, is this, that public servants are, perhaps, not called to account with sufficient strictness." I agree with those words. Loss of office is too small a punishment for the betrayal or the neglect of public duty, and even that penalty may be evaded. The trained fidelity of party, personal combinations, of which we have heard something in a whisper to-night, the subtle instruments of Parliamentary influence, in the use of which the present Government is experienced and skilled, may to-night prevent the expression by this House of the unhesitating condemnation which their fellow-countrymen have pronounced. But though they may cling to the office of which they are proved unworthy, they will not be unpunished. Personal humiliation, the discredit of their party, the indignation, and scorn of the people, will be a sure and severe, but still an inadequate punishment.

Home Rule Bill (Second Reading).

MAY 13, 1886.

[The debate upon the second reading of Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill commenced on May 10, 1886, and continued for twelve nights. Eventually the motion for the rejection of the Bill, made by the Marquis of Hartington, was carried on June 7, by 341 to 311. The following speech was made on the second night of the debate.]

SIR,—The House has listened with much interest to the speech of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Campbell Bannerman). No one expected from him that he should make a formal answer to the elaborate argument of my right hon. friend the member for Bury (Sir H. James). That argument dealt with questions of Constitutional law, which undoubtedly require very careful examination and consideration. The speech of the right hon. gentleman, the Secretary of State for War, has been looked forward to because of the peculiar character of the interests which at the present moment are centred in this Bill. The members of the Government know perfectly well that of that great Liberal party they are supposed to lead they have scarcely a bare majority who will support the enactment of the Bill as it was laid before the House of Commons. And they know perfectly well that, outside the House, the educated and intelligent opinion of the country has, by the Prime Minister's own confession,

expressed a distinct and definite judgment against the proposals which he has made to Parliament—a judgment so distinct and so definite that the right hon. gentleman has made a sort of appeal from the educated judgment of the country to those masses who may the more easily be moved by passion and by prejudice because they have less knowledge of the past and less power to judge of the probabilities of the future, and who, as they are more easily moved by passion and by prejudice, are so much the more easily manipulated by the machinists of a Parliamentary party. But the real interest in the speech to which we have just listened arose from the expectation that some sop might be offered to the defaulters of the Liberal party, that some expedient might be found by which the support of all sections of the party might be brought together in aid of the Ministry, and undoubtedly hints had been thrown out that the right hon. gentleman was going to make some statement which would reconcile the Prime Minister with some of his defaulting followers. What did it come to? It came to an ingenuous confession of an open mind, a mind so open that it had nothing in it at all. It had no constructive capacity, it received no help or instruction from anyone else, and was unable to contribute to the discussion of the Bill—one single important fact. The only thing Parliament was told was that the Government had come to a definite conclusion to propose that whenever it is suggested that increased taxation should be placed upon Ireland her representatives should be invited into this House in order to resist it. One listened with interest to the delivery of that speech to notice whether there was any reproduction of the suggestions made by the Prime Minister on Monday about a Joint Commission, and I suppose they have finally disappeared, because the right hon. gentleman has said that the Government is not prepared to adopt any proposal which it is not itself in a condition to put into definite shape. He has put into shape one proposal, but with regard to the others, he says that if anyone will be good enough to put them into definite shape for the Government, before the time of the committee stage, then the open mind will be perfectly ready to consider them. Well, perhaps those suggestions about the Joint Commission have become a historic curiosity. Certainly they were curious. To establish a Joint Commission to decide whether Irishmen were to be invited to the House to take part in certain debates was surely one of the oddest suggestions that ever occurred to a minister. Who was to nominate the commission? I presume the Prime Minister would have considerable voice in the selection. The result would be that if the ministry found itself in difficulties, and in want of 103 votes, the Commission would be called together to invite the Irish members over to its assistance, and the committee

would become a piece of machinery by which a falling minister might attempt to save himself. The right hon. gentleman says it has been the custom of those who have discussed this matter to deal with details, and not with the main principle of the measure, and he tells us the main principle of the measure is that a legislative body shall be established in Ireland upon which the Irish executive shall rest. I think that is a reasonable definition of the proposal which I believe the country has examined, and considered, and decisively rejected. The principle of this Bill is to be found in its first clause, which is to the effect that on and after an appointed day the Legislature of Ireland shall consist of Her Majesty the Queen and an Irish legislative body. That, sir, is the proposal of the Bill, and I hope and believe it will be rejected by a decisive majority in this House. We have heard from the right hon. gentleman, the Prime Minister, some observations in support of the principle. He began by a very curious confession, namely, that this Bill was proposed because the Government could not defeat the National League. Because the Government of the Queen cannot put down the National League, or hesitates to put down the crime that has followed the action of that body, the National League must be accepted as having put down the Government of the Queen, and must be installed in Dublin under the title of a Legislative Council. The right hon. gentleman said the immediate necessity and the cause of the Bill was to satisfy the national sentiment of Ireland. Sir, this Bill would not do it. Nothing that is consistent with the interest and the honour and the independence of this country can satisfy the national sentiment. But, in the next place, surely to talk of satisfying a national sentiment as an imperative rule for legislation, is to mistake the object and the purpose of legislation altogether. We have to deal with the good government of Ireland, and the security and good government of all portions of that people, and all sections of that community. It may be, and I think it is, a fact that the indulgence and satisfaction of that national sentiment would lead, not to good government, but bad government of the most important parts of that country; and if we find that the national sentiment could not be satisfied by this Bill, and that the enacting of the measure would lead almost of necessity to disorder and disunion instead of good government, surely the plea of national sentiment is the least substantial claim the measure could have upon the House. It would be, in fact, a great experiment, which in this form would be made for the first time. The right hon. gentleman, when he addressed the House at the opening of the debate, spoke of Ireland as having had a Parliament before Grattan's time. Previous to 1782 Ireland never had a body that deserved the name of Parliament at all, It

was an assembly which was a mere creature of the executive Government of this country. It had no power to originate Bills. If it passed what it called measures it had to send them to England, where they were handed over to the English Attorney-General for him to examine and advise the Crown as to whether it should allow them to be treated as part of the laws of Ireland or not ; but undoubtedly there was a Parliament in Ireland after 1782, and if the right hon. gentleman wanted to satisfy national sentiment he would try to give to Ireland something like that Parliament—a Parliament equal in authority and in the scope of its work to the Parliament of 1782. But this Parliament, as defined and limited by the Bill before the House, would be altogether unlike the Parliament of Grattan, and I will prove this to the House in a few minutes by statements of Mr. Grattan himself. Sir, the Parliament of Grattan was a dismal and disastrous failure. It was a surrender to Ireland, as Grattan himself boasted, because, at the time, the Irish Volunteers were armed, and the English Government was afraid to face them. It existed for a few years ; it checked the material prosperity of Ireland. During that Parliament not only was the material prosperity of Ireland checked, but the relations between the two countries became of so anxious, so delicate, and so dangerous a character, that it was by the concurrence of all the statesmen of this country that the step was afterwards taken which resulted in the Union between the two countries and the abolition of the Irish Parliament. It has been said over and over again that the abolition of that Parliament was obtained by deplorable and disgraceful means. Well, there is another side to that question, as was pointed out by Sir George Cornwall Lewis, who said that what was done in the way of buying seats in the Irish Parliament made that Parliament more, and not less, the popular assembly. The seats that were bought, with money voted in open Parliament for the purpose, were the seats of the borough-mongers of Ireland ; and the purchase of those seats made the Irish Parliament at the time it accepted the Union more—and not less—representative of the people than before the purchase was effected. In the next place there was nothing underground about the transaction, but the bargain was made in Parliament in the open day, and there was this absolute justification—so plain that if the operation had to take place over again it would be the duty of the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues to do it in the same way—that there was only one alternative, and one which would have been far worse, and that was the reconquest of Ireland by force. From the time of the union of the two countries Ireland has prospered. She has gone on steadily of late years in the course of advancing prosperity, and on what reasonable ground can she now ask to have her Parliament

restored to her? Is it because there is any doubt of Parliament—anything that an Irish Legislature could do which would be for the benefit of Ireland which this Parliament is unwilling to do? Is there one member of that body which calls itself the Nationalist party, who will get up and state what there is desirable for the advantage of the people of Ireland, which he has no hope of getting from this Parliament? They know perfectly well they cannot mention one such legislative proposal in this House. They know perfectly well that if any one spokesman from among them were to get up and state to the House some definite proposal to which legislative form could be given, and which he could show would be beneficial to the people of Ireland, there would not only be willingness, but eager competition amongst all English parties in this House to have an opportunity of testifying to its goodwill towards Ireland. Let the Irish party state for what purpose they desire a Parliament in Dublin, and what it is they want to create that Parliament for, and I venture to say that if their demand has anything of sound and abiding principle in it, dictated by justice—and whether in the English Parliament or in the Irish Parliament those are the limitations within which useful legislation must travel—let them only mention a measure having these characteristics, and there will be a cordial acceptance of that measure and a desire to give it prompt effect.

Sir, the legislature shadowed in the Government Bill is not the Parliament which has been asked for by the Irish people or the Irish leaders, and it would differ from Grattan's Parliament in some very important particulars. Mr. Grattan, speaking in the Parliament which his genius had done so much to win for his countrymen, said: "What is your claim of right? That you are the only body competent to make law for this realm in any case whatsoever." That was Grattan's claim. How does it compare with the miserable stunted sort of Parliament created by this Bill; limited in its functions, and from whose operations and whose judgment the most important matters of legislative activity are entirely excluded; a Parliament which is to be kept in check at every turn by the English Privy Council, if it presumes to travel beyond the limits of the Statute. Here, again, I will quote Grattan's words: "Thus have you sealed the treaty with Great Britain. On the one side the restoration of the final judicature, the extinction of the legislative claim, of her Privy Council, of her Perpetual Mutiny Bill, the repeal of the Act of Legislative Supremacy; on your side satisfaction; and thus are the two nations compacted for ever in freedom and peace." There is not one of these items, of which Mr. Grattan spoke, which would be given to the Irish people by this Bill. Take the restoration of the final judicature. There is a special

clause which provides that nothing is to interfere with the judicial supremacy of the House of Lords. Then, there is the extinction of the authority of the Privy Council. The Bill expressly provides that the Irish Parliament is to be subject to the check of the Privy Council. It is true, they may get rid of their judges, but these judges then become members of the Privy Council, whose duty it will be to decide whether Irish measures are within the scope of the legislative powers of the Irish Parliament. Further, the Perpetual Mutiny Bill is not conceded, because the Army and Navy are to be independent altogether of the Irish Parliament—(Home Rule cheers and “Hear, hear” from Mr. Gladstone). I am glad, sir, to hear so much cheerful satisfaction with my exposition of the differences between Grattan’s Parliament and that which is to be given by the Bill, and I do not wonder that the Prime Minister makes vocal his delight at the way in which that satisfaction has been expressed. But if the question is put whether this concession is likely to be a final measure or not, I doubt whether we shall find quite so pleasant a harmony. Are the Irish people going to accept something much smaller than Grattan’s Parliament? We have heard much about passing an Act of Indemnity. By all means. But not an Act of Oblivion. Let us deal kindly, let us deal generously, with those who may have spoken strongly, or those who have acted violently, in past times; but if we are going to embark on a great political experiment, it is absolutely essential we should see what they have said, at whose request we are going to make it, and how far they are likely to be satisfied.

I wish to call the attention of the House to what has been said on this point by the leader of the Irish party. The hon. member for Cork (Mr. Parnell) has spoken several times upon the question of the limits of the concessions he was willing or entitled to make to the English people.

Speaking at Castlebar so lately as November 3 of last year, he said, “Speaking for myself, and I believe for the Irish people, and for all my colleagues, I have to declare that we will never accept, either expressly or impliedly, anything but the full and complete right to arrange our own affairs and make our land a nation; to secure for her, free from outside control, the right to direct her own course amongst the peoples of the world.” I will read a few words more. Speaking at Cork on the 21st of January 1885, the hon. member for Cork said, “We cannot ask for less than the restitution of Grattan’s Parliament, with its important privileges and far-reaching constitution.” Sir, I have just shown that every one of the most important privileges given to the Irish Parliament by the Act of 1782 would be denied to the Irish people by the Bill now before us. Again, sir, speaking

at Clonmel on the 9th of January 1885 the hon. member for Cork said : " We claim for Ireland and for the masses of the people the restitution of her Parliament, her independent Parliament, of which she was cheated and deprived towards the close of the last century." There are two or three other words I propose to read, not from the member for Cork, but from one of the youngest members of the National party (Mr. J. H. McCarthy) at Newry. " We will," he said, " have no contemptible National Council, no small local boards, such as Mr. Chamberlain suggested, to govern us. We will have Grattan's Parliament, and we will have more than Grattan's Parliament. We will be as free as a State in the great American Union is free, to make our own laws for our own people in our own way." (Irish cheers.) Those expressions are received with cheers from below the gangway, and the representatives of the Nationalist party, just re-inforced by their deputy-leader, accept them as the statements of what they desired. Do they abide by those declarations now? If they do, then they fling to the winds the statement of the Prime Minister that this is to be the final measure. It is one of two things : either they are attempting now by very mild pacificatory language to induce the House of Commons to grant something which hereafter will be used for purposes, now concealed, which it would be dangerous to the Bill to avow, or they did not mean all those fine things they have told the people of Ireland about the restoration of Grattan's Parliament. I think better of them than to suppose they are going to run away from these declarations. I think they look forward to try and carry them into effect ; but I am sure that if they tried to back out of these declarations there will be a power behind them which would make short work of them, either as members of this Parliament or of an Irish Parliament. They will not be allowed to betray the hopes they have raised, and to falsify the promises they have made. There was an interesting little incident at the beginning of Grattan's Parliament which it will not be useless to recall to the recollection of the House. The first thing that Parliament did was to vote a sum of £50,000 to Henry Grattan, and that proceeding has remained on record since, and has been a great encouragement to pure-minded patriots. Within three months of that vote, Mr. Flood was denouncing Mr. Grattan in the Irish House of Commons as a mendicant patriot who had sold his country for prompt payment ; and Irishmen would know pretty well how to deal with those who betrayed the interests of the Irish people now, and accepted at the hands of the Prime Minister a measure which they had declared would never satisfy their desire. I think the Irish people would be quite right. They would be worthy of contempt if they were to sit quiet, and take the Bill which is proposed, and ask for no

more. To call into existence a legislative body which is to have the opportunity of passing measures which would only come into force by the approval of the Crown—given under the advice of the English Prime Minister; to have no authority over the great national forces of the army and navy; to have no part in foreign affairs, or in treaties of commerce; to find itself simply a limited assembly in Dublin, with only the precious privilege of appointing a few ornamental personages who would furnish forth the appearance of a legislative assembly—the Irish people are far too high spirited to sit content under such a state of things as that, and the claim they will make upon this country, either to give them real independence, or to let them come back in full fellowship to the privileges and rights of a portion of the United Kingdom, will, I think, be irresistible. It has, sir, been said in the course of this debate that it is unadvisable to put down the National League, because it is better to have to do with a public body acting in the light of day than to have to do with secret societies. I, for one, do not think so. A secret society is not nearly so formidable as one which, in its career of intimidation, adds to the authority which it naturally gains from the unstinted publicity of its proceedings the fact that the Legislature does not interfere with its work. I believe that the police authorities would know how to deal with a secret society, but it is essential that those authorities should be allowed to act. Sir, if this Irish Parliament were established, it would clearly be only a starting-place for further agitation and further claims.

It has been said that the position of Parliament in regard to the question of Home Rule was largely and irrevocably altered by the course pursued by the Conservative Government last year in allowing the Crimes Act to lapse. I think that a much more elaborate explanation of that course has been given, and a much larger inference is drawn from it, than the facts really require or justify.

The real fact is, that at that time and in that Parliament, it had become an absolute impossibility for either a Liberal Government or a Conservative Government to renew that Act. The impossibility had been brought about by two members of this House. One was the Prime Minister (Mr. Gladstone) and the other the present Chief Secretary for Ireland (Mr. J. Morley). The Prime Minister had from time to time postponed announcing what parts of the Act he proposed to continue. He told us nothing except a few words about the most equitable clauses of the Act being renewed, but refused to say anything definite. Then came an evening when the Prime Minister said distinctly that he proposed to introduce a bill to renew some of the clauses, and within an hour after that announcement the

present Chief Secretary rose below the gangway and read out an amendment, which he had prepared in the interval, to the effect that the then condition of Ireland did not justify any such measure.

The resolute resistance to the proposal by the right hon. gentleman made it absolutely impossible to any Government to re-enact the Crimes Act at that time. How far the consequences have been serious only those who have been intimately acquainted with the affairs of the Irish Government are able to judge. But those transactions pledge neither party at the present time, and bind none of us to any particular course of action. The Conservative party is perfectly free to deal as it thinks right with the state of things now existing in Ireland, unfettered by any memories of what happened six months ago. It was stated over and over again by the right hon. gentleman who spoke last that the mere proposal of this Bill has had very serious consequences. With the most candid accuracy he described it as having been the most startling event which has happened in the political memory of anybody in this House. That was a strong description, but it was perfectly true. We know from the revelations that have been made that this was the Prime Minister's own Bill.

Mr. GLADSTONE: You know nothing of the kind.

Mr. EDWARD CLARKE: Sir, although he spoke under restrictions, severely enforced, a late Minister (Mr. J. Chamberlain) has been able to tell the House what occurred. He told us that until the 13th of March the Cabinet had no idea of what sort of bill was going to be laid before them, and he himself declared that he understood, when he joined the Cabinet, that the inquiry which was to take place into Irish affairs was to be an inquiry conducted by the Cabinet, and it was this disappointment at finding that that inquiry was not to be conducted by the Cabinet, but was to be conducted by the right hon. gentleman himself, without, so far as he knew, the assistance of his colleagues, that struck him with surprise, and he immediately tendered his resignation.

I quite agree that the introduction of the Bill has been a great event. The rejection of the Bill will be a most useful event. And it will not easily be forgotten. Where the Prime Minister has failed no future leader of the Liberal party is likely to make a similar proposal. We know perfectly well that from the Tory party no such proposal will come. I do not believe there is one gentleman sitting on the front Opposition bench of the House who would ever commit himself to such a proposal; but I know this, that if one were to do so he would shatter his party in exactly the same way as the proposal of the right hon. gentleman has cloven and shattered the Liberal party. We have the great satisfaction of knowing that, this Bill once defeated on the second reading, it is not in the

least likely that any leader of political opinion in this country will embark on the dangerous enterprise of trying to conciliate—I would almost add to dupe—the representatives of the Nationalist party in this House. The gain will, indeed, be a great one, if Parliament asserts itself, and distinctly and definitely refuses to embark on such a course as that proposed. Then Parliament will address itself to another task. That task, sir, may be slow and may be painful; it may involve, as the noble lord (Hartington) has said, the rise and fall of several Ministers; and may weaken those party ties which, I believe, have done very much in their operation to preserve the purity of public life in this country, and to provide a number of men capable of serving Her Majesty in offices of State; but at least it will be a plain and honourable task. We have no right to shatter the Empire. We have no right to call upon the people of Ulster to come under an authority which was no part of our Constitution as they have known and prized it. It is our bounden duty, by all means that may be devised by the experience and wisdom of statesmen, to go forward in patient faith and resolute determination, to sacrifice ease and convenience to secure the fulfilment of good government for the whole of an United Kingdom. If this course be consistently pursued we cannot fail of ultimate success.

Parliamentary Privilege.

MAY 3 AND 4, 1887.

[On the 3rd of May, Sir Charles Lewis (North Antrim) as a matter of privilege, and without notice, made complaint of certain passages in the *Times* newspaper of the previous day and, the paper being handed in and such passages read by the Clerk at the Table, moved “That the publication in the *Times* newspaper of the 2nd of May of the article headed ‘Parnellism and Crime,’ constitutes a breach of the privileges of this House.”

After some conversation, Mr. W. H. Smith, on behalf of the Government, moved that the debate be adjourned. Upon this motion the following speech was made. The motion was eventually carried by 213 to 174, and the debate was adjourned until the following day, Wednesday, at 12 o'clock.]

THE SOLICITOR GENERAL.—Mr. Speaker,—Of course it is with great diffidence that I venture to address the House on a matter of this kind after the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Gladstone), who

has had so long an experience of the conduct and business of the House, but I do, notwithstanding the right hon. gentleman's speech, ask the House to consider whether he has not himself stated ample reasons for having an adjournment, in order that the question, the gravity of which he pointed out, may receive some further consideration. There is not the smallest desire on this bench, or on this side of the House, to refuse hon. gentlemen below the gangway opposite the fullest opportunity of meeting in this House the damaging accusations which have been made against them. I do not think there is anyone on this side of the House who has not listened with sympathy to some of the expressions which have been used by members below the gangway on that side of the House. The motion did not proceed from the Government, nor was it brought before the House by any supporter of theirs in concert with the Government. The question now is whether the House shall at once proceed to say that it is a breach of privilege, or whether the discussion shall take place on Thursday next. If this had been a technical or an unimportant question the Government would have been glad to get rid of it, instead of resuming it on another night. But it is a question of the utmost possible seriousness. My right hon. friend the member for the Bodmin division of Cornwall (Mr. Courtney), has pointed out that although it is usual for the House to deal with these matters promptly, yet in this case the House is called upon to deal with it when hon. members have not an accurate knowledge of the subject under debate. The motion for adjournment was made upon an understanding that it was the desire of the hon. member for East Mayo. That has since turned out to be erroneous; but is that fact a justification for refusing to adjourn? The House is dealing with an important question of law, and cannot be governed either by the desire of the hon. member or by the desire of the hon. bart. the member for North Antrim (Sir C. Lewis). There is one matter which has never been referred to in the course of this discussion. The statement in the *Times* which has been read and upon which this motion is founded, purports to be an answer to something which was stated in the House by the hon. member for East Mayo. In the House of Commons the hon. member said that a statement which had appeared in the *Times* was a false statement. The *Times* repeats the statement, and retorts the charge of falsehood. This is suggested to be a breach of the privileges of this House. The right hon. gentleman said he thought this was a question to be dealt with at once. I think, however, there is very grave doubt indeed whether this is a breach of the privileges of the House, and it is most important that those who are called upon to assist the judgment of the House in deciding so grave a question as this, should have time to consider, and to prepare themselves to discuss, this very important

matter. The assertion of power on the part of the House is limited as compared with what it was formerly, and it is a most serious thing for the House to take upon itself to declare that whenever a member denies the truth of a statement in a newspaper, if that paper reasserts its statement any member may bring that before the House as a matter which affects its privileges. There is another reason which the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Courtney) has given to the House for not dealing hastily with the matter. It has been pointed out that, according to the ordinary course of proceedings in this matter, the printer of the *Times* would be brought to the bar of the House, not to enter into the question whether his statement was true or not—because the House would have already decided that whether it was true or not, the making of that statement was a breach of privilege—but he would be brought to the bar to receive sentence for the offence which the House had already adjudged him to have committed. The hon. member for Northampton spoke of the case when a member of the late Government was brought to the bar in consequence of a letter or pamphlet he had written with regard to the naval administration. I remember the circumstances of that case well, though I witnessed the scene from another part of the House from that in which I am now. No justification was made on that occasion. The hon. gentleman—now the member for Cardiff—stood at the bar and apologized humbly to the House for his offence, and then withdrew in order that the House might pronounce its judgment. But, that being the case, the right hon. gentleman has made another suggestion as to further action of the House in this matter. He has suggested that a Select Committee should be appointed to inquire into the matter. That suggestion makes the matter still more serious and still more deserving of deliberation.

Mr. GLADSTONE.—That would be a later stage. I simply read from Sir Erskine May's book.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—I know it is a later stage. I can read Sir Erskine May's book as well as the right hon. gentleman. I had the page before me as he read the passage. His suggestion is in answer to the statement of my hon. and learned friend the Attorney General, who pointed out that the appearance of the printer of the *Times* at the bar of the House would be an appearance to receive sentence and not to contest the facts in question. In answer to that the right hon. gentleman says "You can appoint a committee." A committee of the House of Commons to consider this matter would be as inadequate a tribunal in its powers, in its results and action, and in the conduct of its proceedings, as could possibly be appointed to examine a charge of this gravity; and it would, in my opinion, be a serious error in judgment on the part of the House to look forward to any

such discussion of a question with which other tribunals are far more competent to deal than the House of Commons. I wish to point out that those considerations with which the right hon. gentleman dealt show the great gravity of the matter with which the House is dealing now, and I therefore submit make it only reasonable that an adjournment should take place for a day or two, in order that we may examine that question which must at some time be discussed fully—namely, the question whether in fact there has been a breach of the privileges of the House.

[Upon the resumption of the debate Sir Edward Clarke in the following speech moved an amendment: "That this House declines to treat the publication of the article headed 'Parnellism and Crime,' in the *Times* of the 2nd of May as a breach of the privileges of the House."

To this amendment Mr. Gladstone moved as a further amendment: "That this House is of opinion that an inquiry should be made by a Select Committee into the charge of wilful falsehood in a speech delivered in this House, brought in an article published in the *Times* newspaper of the 2nd of May against John Dillon, Esquire, member for East Mayo." Mr. Gladstone's amendment was defeated by 317-233, majority 84, and the Solicitor General's motion was accepted without further division.]

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—I rise, Mr. Speaker, to move an amendment to the motion now before the House, namely, "That this House declines to treat the publication of the article headed 'Parnellism and Crime,' in the *Times* of the 2nd of May, as a breach of the privileges of this House." I shall endeavour, sir, to support that amendment by some reasons which I hope, whether they commend themselves to the acceptance of right hon. and hon. gentlemen opposite or not, will at all events be acknowledged to deserve the consideration of the House. I am sure it will be understood that I speak upon this matter with a feeling of very deep personal responsibility. My hon. and learned friend the Attorney General and I, holding the positions we now occupy, are responsible for our advice on matters of law, including the rules and practice of Parliament, to that Government as members of which we have the honour to serve, and we are bound when a question of this kind arises to address ourselves to it with reference strictly to legal considerations, and I now say for myself, and I am sure I can say so for my hon. and learned friend, that in the opinion which we intimated early last evening to the leader of the House, and which after very careful consideration we definitely gave to the Government some

hours later, we have been utterly careless of party or political results.

Now, sir, there is only one observation I should like to make on the speech of the right hon. gentleman (Sir W. Harcourt) who has just addressed us. I shall deal presently with the question of the character of the prosecution which it has been suggested might be instituted, and with the difficulties of the management and conduct of such a prosecution. But at the present moment I wish to refer to a sentence in which the right hon. gentleman said that this proposal resembled the "transaction" of yesterday, and that the country and the House would understand the nature of the proceeding. I quite agree in hoping that the House and the country will thoroughly understand it, but I do not think the right hon. gentleman ought to have used the word "transaction," as if for the purpose of pointing to some contract or arrangement; when that was absolutely repudiated by the right hon. gentleman the leader of the House, in terms which were accepted at once by right hon. gentlemen opposite. I think he might have refrained from using a word which carries with it the imputation which that word implies.

Sir W. HARCOURT.—I did not use the word in that sense.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—I am glad it was not intended to use the word "transaction" in the sense I have referred to, for everyone well knows that no arrangement was made. As to the country and the House understanding the real meaning of the motion of yesterday, I think we most of us understood it, and regretted that such a motion should have been made. There was not a syllable of applause or cheering from these benches when the hon. baronet made his motion. So far as I know it was made by him without the consent of any other member on this side of the House, and he will excuse me if I say frankly that I deeply regretted at the time that such a motion had been made, because I did not think that it was in accordance with Parliamentary precedent, nor with the fair exercise of the rights of a member in matters of this kind, that a motion should be made which in form was an attack on the writer in the *Times*, but which in substance appeared to be an attack in the House of Commons, not on the *Times*, but on the hon. member for East Mayo. I thought that upon that ground the motion was objectionable, and upon that ground I regretted it; but with regard to the political or party aspect of the matter, we have entirely neglected what the results of it may be. I am quite sensible of the weight of the observations which have been presented to the House by hon. members below the gangway opposite, and I am quite aware of the use they will make, and are entitled to make, of this incident; but that has nothing whatever to do with the responsibility of the law officers of the

Crown when yesterday evening they were asked to express an opinion on this motion. Yesterday, speaking for the Government, I expressed grave doubt as to whether what had taken place was, according to the custom and practice of the House a breach of privilege of the House, upon which we ought to exercise the exceptional power of bringing to the bar of the House, and sending to imprisonment, those who offend against our privileges. I am glad that the adjournment has given me an opportunity of going through, as far as time permitted, every reference and precedent I could find with regard to this matter. I have carefully searched the precedents, and if the right hon. gentleman the member for Derby is right in saying that there is a long and constant and unbroken line of precedents in favour of the appointment of a Committee to consider the truth of matters of this kind—

Sir W. HARCOURT.—I said recent practice was in favour of that course.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—I thought that the right hon. gentleman had given a larger scope to his words ; but if there is a recent practice to that effect by which we ought to be bound, and from which our present action may be denounced as an unwarrantable departure, all I can say is that I have been extremely unfortunate in finding no record of that practice. My belief that no such practice exists is strengthened by the fact that the right hon. gentleman after making that statement to the House did not condescend to support it in any way by precedents. But before I address myself to the serious question here involved, I would ask the indulgence of the House while I refer to the last debate that took place on the question of privilege. It was in the month of February, 1880, when Sir Charles Russell (not the Sir Charles Russell whom we now all know and respect so well), who used to sit for Westminster, complained that in a placard published and signed by Mr. Plimsoll he had been denounced as guilty of inhuman and degrading conduct in blocking a bill in this House. The motion that this placard was a breach of privilege was made on the Tuesday evening, February 17, and with the full concurrence of the members of the Liberal party, who were then led by the noble marquis, the member for Rossendale (the Marquis of Hartington), the debate was adjourned from Tuesday to Friday in order that the House might have time to consider the matter. (Sir W. Harcourt expressed disagreement.) The right hon. gentleman had better not disagree with me, because I have the book before me, and I am going to quote some of his own words. On Friday, the 20th, a most valuable speech was made by the right hon. gentleman the member for Derby, who had in the interval prepared himself to discuss the question, and he

alluded to a complaint made by the hon. member for West Norfolk that the consideration of the question before the House had been delayed by the adjournment. The right hon. gentleman defended that delay, and quoted a precedent in favour of it. He said:

“He would next call the attention of the House to another case of very great importance which occurred in 1844, when a charge of a most odious character was brought by Mr. Ferrand against Sir James Graham—a charge which was unquestionably and undeniably false—that of using his influence with other members of the House to obtain from an election committee a false and fraudulent report. It was impossible to make an accusation more odious or unfounded, and he should like to observe, in reply to the hon. member for West Norfolk, who complained that the consideration of the question before the House had been delayed, that that was precisely the course which had been advocated by Sir Robert Peel in 1844. Sir Robert Peel then said that the case was one which ought not to be disposed of in a hurry, ridiculous as the charge was, and unanimous though the feeling of the House might be that it was without foundation. A decision, Sir Robert Peel—who was in favour of the public discussion of the conduct of members of Parliament, and even of Cabinet Ministers—contended, could not be arrived at on the question without establishing an important precedent, and therefore it was desirable, before coming to any such decision, to look back at the records which were within reach of the House. Considering the great Constitutional question involved, Sir Robert Peel went on to urge the necessity of perfectly free discussion and the risk that a feeling of indignation might prompt the House to adopt some sudden course which it might afterwards regret. Hon. members in their individual capacity ought to have the means of seeing what had in similar circumstances been done in past times and be afforded an opportunity of deliberating as to what ought to be done in the present. That, he thought, was a sufficient answer to what had fallen from the hon. member for West Norfolk.”

That opportunity for deliberation is precisely what we asked for, and what the House granted yesterday afternoon, and I have tried to do what the right hon. gentleman did with great success and great effect upon the House in 1880—namely, to look back to the precedents with which the House had to deal. On February 17 Sir Charles Russell had moved that the words constituted a breach of privileges of the House. On February 20 (Friday), Mr. Plimsoll apologized for the use of the words, and thereupon Sir Stafford Northcote, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed a resolution which declared the words to be a breach of the privileges of the House. The resolution pro-

ceeded to say that, considering the accusation had been withdrawn, the House did not think it necessary to proceed further in the matter. But the right hon. gentleman (Sir W. Harcourt) in his speech resisted the declaration that it was a breach of the privileges of the House; and he quoted three precedents in support of the protest he made against the House passing a resolution which declared that proceeding to be a breach of privilege. The right hon. gentleman referred to the question in 1844, when Mr. Ferrand made the charge against Sir James Graham. He said:

“But did the House of Commons, he would ask, in 1844 decide that a breach of privilege had been committed? No, although the charge brought against Sir James Graham had neither been proved nor withdrawn, Sir Robert Peel would not allow so dangerous a precedent to be set; but he made a motion to the effect that Sir James Graham and the other members named having denied in their places the truth of the allegations made against them, and Mr. Ferrand having declined to substantiate his charges, the House was of opinion that those charges were wholly unfounded and calumnious, and did not affect in the slightest degree the honour or the characters of the members in question. There was in all that not a word about privilege, for Sir Robert Peel was alive to the danger of passing such a resolution as that which the Chancellor of the Exchequer now proposed. He would not permit the House of Commons to set so mischievous an example, and put such a restraint on the public discussion of the conduct of members of Parliament. There was also another case—the Abercromby case—to which he might refer, which occurred in 1824, when Lord Eldon denounced in the Court of Chancery a member of the House as having been guilty of falsehood. The matter was brought before the House as a question of privilege, and was debated at great length. Some very eminent persons were in favour of pronouncing the language of Lord Eldon a breach of privilege, but Mr. Canning and Mr. Peel were opposed to that course, and a majority of the House supported the view which they took.”

Now I ask the House to notice this, and I beg that I may be understood as adopting the language of the right hon. gentleman and incorporating it in my speech.

“Those were the three great precedents on the subject; and it was clear from them that in recent times the House of Commons had not shown itself willing to invoke the shield of privilege for the purpose of defending its members from public criticism. If he were to quote ancient precedents, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had very wisely declined to entertain, a rule would no doubt be found to the effect that there could be no

criticism upon any act of a member of Parliament in reference to his Parliamentary conduct ; and if they chose to act upon the principle of privilege as laid down in Parliamentary precedent, to speak of a man's vote, even to publish his speech or his vote, or to criticize his vote, was a breach of privilege. That was the only principle, if a rigorous course was to be adopted, on which the House could stand. All the rest was a question of degree. It was a question of adjectives, and as regarded the adjectives of the hon. member for Derby"—there seems to have been a former member for Derby who used adjectives—"they were withdrawn, and they had no place in the resolution of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. What they were asked to affirm was that criticizing and condemning the conduct of an hon. member of that House was a breach of privilege. That was how he understood the resolution."

That was how the House understood the resolution, and how the noble marquis the member for Rossendale understood it, and all the Liberal members who were then in the House went into the Lobby to the number of 116. I think it was against that resolution. Though I do not follow at length this most valuable speech, which I respectfully commend to the perusal and attention of the House, I should like to refer to one more passage.

Mr. ILLINGWORTH.—Will the hon. and learned gentleman give the numbers on the other side ?

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—Certainly ; I did not conceive that it was relevant. One hundred and eighty-two voted in favour of it. I do not misapprehend the question as to whether this binds us in the case or not ; I only refer to it in order to get the valuable authority on some of the propositions in this matter of the right hon. gentleman the member for Derby. He went on to say :

"The question was whether the House was to declare that printed placards—nothing was said about the character of the language of them, which might be the most respectable—reflecting upon the conduct of an hon. member of that House, constituted a breach of the privileges of Parliament. It seemed to him that, in passing such a resolution as that before them, the House would be striking a fatal blow at liberty of speech. If, for instance, an hon. member were to make a speech denouncing another hon. member for obstruction, was the member so denounced to come forward and to appeal, under the protection of the Chancellor's resolution, to the protection of the House ? It was too late in the day for the House of Commons to employ the engine of privilege to smother public criticism upon the conduct of hon. members. He did not say the Chancellor of the Exchequer had such an intention ; but that would be the

effect of his resolution. If a member of the House used language offensive to another member, there were other ways of obtaining a withdrawal of, and redress for, the language. If he refused to withdraw that language, as in the case of Mr. Ferrand, then the member whose conduct was impugned might be vindicated by the unanimous opinion of the members of the House. But when they drew this old and rusty sword of privilege for purposes of this character, then he believed the House would be embarking in a course which would land it in immense embarrassment, and in which he saw no end of difficulty. There would be nothing to prevent its enforcing the new doctrine of privilege against every newspaper and every election placard."

I am sure the House will not think that I require to make an apology for having quoted from this speech. But now let me turn to the question that the law officers advising the Government had to consider, and upon which, having advised the Government, they are prepared very respectfully to advise the House. The fact is that what the right hon. gentleman called the doctrine of privilege is a doctrine that the House of Commons is a court, that is like other courts of justice, and that it has the same power of compelling regularity, order, and decency in its proceedings as other courts of justice have, and that it has power of taking up and dealing with accusations made against hon. members of this House when they are acting in the service of the House. Let hon. members suppose that a chairman of a Committee of this House—a committee to which the House had delegated some of its judicial functions—was charged with corruption in his office, there is no doubt whatever that that would be a contempt of the House, and would be a breach of privilege. If an attack be made on the Speaker of the House, who represents the highest authority here, the House has not been in the habit of leaving it to the Speaker by personal action to vindicate himself from the charge, but the House has sometimes punished by its own action the offence which has been committed, and has sometimes, and I think more often, referred the subject to the tribunals, where alone a question of this kind can properly be dealt with. I am sure that hon. gentlemen will make allowance for the shortness of time for considering the long range of precedents referred to; but since the last sitting of the House I have done my best, and I have not found, and I do not believe anyone can find, an instance of the House of Commons exercising this power of punishment by committal to prison of a person for an accusation made by him against a member of the House of Commons which was not directly an accusation of corruption or of misfeasance in a vote given, or which was not an attempt to coerce and intimidate him in his action in the House of Commons. I ask the House, I

ask the hon. member for East Mayo himself, to look frankly at the case which we have here. There is no accusation here against an hon. member of the House for corruption, or that any act he has done, as a representative in this House, is in any way tainted; but what happened was this. Accusations of personal misconduct—if I may be allowed to use that general phrase—not in the House, but outside the House, were made against the hon. member for East Mayo. In the course of debate in this House the noble marquis the member for Rossendale quoted statements which had been made with regard to the hon. member, and upon being asked to substantiate those statements, he said that he had obtained those statements from the *Times*, but that he did not put his own authority at the back of them. Thereupon the hon. member for East Mayo denounces the *Times* in unmeasured language, and I do not say that that language was not entirely justified by the feeling which possessed him at the time, for having told a falsehood about him. Upon this the *Times* says that the falsehood is not with the *Times* but with the hon. member. That is what the House has now to deal with.

Mr. DILLON.—While I do not intend or think it proper to enter into the debate, I think it right, in justice to myself, to state that I consider the hon. and learned gentleman's statement of the case to be extremely inaccurate.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—I am very sorry that it should be so. I was endeavouring, at all events, to state fairly what had taken place; and I really think that if the hon. member for East Mayo will follow me step by step he will admit that there is no inaccuracy. Let me just put the case again. The statements which appeared in the *Times* with regard to the hon. member were not as to something he had done in the House, but, it was alleged, at particular times some years ago, he was in communication—in habitual and constant connection I think the words were—with persons whose character was bad, and it was suggested that he must have known this to be the case. The noble lord the member for Rossendale quoted some statements on the subject in a speech in the course of debate, and the hon. member for East Mayo got up—I think the next day—and gave a most positive denial to the statements which had been made. Thereupon followed this article in the *Times*. Sir, it may be that I have by accident—I do think it has been by carelessness—overlooked some precedent which may be found in the books, and which justifies taking immediate action by the House of Commons, in the sense of punishment by imprisonment of the person who has made a libellous statement. That is the question. If the House of Commons decides that this matter is a breach of privilege the person guilty would be brought to the bar of the House of Commons,

and unless apology or retractation were made, and satisfaction given to the House, the person would be ordered into custody. (Cries of "No.") That is the only power that the House of Commons has exercised beyond the power of reprimand, and there is no case in which any power whatever has been exercised by the House of Commons for a very long time past except that of ordering the person into custody.

An Hon. Member.—A Committee.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—A Committee? When yesterday afternoon I said a word about a Committee the member for Midlothian quite justifiably interrupted me by saying "Oh! that is an ulterior step." It is an ulterior step, and I will come to it. In the meantime I venture to say that I believe no case is to be found in the records of Parliament in which the House of Commons has committed a man to custody, as being guilty of breach of privilege, for such a statement or such an act as is now alleged. Now, then, let me say this. The foundation of the jurisdiction of this House in regard to breach of privilege is that it is an open interference with the House, or with the conduct and action of a member of the House, as a member of the House. Of course hon. gentlemen know that this question of the right of the House of Commons to commit for contempt has been brought under judicial decision, and in the case of "Burdett v. Abbot" the matter was largely discussed, and judgment given by Lord Ellenborough and the other Judges. In that case it was decided that the House of Commons was entitled to commit for breach of privilege, because it was a Court; and it was further decided that the House of Commons was entitled to judge of its own privileges, and that if it judged of its own privileges, and committed a person to prison for breach of privilege, no Court existing in this country could inquire whether that jurisdiction had been properly exercised or not. And I submit to the hon. gentlemen opposite, who, though they may be deeply interested in the political issue which is connected with this matter, are yet, I hope, far more deeply interested in the position of the House of Commons, and the attitude which the House of Commons shall take with regard to a question of this kind, that this is an occasion on which they will do well to remember and give great weight to the words of the right hon. gentleman opposite (Sir W. Harcourt) which I have read to them. I will not trouble the House by reading extracts from the law books, but the early precedents all put the matter on the ground that breach of privilege must be for contempt of the House, or interference with the action of a member of the House as a member of the House. There has been no such interference here. There is an allegation that the hon. member for East Mayo has been guilty of falsehood, but no corruption is alleged, nor is anything

alleged which has in past cases been considered by the House to be a breach of privilege justifying the exercise of its own authority. Now there are some cases in which the House of Commons has taken another course. In the case of Sir Francis Burdett a Committee was appointed to consider the privileges of the House of Commons, and the course which ought to be taken in regard to them. That Committee sat in 1810, and presented a report which will be found in the first volume of "Hatsell's Precedents." In their report that Committee, speaking of commitment for libel, said that such a course "tends to excite public misapprehension and disaffection, endangers the freedom of debates and proceedings in Parliament, and requires most prompt interposition and restraint. The effect of immediate punishment and example is required to prevent the evils necessarily arising from this offence, which evil would be much less effectually guarded against by the more dilatory proceedings of the ordinary Courts of law. Nevertheless upon some occasions the House of Commons has proceeded against persons committing such an offence by direct prosecution or by addressing His Majesty to direct them, as appears by the precedents collected in the appendices." Now, in the appendices there is a list of the cases in which the House of Commons has dealt with the question of libel upon its members. These cases run down to about the year 1810. Turning to Appendix B I find that since 1697 there have been twelve cases in which the House of Commons has dealt with libels upon the House of Commons or one of its members by ordering a prosecution in a Court of law.

Sir CHARLES RUSSELL.—By address.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—It is the same thing, it is an address for a prosecution. These cases come down to the year 1810, and I am unable to find examples since 1810 in matters of this kind at all. There are very few cases of newspaper libel upon members of the House of Commons. There appear to have been three in 1821, which will be found in the 112th volume of the "Commons' Journals," and it is interesting to notice what became of those three cases. The first was the case of the *Morning Chronicle*, which was brought before the House in February, 1821, as a breach of privilege, for a false statement as to the way in which members gave their votes. A motion was made that Lambert, the printer, should attend at the bar. An adjournment was moved and defeated; the previous question was moved, and the previous question and the motion were both withdrawn, and the House took no steps in the matter whatever. On the 8th of May in the same year the publisher of *John Bull* was charged with having published a false and scandalous libel on a member of the House, and in breach of the privileges of the House; and the statement was that a member of the House had under a threat

made by the son of a person whom he had attacked, made a speech and apologized, but in an intentionally low tone, so that it should not be heard. In that case proceedings were taken. The printer attended at the bar, and eventually Henry Fox Cooper—and, looking to the date of 1821 and that name, I think that probably there was a great deal of strong feeling in the House—and the printer were committed to Newgate. But I find no record of what was done afterwards. On the 10th of May in the same year the *Times* was attacked, and a motion was made that an article in the *Times* was a breach of the privileges of the House, as a misrepresentation of what passed in the House, during the speech of a member of the House. A motion was made that the printer, Bell, should attend at the bar of the House; and in that case, as in the case of the *Morning Chronicle*, the House took no action. And now I have given to the House my judgment, and the result of my examinations for precedents. Now Sir, it has been suggested that a Committee is the ordinary and proper course of dealing with the question of privilege. Upon that point I should like to refer to an authority which hon. gentlemen below the gangway opposite will at once recognize. In the case of “Grissell and Ward,” in 1879, in connection with the Tower High-level Bridge, some statements were made to a Committee of this House as to the position of certain persons who were interested in the proceedings of that Committee, containing a suggestion of possible corruption against some members of that Committee. The Committee came to the House and asked that an inquiry should be made. There was no inquiry after the persons were brought to the bar of the House. The inquiry took place before the persons were brought to the bar. That is as different as possible from this case. But in the course of the debate objection was taken to the appointment of a Committee, and that objection was taken by the hon. member who now sits for Cork (Mr. Parnell), and he said: “There are just two precedents for referring a question of privilege to a Committee, and only two precedents as far I can discover, and they are not precedents which govern the present case. On the 18th of February, 1575, a Committee was appointed to examine the matter touching the case of Hall’s servant. That matter was treated as a question of privilege. Also on the 3rd of December, 1601, a complaint was made to the House of an information having been exhibited by the Earl of Huntingdon in the Star Chamber against Mr. Belgrave a member. The matter was referred to a Committee of Privileges, who reported upon the 17th of December. But we have no precedent at all for the report of a Select Committee which complains to the House of a breach of privilege against itself of a most offensive character—there is no precedent whatever for

sending such a report to a Select Committee. On the contrary, all the precedents go in the direction of showing that these matters have always been considered by the House at once, and decided upon as a matter of privilege." I believe the hon. member was quite right in stating that since 1601 there has been no precedent for a committee on a question of privilege of this kind. Now let me go to a further point. The committee that we are now asked to appoint would be one entirely new, and unsupported by any precedent given in the book we regard as authoritative. In that book, which I remember Mr. Disraeli telling me to study very carefully and constantly, Sir Erskine May's, there appears a passage to which the right hon. gentleman the member for Midlothian yesterday referred in suggesting that a committee might be appointed. But that passage only has two references to instances in which a committee was appointed—one being a case in regard to an election petition, and the other the case of Mr. Grissell, which I have shown to be a case of an entirely different character from this. The House will search its records in vain to find a case in which a committee was appointed to inquire, as between an hon. member of the House and his accuser outside, whether the hon. member or his accuser had or had not been guilty of falsehood. And let me point out why it is that Parliament would have been most unwise in adopting any such course. The suggestion is that the House should summon some one to the bar of the House for a breach of privilege. The question is whether an hon. member of the House has told a falsehood—(an hon. member.—"In the House")—yes, in the House, but in reference to his personal conduct, not within the House, and unconnected with his position as a member. The suggestion appears to be that having brought a person to the bar a committee of the House should be appointed which would, in a judicial capacity, enter upon the question which, if it is to be decided at all, ought to be decided by the calmest and most impartial tribunal which it is possible to procure. If I wanted demonstration of the monstrous character of this proposal I should find it in the language of the right hon. gentleman the member for Derby, who said that no doubt hon. members on the Ministerial side of the House had already formed an opinion as to whether the charge against the hon. member was true, and the right hon. gentleman added that the Government would be able to name the majority of the committee. I am not challenging the fact, but what does that statement come to? It comes to this, that at the very outset of the proceedings, while the House is considering how best to secure a fair and impartial arbitrament of this matter, the suggested tribunal is denounced beforehand by the right hon. gentleman who supports its appointment, on the ground that it will be nominated by those

who have pledged themselves in advance to one conclusion. Sir I would appeal to all members of this House who are desirous of dealing justly and calmly with a serious question, whether what has occurred in this House to-day, and the cheers we have heard from different parts of the House, are not a demonstration that the appointment of a committee by this House would be a means absolutely insufficient for dealing with this question? Just see what would happen. This committee would be sitting: it would not have all the opportunity and all the powers possessed by a court of law. ("Yes!") Those gentlemen who say "yes" are not very familiar with courts of law. There would be no control over a committee of the House of Commons—a committee composed of ardent partizans. (Mr. Healy.—The Government would have a majority). In making that observation the hon. member strengthens my argument. (Mr. Healy.—But we are not afraid.) We know now by the declarations that have come from the front Opposition bench, and from below the gangway opposite, that if the committee were to arrive at a decision hostile to the hon. member for East Mayo it would at once be denounced as a packed committee. Suppose the committee appointed, and the long squabbles as to what was relevant and irrelevant to be decided, and all the evidence to have been taken, and the committee to come to consider its decision. Does any one doubt that there would be a division of opinion, and that there would be a report of the majority and of the minority? It is obvious that that would be the probable conclusion. It is clear that hon. members below the gangway opposite do not trust the members on this side of the House.

Mr. T. HEALY.—We have said directly the contrary. (Home Rule cheers.)

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—I think no one can doubt who has heard the speeches delivered that at the end of the investigation such would be the case.

Mr. DILLON.—I rise to order. The hon. and learned gentleman is attributing to us a statement that both I and my friends utterly repudiate. I understand that it is customary for hon. members to be allowed to repudiate statements attributed to them.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—If these are really the sentiments of hon. gentlemen below the gangway, it is a pity that the observations to which I refer were made.

Mr. T. HEALY.—Who made them? Who made them?

The SPEAKER.—I must call on the hon. member for Longford not to interrupt.

Mr. T. HEALY.—The hon. and learned gentleman has stated that we have said that we would not trust a committee selected from hon. gentlemen opposite. We ask him, and we are entitled to ask him, who said this?

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—I think it was the hon. member for West Belfast, who a few moments ago interrupted me by calling out "You would have a majority."

Mr. SEXTON.—I claim the right to explain. I did not use those words, and if I had they would not have affected my position. I said distinctly yesterday that, although the Government would have a majority on the committee, yet I would have confidence in that tribunal.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL.—I would recall the recollection of the House to the observations of the hon. member for the Scotland division of Liverpool. In that speech he, in very strong language, assailed the Government, and denounced its action in this matter of taking proceedings against the *Times*, and suggested that nobody could trust to a prosecution conducted by the Government. I am very glad to know that that speech has already been sent to the printer, and that hon. gentlemen can refer to it for themselves if they did not hear it. If hon. members will refer to it they will find that it is a denunciation of the Government for making a dishonest proposal with regard to the prosecution of a writer in the *Times*, or the printer, and a suggestion that nobody could trust to a prosecution conducted under the circumstances. Sir, I think I have now pointed out that procedure by committee would be absolutely contrary to the whole course of Parliamentary precedents; that it would be to invent a totally new procedure; and that the proceedings of the committee, and the result, could hardly be considered satisfactory. I should now like to say a few words as to the question of prosecution, and as to the suggestion of the leader of the House. What we find in "Hansard" is that there have been twelve cases during a certain number of years in which the House has ordered a prosecution. Of course, directly that question of prosecution was raised, we knew perfectly well that hon. members below the gangway opposite would not be satisfied with a prosecution conducted exclusively by the present Attorney General and Solicitor General, and they are perfectly justified in taking up that position. I agree that they ought to be represented in the prosecution by persons in whom they have entire confidence, not only in the sense of believing that those persons have some acquaintance with the law, and will try to do their duty in the case, but also in the sense of believing that those persons have some sympathy with them in the action which they are taking. Hon. members may be certain that there is no desire on the part of the Attorney General or myself to interpose as the instruments of the prosecution in this matter. There was a case not long ago in which a similar but not so great a difficulty arose. The junior member for Northampton, in the last Parliament but one, was ordered by the House to be prosecuted, notwithstanding

the fact that the Government had taken his part in the proceedings that led to the prosecution, and it was felt that the hon. member for Bury (Sir H. James), who had been supporting the hon. member for Northampton in his action, ought not alone to conduct that prosecution, and accordingly the present Lord Chancellor, then sitting on the front Opposition bench, was associated with him in the conduct of the case, and took a very active and diligent part in the framing of the indictment and in the subsequent proceedings. Hon. members below the gangway will, perhaps, allow me to say that I do not think that this proposal for a prosecution by the House, or under the order of the House, is one that can fairly or properly be entertained, except on the motion of the hon. member for East Mayo. But if he or any friend of his, with regard to these circumstances, which are exceptionally grave, moves that the House should order that a prosecution be instituted, although I think that in accordance with the rules and precedents of the House it would be right that the Attorney General should be nominally associated with the prosecution, hon. members may be quite certain that the whole conduct of that prosecution would be left to such persons as they might nominate; and I am not speaking merely of the Counsel who would appear in Court, but also of the solicitors with whom they would communicate in preparation for the trial. If hon. members ask the House of Commons that the proceedings may be of this nature, the Government will place no difficulties in their way. I hope the House will forgive me for having trespassed so long upon its attention. Even if I strain its indulgence, I wish to say two or three words upon the general subject. The question of the privileges of the House of Commons, and the right of the House of Commons to exercise its own power for the punishment of persons who have assailed members of Parliament is an extremely serious one. In 1880 the noble lord the member for Rossendale, who then led the Liberal party, said the whole course of the House of Commons in recent times had been in the direction of relaxing and not of straining the rules of privilege. We live in times when a question of this kind is extremely serious, and I hope that, disentangling it from the immediate excitement and passion of the day, we may be able to consider calmly what the position is which the House of Commons is called upon to take up. If an hon. member were to say that an attack had been made upon him in such a manner or in such circumstances that it could not be met in the ordinary way in which an attack would be met by a gentleman who was not a member of this House, there might be some ground for the appeal made by hon. members opposite. But that has never been said by hon. members below the gangway ("Yes"); no appeal has been made to the House (renewed Home Rule cries of "Yes"), no spontaneous appeal—the inter-

ruptions of hon. members again bring me into conflict with them. In this case the accusation which is made is made by a responsible person, by a person who can be dealt with in the ordinary Courts of law. The machinery of the law is at the disposal of hon. members, and I venture to say that, after what has taken place, if one of these hon. members would go into a Court of law to complain of and seek redress for an attack of this kind, it would be the defendant and not the plaintiff who would have to fear the prejudice and sentiment of a jury. But the House of Commons is asked to extend its practice with reference to this matter, to extend it in a dangerous direction, to institute a form of proceedings hitherto unknown in its history, and to do this when a prompt and far more effectual remedy can be obtained in those Courts of law which are open to all the subjects of the Queen. It is my sincere hope that the House of Commons will never stretch the law of privilege one inch beyond its established limit. Its extension may have been necessary in other times and circumstances; but situated as we are I fear that such an extension would be a dangerous one, and I feel that it would not be justified by the circumstances which the House has now before it.

Local Government and the Licensing Question.

APRIL 17, 1888.

DELIVERED IN THE DEBATE UPON THE SECOND READING
OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL.

THE SOLICITOR GENERAL: Sir, there is in one respect, at all events, an agreeable contrast between the speech which we have just heard and that delivered last night by the hon. baronet the member for Cumberland (Sir Wilfrid Lawson), because the hon. baronet attacked Her Majesty's Government very bitterly upon the licensing proposals they now make, and said that the shame of those proposals must rest on them, and he wound up by alleging that the policy embodied in the licensing clauses was never exceeded in the meanness of its conception, the injustice of its scope, or the cruelty it inflicted on the industrial classes. The hon. member who has just sat down, who is equally entitled to claim to be an ardent supporter of the temperance cause, has, on the other hand, dealt fairly with the proposals of the Government, and recognized that in the licensing clauses of the Bill there is a real attempt to deal with a difficulty that has baffled Parliament for many years past. I do not propose to enter into all the details of the speech which has just been de-

livered. No doubt some points of detail have been raised by my hon. friend which could most properly be treated in committee, and which are matters of fair discussion and argument. The point referred to by the hon. gentleman as to the numerical limit of population of towns which are to be allowed to remain licensing areas is one that may very well be dealt with in that way; but, taking the licensing clauses as a whole, the Government has proposed them deliberately and carefully, with a regard, on the one hand, to that which it believes to be fair and right to the interest of those engaged in that trade; and, on the other hand, to the desire which Parliament has expressed very often that there should in some way be given to the people themselves a power of dealing in their localities with the granting of licences. I wish to show how the Government has tried to deal with the various difficulties that have arisen in connection with this matter. But first I will answer the challenge which has been thrown out by my hon. friend who has just spoken as to the opinions of those who are responsible for advising the Government on matters of law, in regard to any vested interests on the part of the licensed victuallers. When the right hon. gentleman the member for Derby (Sir William Harcourt) was Home Secretary I expressed the opinion which I now repeat, and which represents the advice on which the Government has acted and is prepared to act. It is that under the licensing statutes justices are not justified in refusing to renew a public-house licence simply upon the ground that there is no need for it, or that there are too many public-houses in the neighbourhood.

Mr. R. T. REID (Dumfries, &c.): Will the hon. and learned gentleman state under what Act of Parliament that power exists?

The SOLICITOR GENERAL: My hon. and learned friend does not usually find it necessary to interrupt me in the middle of a speech to put such a question. I should not have made such a statement if I had not been prepared to go into the matter. I listened last night with great interest to the speech of the hon. baronet the member for Cumberland, who argued against the idea that there was a vested right or interest on the part of those licensed to keep public-houses. The hon. baronet founded his proposition chiefly on a sentence which he quoted, and which I myself have seen quoted in a number of temperance publications; and he said that Mr. Justice Field, in the Court of Queen's Bench, in the month of November, 1882, stated that "the Legislature recognized no vested interest at all in any holder of the licence." I have seen that sentence before in inverted commas, and the hon. baronet quoted it last night. The case referred to was dealt with by Mr. Justice Field, and decided in the Queen's Bench in November 1882. In the first place, I have carefully

gone through the five different reports of the decision, and the judgment in the case, and in no one of the reports will the sentence which the hon. baronet quoted to the House last night be found. In the next place, the decision was not a decision on this point at all, but on a different Act of Parliament. Anybody who refers to any of the reports of the case will find that the judges laid great stress upon the words of the Act which had quite recently been passed, and upon which they were called to put judicial construction. The Act related to beer dealers and retail licences. The words inserted in that Act were these :

“Notwithstanding anything in Section 8 of the Wine and Beerhouse Act of 1869, or in any other Act now in force, the licensing justices shall be at liberty, in their free and unqualified discretion, either to refuse the certificate for the sale of beer,”

and so on, or to grant the same. Mr. Justice Field and Mr. Justice Stephen had to deal with the case in question under the Act of 1882, and having before them the words, “in their free and unqualified discretion,” said that those words indicated exactly what they stated—namely, that there was to be no suggestion of any kind as to the limit of their unqualified discretion. That is being quoted in every circular sent out by the United Kingdom Alliance and other temperance bodies ; but I am afraid that the hon. baronet has been misled into attributing to Mr. Justice Field an expression which that learned judge never used. So much for the authority which the hon. baronet quoted last night. The question now before us arises on the Act of 1828, as dealt with in the Acts of 1872 and 1874. The Act of 1872 established a clear distinction between the granting of a new licence and the renewal of an old licence. The provisions of the Act were that where a licensed person applied for renewal—(1) he need not attend at the annual licensing meeting unless required by the justices. In ordinary cases, licences which are upon the register are to be renewed as a matter of course. Not only need not the licensed person attend unless required, but (2) the justices are not to entertain any objection unless written notice of intention to oppose has been served upon the licensed person seven days previous to the meeting ; and (3) the justices are not to receive evidence except on oath. Those were the provisions in the Act of 1872. The Act of 1874 went still further, and provided that the notice to the licensed person to attend, without the service of which the justices had no right to entertain an objection at all, could only be given to the licensed person on some ground personal to himself. The state of things stands thus. Suppose the justices were to make up their minds before the Licensing Sessions were held that they would not grant a renewal of any of the licences, the Court of Queen’s

Bench would interfere on a mandamus and compel them to deal with the licences separately, and they cannot refuse any licence to a person already licensed unless they call the person before them. The Act of 1874 said :

“Whereas by Section 42 of the principal Act it is enacted that a licensed person applying for a renewal of his licence need not attend in person at the general annual licensing meeting unless he is required by the Licensing Justices so to attend, be it enacted that such requisition shall not be made save for some special cause personal to the licensed person, to whom such requisition be sent.”

Sir WILLIAM HARCOURT (Derby) asked whether the hon. and learned gentleman held that the words “some special cause personal to the licensed person” meant “personal misconduct” on the part of the licensee?

The SOLICITOR GENERAL: Sir, in my opinion, the words, “some special cause personal to the licensed person,” would mean some cause such as personal misconduct, or the permission of conduct in the house which could be made a subject of complaint against himself. It is impossible to contend that if there were 50 licences and the justices came to the conclusion that 48 were sufficient, notice to the other two to attend would be for a special cause personal to them. I say that, taking these statutes altogether, it is not competent to the magistrates to refuse the renewal of licences which have been previously granted except on some special cause personal to the holder of licence. The hon. baronet last night asked whether any lawyer would venture to contend that there was a vested interest in licensed premises? I answer that there is, and I believe that the Acts, properly read, do give to the licensed victualler a vested interest in the continuous enjoyment of his licence. The condition of the property, moreover, I should think, was a personal cause, as the licensed person had to keep it in good order. At Common Law anybody who chose had a right to keep a public-house. There have been restrictions imposed by statute, partly for the sake of good order and partly for the benefit of the revenue; and ever since the time of Henry VII., when the provisions were first introduced with regard to the power of the justices to licence, this trade has always been considered and dealt with by the legislature as a lawful trade. I submit to the House that it would be impossible for the legislature, with any fairness and honesty, substantially to confiscate the property of a very large number of persons carrying on a lawful trade without giving compensation. It has never been suggested or maintained by any responsible leader or party in the House that that course would be a fair course. But, sir, this is not a mere

question of legal right, upon which lawyers may, and very likely, will, differ. It is also a question of what is fair and just. It ought to be borne in mind that, besides publican's licences, there are beer-houses, which were licensed before the 1st of May, 1869. It is impossible to contend that the owners of these beer-houses have not a vested interest, for the magistrates have no power of refusing a renewal of such licences, except on four specified grounds. When this question is being considered there is also another class of licences that ought to be borne in mind—namely, provisional licences, granted in respect of premises not already erected. By the Act passed in 1872 these most salutary licences were provided for. Before that speculative persons used to take corner plots and build houses in the hope of getting a licence when the houses were completed, and used to go on applying year after year, till at last, out of sheer pity, a licence was not unfrequently granted. Since the passing of that Act, however, very few houses have been built as a matter of speculation, and in the mere hope of getting a licence. Now, the custom is to apply for a provisional licence, which is granted upon the plans being submitted to the magistrates, and it is confirmed when a certificate is presented to the magistrates signed by the architect, and testifying that the building has been completed according to the plans. Can anyone say that it would be fair or honest that when a man had gone to the expense of building a house according to plans approved by the magistrates the licence should, after a year or two, be taken away without compensation? There is a deliberate invitation by Parliament to people before they build public-houses to go and consult the magistrates as to the position of the houses and the arrangements they propose to make, and an implied pledge is given that they will be continued in the enjoyment of these premises. The very illustrations given by the hon. member for Barrow in regard to the value of licences show how unfair it would be to cancel them without compensation. It would be outrageous that a man who has purchased a licensed house, and paid many thousands of pounds upon the generally prevailing idea as to the right to a continuance of a licence, and its value based upon that right, should suddenly find himself mulcted in £8,000 or £9,000, by being deprived of the licence which he bought. I do not think that is a policy which would be likely to be accepted by the House, and I do not know of any person occupying a prominent position in any Government who has supported it. It has always been hoped that this question would be, in some way or other, dealt with in a Local Government Bill, when brought in. The suggestion of the temperance reformers has always been that, there not being an elected body to grant licences, it was desirable occasionally to have

plébiscite on the subject to enable the ratepayers to say whether they would have any more licences granted in the district. The whole question has always been beset with difficulties, and no one has ever defined the area in which each *plébiscite* should take place. So long as the justices were the licensing authority there was, perhaps, a scintilla of reason at the back of the appeal that an occasional *plébiscite* should be taken; but if the House should find itself fortunate enough to be able to deal with the whole question of local government, and if it should establish for the purpose County Councils, which will be directly elected by the people to represent them in local matters, it would be sheer absurdity to have an occasional *plébiscite* of the people to say whether they disagree with the Board they themselves have elected. The right hon. gentleman the member for Derby (Sir William Harcourt) and the right hon. gentleman the member for Newcastle (Mr. John Morley) are both, I am glad to say, of opinion that this question ought to be dealt with by the Local Government Authority. The hon. member for Barrow said he hoped the Government would abandon the proposals in regard to licencing, except those transferring the licensing authority from the justices to the County Council. But the mere transfer of authority, without safeguards, from the justices to the local governing body would do a great injustice, against which I have been, and am now, protesting. The justices are bound by the law to which I have referred, and they have to deal with persons to whom they or their predecessors have given a privilege, and over the exercise of which privilege it is their duty to watch. But if the power were transferred from the justices, who are governed by these Acts of Parliament, and have to exercise judicial functions, and who would be compelled by a *mandamus* to deal with each separate case, and not make a rule to govern a set of cases—if these justices were to be replaced by an elected body without judicial functions, but with absolute capacity to deal with the matter just as it liked, and if no provision were made for compensation, we should have done the mischief of handing over the interests of those who had embarked in a lawful trade to the tender mercies of a chance majority in any particular district in any particular year. Suppose that absolute authority were handed over to the local governing body without any check upon the cancelling of licences, and this power were to be largely used, great agitation and excitement would prevail. We might have all the houses in a particular district shut up at a particular time by a local authority, with the smallest amount of real knowledge of the wants of the neighbourhood, or consideration for the wishes of the minority of the people. What would be the result? I venture to say it would be quite intolerable. It would be difficult even to keep public order where the public-houses were

shut up in this way, unless the sense of the people was very strongly in favour of such a step, in which case such a drastic measure would be quite unnecessary, as the public-houses would be starved out. In ordinary cases the inevitable result would be that a club would start up in almost every public-house that had been closed, and the wishes of the people would be strong enough to prevent any adequate check being placed upon the multiplication of clubs. I think the question of clubs is, after all, most important. A very poor service, indeed, would be done by the Temperance party to the cause they have so long and ardently advocated, if, by a despotic act, they succeeded in shutting up the whole of the public-houses in a particular district, unless they had previously prepared themselves to deal with the difficult question of clubs. Then it is necessary, I submit, to make some provision with regard to compensation. The hon. baronet, no doubt, remembers the year 1880. It was an epoch in the temperance agitation, which had been going on for many years before that. Before 1880 there had been almost from year to year a proposal of a definite character put before the House of Commons. The Permissive Prohibitory Bill provided that a certain majority should have the power of closing public-houses altogether. That Bill was before the House with varying fortunes for a considerable number of years before 1880, but it was killed in 1880, when the senior member for Birmingham (Mr. John Bright) declared that though the Bill had received large support, he did not know five members who really believed in its provisions and desired to support it. There was in those days a weakness in regard to the second reading, and many members voted in its favour who would have voted against it if they thought it was likely to pass. After the election of 1880 there came a Parliament of temperance proclivities, and the hon. baronet opposite enjoyed his golden hour. The resolution which was rejected by 100 votes in March, 1880, was carried by a substantial majority three months later; but in the hour of his triumph the hon. baronet heard the right hon. member for Midlothian (Mr. W. E. Gladstone) complaining that in the resolution the question of equitable compensation found no place.

Sir WILFRID LAWSON (Cumberland, Cockermouth): The House passed it, though.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL: Yes, Sir: if the right hon. member for Midlothian voted for the resolution, he voted for it with that reservation, and it was accepted by other members of the House, with the knowledge that in the mind of him who would be the chief authority in that Parliament, the question of compensation was closely and inextricably connected with the question of putting an end to the liquor traffic. Five years passed and nothing was done, and from 1880 until the present time no

one has ventured to bring forward a positive proposal for introducing Local Option in the sense in which the hon. baronet uses that expression. I appeal to the hon. baronet to look back upon that history, and say if it is fair for him to attack the Government in the terms he used last night for attempting to deal with the matter? It has been complained that licences are dealt with by an authority irresponsible to the people. The Government says—"Let them be dealt with by an authority created by the people, and directly responsible to the people." There has been a very ardent combat over this question of compensation. Reference has been made in the debate to the defeat of the Bill of 1871, and the hon. member who spoke last repudiated the idea that the temperance advocates in the House had defeated that Bill. The hon. member is justified in his repudiation, because the temperance advocates in this House have never defeated anything except a Liberal Government. All those abstract resolutions, which may mean anything or nothing, and which half a dozen different people interpret in half a dozen different ways, are all very well; but as soon as the question of compensation was approached, it was always found that among those who knew most about the circumstances of the case there was a unanimous opinion that some provision with regard to compensation must be made. The Bill of 1871 proposed to give compensation in the shape of a fixed tenure of 10 years.

Sir WILFRID LAWSON: That was withdrawn.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL: I am aware of that; but I do not know how the hon. baronet and his friends can reconcile this with a profession of no compensation. Yet it is now put as an alternative suggestion from the other side—as something better than that which the Government now proposes. Surely, sir, the hon. baronet and his friends could not accept that suggestion. Every week of every year they are making speeches in which they declare that it is an intolerable grievance that there should be so many public-houses as now exist, and if they consented that all these public-houses should continue for another ten years, they would be guilty of something very like an infringement of the great principle which is the basis of their agitation. Well, they may not be able to accept a proposal of that kind; but that is no reason why they should not accept the proposal of the Government. The Government propose that, after the passing of the Bill, no new interest should be created in a licensed house. As to the existing houses, in respect of which, according to all equitable considerations, a vested interest does exist, surely the fairest thing is to say that there shall be an additional tax upon those who are carrying on the business, and that when a public-house is put an end to, com-

pensation shall be paid in respect of it, out of that tax, or from the general funds of the county. The hon. member for Barrow seems to have a very feeble faith in the principles which he advocates. He warned the House not to accept the proposals of the Government, on the ground that the tax on licences would constitute an overwhelming temptation for localities, and that these would be prepared to favour the existence of licensed houses, in order not to lose the contributions derived from them for the relief of local burdens. That is a very feeble faith indeed. I have always thought the hon. baronet and his friends had an unlimited belief in their own power to convert the people. I am not going to minimize the evils of excessive drinking. I know too much of the effects of excessive drinking upon the classes low down in the social scale : but, as far as the great majority of the working classes are concerned, I believe if we took an assembly of men, as numerous as that which the House of Commons contains, and these men were met together at a Trade Congress or a Trade Association of any kind, we should find at least as strong a repugnance on their part as a body, to excess in intoxicating drinks, as we find among members of this House. I believe it is in that direction that the true work of the hon. baronet lies, and if he can but succeed in spreading that feeling still more widely there will soon be no ground at all for hesitating to award compensation to the publicans. If the public-houses ceased to be used by the people they would cease to be valuable property, and it would become possible to deal with the publicans on very easy terms. If the great temperance associations had confined themselves to the propagation of the principle of abstinence, and had not indulged so much in the Christian virtue of finding fault with other people, the attainment of this condition of things would be still nearer than it is. There are some other matters which have been referred to, but which will more properly be dealt with in Committee. I hope I have shown the House, at all events, that the Government have dealt with this question with an honest desire to put an end to a controversy which has affected, and sometimes determined, political struggles for twenty years, without any really satisfactory result in legislation. Stopping, with the passing of this Bill, the creation of any new interest ; making arrangements whereby partly, if not wholly, from the contributions of the trade itself, compensation shall be paid when the property is taken away without any fault on the part of the man who had enjoyed it ; I hope it will be found on consideration that the proposals of the Government are fair and reasonable proposals, and that the House may well accept them as the solution and termination of a very difficult controversy.

MISCELLANEOUS SPEECHES.

Speech at Banquet on Appointment as Solicitor General.

OCTOBER 19, 1886.

[Upon the occasion of his appointment as Solicitor General, Sir Edward Clarke was entertained by his constituents, without distinction of political party, at a banquet at the Plymouth Guildhall; the Mayor (Mr. W. H. Alger) presiding.]

MR. MAYOR, MY LORD MOUNT EDGCUMBE, AND GENTLEMEN,—I have to acknowledge, as best I can, the compliment which you are paying me to-night, and which is a compliment higher than I could have ventured to expect, a compliment which I believe to be unprecedented in the political life of this borough. There have been many occasions when constituencies have done honour to those who they think have served them well as members of Parliament; but the compliment has usually been paid at the end of that service, when the public work has been done, and when the man so honoured is passing away from active political life to other spheres where his labours will excite less of antagonism or criticism. I do not know that there has ever been an instance where such an honour has been paid by the people of a great town, without distinction of party, to one of their members while he was in the midst of a political career, and while he was still actively engaged in political controversy. And it is my great happiness to-night to feel—and I hope I may be allowed to feel it—that if I persevere in my public career, in the course which I have hitherto adopted, I may be assured beforehand that when that

career closes its record will be approved by my fellow countrymen. One of the sweetest of our poets has said that the greatest incentive to all exertion is

"To see the laurel wreath on high suspended,
That is to crown our name when life is ended."

And it is a great satisfaction, and not a satisfaction merely, but encouragement and strength, to one working as I am and in my position, to believe that in the tribute which you are paying to me to-night I can read an approval which will continue so long as I continue the course which hitherto I have led before you. Mr. Mayor and gentlemen, I cannot be insensible to the fact that there must have been something in my career which has attracted the interest and sympathy not of my constituents only but of my fellow countrymen. I have been working hard in a difficult profession—not propped by ancestry, not assisted by connection—and there has been an amount of personal sympathy with me displayed in all quarters for a long time past, which has helped me, has strengthened me, and has given me very great happiness. It is well for us to know, and for all to know, that, in this land of freedom, to industry and to courage the avenues of fame and fortune are ever open, and I hope that my career may not have been without its encouragement to those who have been ambitious, as I was years ago, and who hope—and I think may reasonably hope—with industry and with courage, to enjoy the success which you are crowning here to-night. Mr. Mayor, the office to which I have been lately appointed is not in itself an essentially political office. Its duties are very varied and are very important. The law officers of the Crown have to advise the Government of the day upon the interpretation of treaties ; they have to advise upon the Acts which regulate the powers and authority of municipal bodies and bodies of local government in this country. They are constantly consulted with regard to the rights of English subjects in foreign lands, and the rights of foreign subjects who come within our territories. In Parliament they have action not of a distinctly political kind. It is their duty to advise the Government of the day with regard to all measures which deal with the administration or the improvement of the law, and to take charge and conduct of those measures in the House of Commons. It is their duty to acquaint themselves with all the proposals that are made by private members in the House, and to advise the Government with regard to the effect of those bills upon the law, and as to their compatibility with the system of legislation and the policy which has been adopted. And I am very glad to believe that in Parliament my work will be but little connected with the controversies of political parties. Unfortunately, for years past, measures which involve no party

questions at all have been lost and have gone to pieces on the shoals and quicksands of the difficulties of Parliamentary life. There they remain ; proposed sometimes by one party, sometimes by another, but never carried into effect ; and it is my hope—as I know it is the hope of my friend and colleague, the Attorney General—that we may be able to rescue some of those proposals from the disasters which have befallen them, and to carry into practical effect some useful measures for the advantage of the country. There is another duty which falls upon the Solicitor General, along with the Attorney General. They are the leaders of the Bar. It is a proud position, and it involves great responsibility. They have the right to assert for the Bar, and with all respect to defend and insist upon the right of the Bar to fair and courteous audience on the part of the judges. They have a right to maintain the position and authority of the Bar, and, on the other hand, it falls upon them, as one of their great duties, that they shall in their own conduct set an example to the Bar which they have the honour to lead—that they shall shew by their own act and deed that it is possible, as I am sure it is, to combine the most zealous and industrious advocacy, as an advocate at the Bar, with the most scrupulous and delicate sense of honour that ever was felt by an English gentleman. Sir, these are great duties and great responsibilities ; and I am glad, indeed, to be strengthened in undertaking them and in advancing on that work, by the sympathy and support of the brilliant gathering of Plymouth men who are met now within this hall. I should be untrue to myself, and I should be untrue to those who have trusted me and who honour me to-night, if I did not look upon this appointment which I have received rather as a means of doing public service than as the mere gratification of individual ambition. Of course, it is the gratification of ambition. No man could have worked as I have worked since I came to the Bar, and not feel what I will not say is pardonable—for I will not think it needs to be pardoned—but will not feel a personal gratification in attaining to the position which has been given to me. But I hope and believe that I prize that position chiefly because it takes me away, as it were, from the mere working for myself, to a position which may give me the opportunity of doing something which may be valuable to my profession and valuable to my fellow countrymen. And if I were to neglect any opportunity of doing public service, I should be not only untrue to my own ideal, and untrue to that opinion which you have formed of me, but I should be most ungrateful to that Providence which has pursued my course since I was called to the Bar, with unexpected and unlooked-for opportunities of success, which have not been given to others as worthy of such opportunities as I myself could

possibly have been. It is in that spirit and with those hopes that I have accepted the office of Solicitor General, and that I receive the kind and generous compliment which you pay to me to-night. Mr. Mayor, you have spoken in words of too generous eulogium with regard to me, and have spoken of the interest that Plymouth has felt in my career, and feels in my new position. Mr. Mayor, I owe very much to Plymouth. At a time when it appeared that my political career was disappointed and arrested, Plymouth gave me a place again in the House of Commons. It is Plymouth which has allowed me to take part in three Parliaments. It is Plymouth which has supported me and given me the opportunity for this success; and more than that, sir, my connection with Plymouth is now something more than the public connection of representative and constituency, because the kindness of many of those in this room—supporters of mine or opponents of mine in political matters—has contributed by their private friendship to the happiness of my private and domestic life. The gathering, Mr. Mayor, that takes place to-night pledges no one to anything in the future except myself. But it does pledge me to this, that having received, and receiving to-night, this honour from Plymouth, it is impossible that at any time during my life, Plymouth and I should be strangers to each other. Whatever the course of my life may be, whatever position I may be called upon to fill, I hope that as long as I live my face will not be unfamiliar to the people of Plymouth. And I pledge myself, so long as life shall last, that the interests of Plymouth shall never be absent from my mind, or from my desire to promote them in every possible way. Sir, I said just now that you had spoken in too great eulogium of me. No one is more conscious than I of shortcomings that are overlooked in the generosity of eulogium on an occasion like this. But there is one claim I will make for myself. I know that defect of capacity, the hard necessities of time, the lack of opportunity, the failure even of physical strength, may sometimes have rendered me unable to see my true duty and unable adequately to fulfil it. But this I do claim, that my opinions have never been accepted as the livery of a party. They have been carefully considered, honestly formed, and unflinchingly avowed, and I can call many in this room to witness that on more than one occasion I have deliberately risked support which appeared to be essential to my position, rather than surrender, or even conceal, the convictions which I had formed and was unable to yield. Now, sir, I have said that I owe much to Plymouth. It is to no mean city that I owe it. The history that teaches by example has never been more eloquent than it is in the history of this town, and I think many who are here—I hope all who are

here—can understand the pride and pleasure that it has been to me to represent Plymouth in the House of Commons. For Plymouth has great traditions which have come home to me, and have been to me always a reminder, when I have come into the streets, or into the place, or have even remembered its history, of the great service that private citizens may render to the State. It is a splendid story, is the history of Plymouth—and I sometimes think that Plymouth citizens themselves do not quite realize the enormous importance to the country that Plymouth has been, and do not quite realize the dignity of the history of the great place to which they themselves belong. Three hundred years ago the heroes of the Elizabethan time, by their skill and their courage, not only gained for England that great empire which was passing away from Spain, but they did something more than that. They entrenched in England freedom of religion, and freedom of life and conduct; they set up in England those great institutions which during all this time have been growing and prospering, and spreading until we now, proud of the institutions of freedom in our land, are prouder still to see those institutions grafting themselves into every colony that is set on a foreign shore. Plymouth was one of the places which gave to the great Elizabethan time its boldest warriors, and its most sagacious thinkers, and there has not been a decade since then in which the history of Plymouth has not been worthy of that origin. It is a great community, this of Plymouth, and it is a happiness to me to think that, in however short a sentence, my name will be inscribed upon its history. Sir, that stately history is not yet finished. So long as England is obliged to sit with hand upon the sword waiting to guard the rights of her people and the ever-growing interests of her colonies, so long the triple town which lies upon the shore of her finest harbour, can never be other than a centre of pride and interest to the English people. So long, sir, as the empire of our race spreads over uncultivated lands, and new communities are springing up who speak our language, who have our religion, and who love, and adopt, and follow our laws and institutions, so long there will ever be dear to the English people that haven into which the white-winged messengers of commerce come, and from which they flit again, bringing to us, and carrying about to all distant seas, the messages that pass between ourselves and our kindred, and, I hope, the seeds of blessings to be enjoyed in every continent of the world. And so long as we find, as I believe we shall always find, in the great municipal institutions of this country, the training places of our public men, the guardians of the freedom of our people, and of their capacity for an intelligent conduct of public life, so long this great community and municipality,

which is decade by decade becoming still more distinctly the centre of the life of the western counties of England, will be an important and a noble place in our country. Sir, who can wonder that to me it has been a matter of the greatest pride that I, a stranger to Plymouth, coming to them in 1880, should have been adopted with a generous kindness by them—not with generosity only by those who supported me, but with the personal kindness of those who felt it their duty to oppose me—who can wonder that I, being allowed to speak in the name of this great place, should be filled with pride, of which I am not ashamed to-night, when its townfolk gather in their Guild-hall and give me this splendid reception. Mr. Mayor, I hope that I shall shew myself worthy in the future of the honour you do me to-night. I have not words to make worthy acknowledgment of this honour in all its fulness, but I trust that the actions of my life may shew that I have fully appreciated this great compliment, and that I do value, and value most highly, the confidence that is shown in me. Sir, to me, and I trust to those who in another generation may bear my name, the events of this evening will always be a memory of pleasure and of pride; and I hope that they will not be lost to those who hereafter, in whatever capacity, may be called upon to serve the people of Plymouth. I trust that this memory will spur their energies, and sustain their integrity, in the assurance that the desire and the effort to do useful public work, and the faithful discharge of public duty, will find its reward in the abounding and most indulgent confidence and regard of a generous community. Mr. Mayor, I thank you for the honour that you and your fellow townsmen have done me to-night.

The Future of the Legal Profession.

AN ADDRESS TO THE BIRMINGHAM LAW STUDENTS
SOCIETY.

JANUARY 18, 1888.

[This speech is published in a separate form by Messrs. Stevens and Haynes, Bell Yard, Temple Bar.]

I FEEL it a great honour to have been invited to fill the office of president of this society, but I should not have accepted the invitation if I had not believed that I could make the occasion of the delivery of my presidential address an opportunity of

saying something which may be of real service to the great profession to which I am proud to belong. I have a great objection to merely formal and platitudinous discourses. If a speech does not contain something which it is worth while for the hearers to remember and discuss, it should not be made at all. And if I had not thought that I had something useful to say, I should not have been here this evening. But I look upon this as a fitting opportunity, for which I have long been waiting, of discussing the most important of all questions to the members of the profession of the law—that is, the question whether they shall continue to be divided into two separate branches, or whether they shall become one body, each member of which shall be entitled to do any part of the work of the profession, and, if he devote himself to one special branch of that work, shall be under no obligation to such a course other than the consideration of his own tastes and qualifications and interest.

I have seen with some amusement an announcement in the newspapers that I was going to make a statement this evening as to the fusion of the two branches of the profession. Now, I have no statement to make except the expression of my own opinions which I have held for twenty years, and which have been strengthened by every year's experience. I have never made any secret of these opinions, but I have not felt that I could usefully put them forward and defend them in public until now, when the position which I have the honour to hold, and the imminence of changes which seriously concern the fortunes of both branches of the profession, may obtain for the subject full and serious discussion. In what I say to you to-night I shall speak with perfect frankness both with respect to the Bar and to that which is called—and as things now stand is not unjustly called—the inferior branch of the profession. I do not doubt that every one of my listeners may hear something with which he does not agree, and which he may be inclined to resent. I cannot help it. If I said nothing which anybody disliked, I should say nothing which anybody would find useful. I make no explanations or apologies. I only ask that whatever you think of my observations you will at all events believe that they are not made without full consideration and the most sincere belief that the change which I advocate is required both by the public interest; and by the personal interest of the very large majority of the members of our great profession.

I have said that in my judgment changes in the law are now imminent which makes this matter of urgent importance to all who practise the legal calling; but, of course, the first question is, what is the interest of the public at large? That should be our first consideration, and if we were disposed to forget or dis-

regard it, a very little reflection would show us that this is a practical age, and that whether we like it or not, a Parliament which addresses itself to industrial and social reform will make short work of professional rules, or the privileges of private institutions, however venerable, if they are found to hinder the attainment of an important public object. That object is the prompt and inexpensive administration of justice, civil as well as criminal, and the enforceable obligation upon every one to whom the State grants the special privilege of practising in its Courts to do to the best of his ability any work which he accepts payment for doing. In my belief, this object can be affected only by the fusion of both branches of our profession, and I wish to set before you this evening some of the reasons why I believe that change will not only produce great public benefit, but will raise the condition and improve the position of the whole profession.

I address myself first to the interests of the public. Let us see how a private person, having ground of complaint, and desiring to enforce his rights by the law, is affected by the present system. He goes to his solicitor and to him explains the whole case and asks if he ought to bring an action? He is advised to do so; the writ is issued and the action is launched. The pleadings, presenting no difficulty, are prepared in the solicitor's office. Summonses are heard at Chambers, orders are made, and the solicitor or a clerk, who is always in communication with him, does the work. Then comes the trial. It may be that the case is sent down to the County Court for trial. If so, the solicitor appears. He has his bundle of papers containing all the notes taken and all the suggestions made. He knows the whole case and he conducts it in that Court. But if the trial is in a Superior Court, counsel has to be instructed, all the facts have to be set down in writing; all the evidence of witnesses must be written out with such fulness that a person who has never seen them, and who comes fresh to the case, shall know exactly what they can say in the matter. And then in general a few observations are added by an industrious clerk, and off the draft goes to the law stationer. Upon paper of the most inconvenient size and shape, the statement of facts, and pleadings, and correspondence, and the observations of the industrious clerk, are fully written out in a big round hand. The observations are not very often read by any one after the first draft is made, but in they go at 2½d. the folio for the draft and 4d. the folio for each of the brief copies. And then the counsel is instructed, brief fees are paid, and thus, at an enormous cost, the knowledge which the solicitor had has been conveyed to another person in order that he may put before the Court the matters which possibly the solicitor could explain just as well.

In most cases the counsel is not the choice of the litigant, but is simply the counsel usually employed by the solicitor. Whether he performs his duty or neglects it, whether he does it well or ill, he is under no legal liability to the man by whom he is paid. The brief may not have told him all the facts; he may not have read it; he may be in another Court when the case is being tried; but a client is absolutely in his hands, and cannot sustain any legal claim even for the return of the fees which have not been earned. This is a grievance of which much is made, and I will say another word about it. I believe the occurrence is one which happens rarely. The habit which, I know, at one time and in a few cases, existed, of barristers taking in briefs that were offered, whether they had reason to believe they could attend to them or not, has now, as far as I know, disappeared. And I do not think there are many members of the Bar who would hesitate to return a fee when they had done nothing in the conduct of the case. I said I believed the occasions were rare, and I think they are generally owing to the strange uncertainty of the arrangements for the trial of causes, or to the practice of a good many solicitors only to deliver their briefs upon the very eve of the trial. They are right, no doubt, when there is a chance of settlement, to postpone as long as possible the heavy expenditure in fees—an expenditure a large part of which cannot be recovered from the opposite party—but when the brief is delivered at seven or eight o'clock in the evening to a counsel whose arrangements for the morrow are already made, and who, probably, has as much work to prepare as he can fairly do that night, it is not he who should be blamed when the case is called on the next morning if he has not fully mastered the case or finds himself obliged to be in another Court.

However, as I said, I do not think this often happens. The greater grievance is that, by the artificial rules, the litigants are obliged to bear very heavy costs in order to have their cases argued by counsel who very often know less of the matter than the solicitors who employ them, and do not argue it as well as they would. And there are two other classes of cases in which the grievances seem to me to be greater. Take a case of a *quasi* criminal character which is heard before justices or magistrates. There the case is argued on each side by solicitors who deal both with facts and law. Let an appeal go to quarter sessions, and there the disputants, who, in most cases, are men of slender means, must somehow find money, not only for the actual fees to counsel, but for the preparation of the costly briefs by which they are instructed. It is even worse in criminal cases. There the necessity of this duplication of parts is a very heavy burden on poor men who are accused. Nothing

can ever put the rich man and the poor man actually on a level. The rich man will always have the abler counsel and more careful preparation ; but it is a blot on the administration of justice, civil or criminal, if any rule or practice aggravates this inequality.

There is another matter I mention here, although, as you will see, it more directly relates to the interest of the younger members of the Bar. The power to deal directly with the man who will actually conduct his case will give the litigant a much wider range of choice. He will not be practically compelled to take the counsel his solicitor chooses. He will go to the counsel whom he knows, or of whom he has heard, and the result will be that the really clever young man will find his merits much more promptly recognized. There is one objection which I have heard made, and which I notice here. It is said that solicitors are not trained to advocacy, that it is a very different thing in its nature, very different to the work of conducting the procedure of a case, and that the division of labour is a natural arrangement. I do not entirely accept this. But, if the arrangement is a natural one, the fusion of the branches of our profession would not prevent it. There are now solicitors who would make great advocates ; there are barristers who would do thoroughly well the solicitor's work ; and, by letting each do the work for which he is best fitted, we should give the litigant a larger area of choice, and save him from the useless burden of being bound to employ two persons instead of one.

I will make one further observation as to advocacy in our Courts. It has been recently said by an experienced judge that "eloquence, either in prosecuting or defending prisoners, is almost unknown and unattempted at the Bar." I should be very sorry to think this is true, and it is quite contrary to my own judgment. But the standard of eloquence in our Courts is certainly not a high one. Our Inns of Court, strangely enough, have no professors either of rhetoric or elocution, and young men appear to have the idea that the art of oratory comes by nature, and that it is the one art for which no training is required. And, I fear, there are very few members of the Bar who have studied this most valuable and most highly-rewarded of all the arts which can be acquired by man in the teachings of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. I have not the slightest doubt that many solicitors could speak—and I know that in County Courts they do speak—quite as well as the average member of the Bar, and it is impossible that giving a wider choice of advocates should lower the standard of advocacy. The natural and the necessary result would be to raise it.

I now turn to consider the matter from the point of view of

the solicitor, and try to put myself in the situation of one who has been induced to choose that branch of his profession. I confess that to hear it called the lower or inferior branch would be something of a trial. But, considering that a larger knowledge of law is required from a solicitor on his admission than is even now demanded for admission to the Bar, that a solicitor is called upon to pay a considerable sum each year for carrying on his profession, that he is bound to the exercise of reasonable skill in the practice of the law, that he is subject to the strict authority of the Courts, and that any breach of professional duty or any serious offence against the law is promptly punished by his suspension or his expulsion from the practice of his profession, it does seem strange that there should be so enormous a disproportion between the rewards in emoluments and honour which are open to the members of the two branches of this learned profession.

Let us look at the rewards which are open to the Bar, and I, of course, confine myself to that of England. At this moment there are thirty-six men, each of whom receives not less than £5,000 a-year as holding, or having held, judicial office, or the post of a Law Officer. Of these, six have founded peerages, sixteen are members of the Privy Council, and, besides that, there are ten other Councillors who enjoy that honour by virtue of having held legal or judicial office. There is no ground for cavil at the number of the salaries of which I speak, or the honours which are granted. It is fitting that besides those who serve the office of Lord High Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Master of the Rolls should be members of the House of Lords, and no one would doubt that they and the Lord Justices of Appeal are worthy to be sworn of Her Majesty's Privy Council. And the salary I have named is not sufficient to tempt men who are in the full course of success at the Bar. I remember Lord Justice Thesiger telling me he gave up £7,000 a year when he accepted judicial office, and certainly the majority of those who accept judgeships suffer a loss of income by the change.

For those who are not successful leaders there is some consolation in the fact that fifty-six County Court judgeships and twenty-three Metropolitan magistracies are open to them with a salary of £1,500 a year for each appointment. As compared with this the solicitors' branch of our profession has no prospect of emolument or honour except a few chief clerkships and taxing masterships in the Chancery Division, the knight-hood of a town clerk when an exhibition is held, or the occasional baronetcy given to a successful election agent. I consider that between the two branches of the legal profession the

disproportion in this respect is far too strongly marked, and that we should get stronger judges and raise the tone of that part of the profession, which is now so greatly disadvantaged, if those honours and rewards were open to their competition as well.

There is only one other matter I mention from the solicitors' point of view. We hope and believe that the changes shortly to be made in the law will greatly simplify all conveyances, and will put an end to a great deal of the work that lawyers now have to do in tracing and verifying titles, and it seems only fair if a portion of the solicitor's work is abolished by Act of Parliament, that he should be allowed to compete in departments which have hitherto been closed to him. But while I believe that from the point of view of the public, and from the point of view of the solicitors, this change would be right and useful, my strongest reason for desiring it is my interest in the fortunes of the members of the Bar. I do not stop to consider the opinions of those whom I have mentioned as enjoying the prizes of the profession. Each of them, and I am one of them myself, has five thousand golden reasons every year for being entirely satisfied with things as they are. But the condition of the general body of the younger members of the Bar is by no means satisfactory. The struggle of the man who comes to the Bar without any powerful patrons to force him into practice has always been a very hard one, but I believe it has become harder of late years. I know what the difficulties are, for I have seen too many men as capable of work and as industrious as I, but without the good fortune that has helped me on, persevere for a time, making great sacrifices, enduring much disappointment, and forced at last to turn away from the practice of the profession in which they had hoped to win fame and fortune. Many go to the ranks of literature, others seek secretaryships or agencies, or some small appointment in our colonial service. Others, again, having sacrificed some years of their lives in compulsory idleness because no man gave them anything to do, turn away to the other branch of the profession, and in so doing abandon with a sigh all the generous ambitions with which they started of public service and of public honour.

I have no patronage whatever in my gift as Solicitor General ; but it has been brought to my knowledge since I have held that post that the number of men who, having been some years at the Bar and fully qualified for its work, are despairing of ever making it a means of livelihood at all is much larger than even I had believed it to be. And this state of things is likely to grow worse. Every change in the rules of procedure naturally gives the larger portion of the work to the solicitor, as the object of these rules (which they sometimes entirely defeat) is

to render litigation less expensive. And there is another change in the law which cannot be far off which would seriously affect the interests of the Bar. At present certain classes of actions cannot be instituted in the County Court. Libel is one of them, and it is only necessary to look at the columns of the *Times* newspaper to see that the trial of libels, many of them of a frivolous character, occupies our judges during many days of their work. There is no reason why these actions should not be tried in the County Court, and if that change were made a very large class of work would be thrown open to the advocacy of solicitors, while no corresponding privilege would be given to the Bar.

The young man now coming to the Bar, if he finds no clients to intrust him with briefs, can earn no money at all in his profession. If he were allowed to do solicitor's work and receive solicitor's remuneration he would almost certainly be able, if he had made himself known for his capacity and industry, to earn at least that small income which would enable him to wait patiently and safely for the opportunity of higher distinction. I must say I think the work of advocacy would be very often more thoroughly and intelligently performed if the advocate had closer practical knowledge of the conduct of the cause in its earlier stages, and a clearer appreciation of the importance and meaning of the different steps that have been taken.

I have thus considered from the point of view of the public, of solicitors, and of barristers the question whether the fusion of the two branches of our craft would be an advantage, and my clear opinion is that it would be a benefit to all. I need hardly remind you that the system already exists in many places. The English barrister who goes to practise in the colonies, or in India, has to act both as solicitor and counsel, and finds no difficulty in doing so. Again, in the United States the system has been long established, and while the incomes of the leaders of the legal profession there are not, I believe, inferior to those earned in this country, and the part taken by lawyers in public life is very considerable, all who have read the reports of legal proceedings in the United States recognize the ability of their advocates and the sound learning which is found on their judicial bench.

I hope I have satisfied some of you, at all events, that the change of system I am advocating is one which for many reasons it is desirable to effect. But I must at the same time say that it is not a simple matter; and that it involves so many questions, and touches so closely on the interests of both branches of the profession, that it could not be effected by a simple Act of Parliament of two clauses. To say by such an act that our system should at once be changed, and that the

members of either branch might henceforth exercise all the privileges and do all the work hitherto confined to the other, would be inflicting considerable injury on some members of the Bar. There are those who are making moderate and steady incomes as counsel habitually employed by certain firms of solicitors. If the members of those firms were themselves able to come into Court and carry cases through every stage, those members of the Bar would suffer immediate loss, perhaps amounting to the destruction of their practice, and men no longer youthful could not undertake the unfamiliar work of that which has hitherto been exclusively the solicitor's part of the profession.

I think, apart from these considerations, that the passing of such a measure would be a crude and undesirable way of endeavouring to effect the object.

There are other subjects to be considered, and the matter of legal education is one of the most important. At present, so far as the Bar is concerned, it is left entirely to the Inns of Court and the committee jointly appointed by them. Now, the Inns of Court are venerable and interesting institutions, but their staunchest admirer can hardly contend that they do any substantial work in the way of legal education. When I was called to the Bar no knowledge of law was required from the applicant, nor was he required to pass any examination of any kind. It was enough that he should have attended a few lectures, or that he should have been recognized as a pupil for twelve months by some member of the Bar. Things are a little better now, but it is hardly likely that the anomaly will long be allowed to continue that the admission to practise in Courts of Justice should lie practically in the discretion of the Benchers of the different Inns, who are naturally anxious to attract members to the Inns to which they respectively belong, and are alike unable to enforce any real course of legal study, or to attract a sufficient number of real students even by offering substantial scholarships and prizes. I think that in these Inns of Court we have the material for a much better system.

Let the whole profession be one body, alike in the requirements of education, alike in its privileges, alike in its opportunities for the achievement of public distinction, and the obtaining of professional rewards ; and the Inns of Court, with their stately halls, their most excellent libraries, and the large resources they possess, might fitly be the colleges in which the work of a real legal education could be carried on. To effect this change it would be necessary to consider the conciliating of many antagonisms, the conquering of many prejudices, but I am persuaded it would be to the advantage of the whole profession, and would directly serve public interests, and therefore I have

made it my business to advocate it to you to-night in circumstances which may perhaps bring its importance plainly and clearly to the attention of those by whom it can be adequately discussed, and through whose influence the change must, if at all, be made.

Newspaper Press Fund Dinner.

JUNE 9, 1888.

SPEECH IN PROPOSING THE TOAST OF "PROSPERITY TO
THE NEWSPAPER PRESS FUND."

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,—I now have the honour of proposing to you the toast of the evening, "Prosperity to the Newspaper Press Fund." I am not called upon, I think, to justify my holding the position which has been given me to-night. The invitation of the Committee justifies that, and that invitation I am proud to see has been endorsed by the gathering of a very goodly company. My claim is that I am a member of the Newspaper Press Fund, entitled to be so by the fact of having been a working journalist—and that I am one who, though now removed from the actual practice of that profession, has never desired to lose touch with those with whom he was associated when he worked among them. But if I have no great personal claim, I hope—but am not quite sure—I have some sort of family claim to occupy the chair this evening. It is nearly 200 years since a very great event took place in the Parliament of this country, an event which Lord Macaulay has described as doing more for liberty and for civilization than the Great Charter or the Bill of Rights. For fifty years England had been under the rule of a licensing act, and liberty of the Press was a thing unknown; Milton had pleaded against the restrictions in their early days, and in the year 1694 the House of Commons sent up a Bill to the Lords continuing certain expiring Acts. The House of Commons intentionally left out the Act which restricted the liberty of printing in this country. The House of Lords, not then so advanced as it is to-day—inserted that Act among the continuing Acts; the Commons struck it out. A conference ensued, and a memorandum was drawn up by the Commons of their reasons for objecting to continue the Act; and the manager for the Commons who drew up and presented that representation to the House of Lords, which, immediately accepted, put an end to the system of licensing in this country and made the Press free as it has been from that

day, was Edward Clarke. He was member for Taunton. My own family history is sufficiently obscure for me not to be able precisely to say whether I am in direct lineal descent from him. I have not yet appealed to the seers and mystics of the Heralds' College to find a Norman baron from whom I am descended. But I am not without reason for thinking that there may be some connexion between me and the member of Parliament I have mentioned. He was member for Taunton; my great-grandfather was a yeoman farmer at Axbridge, in Somersetshire; and I hope it may be the case—at all events, I will please myself with the thought—that I may be in lineal descent from my illustrious namesake, who, two centuries ago, did great service to the Press of this country. It is some years since, looking at that passage in Macaulay's History, I thought to myself, if ever I should be invited to preside at the Newspaper Press Fund dinner, I would mention it, and not till then; and I have kept my resolution. But I could hardly have thought that the recollection would be so opportune as it is to-day. Although we have not now to relieve the Press of this country from the bonds of licensing laws, there is much in the law of libel which needs to be reformed. It is curious that only this week we have been engaged in an attempt, which I trust may be successful next year if not this, to relieve the Newspaper Press of this country from liabilities which are grievous and unjust. I ventured to say at the beginning of last year, speaking at a provincial Press dinner, that in my belief the Newspaper Press should be relieved from one obligation or disability which falls upon it to-day. Where a public meeting is held for public purposes, with the intention amongst those who hold it, that its proceedings should be known to the world for the influencing of public opinion, there the newspaper editor has a right to send his reporter; and if that reporter gives a fair report of that meeting, not only is the newspaper editor, in my judgment, not bound to strike out anything from the report, but I do not believe he would be doing his duty if he struck out anything. If a man, speaking at a public meeting where he either knows or has good reason to believe his words will pass into the columns of a newspaper, takes that opportunity of speaking in slanderous terms of another man, he should, by law, be made responsible as if he had authorized and instructed the newspaper editor to publish the libel. But to put upon newspapers the burden that is put upon them to-day, and the liability for admitting, in the course of a fair report of a public meeting, some detached sentences which may be of a libellous character, to make the newspaper responsible for that, is not only to act unjustly towards those who are doing a great public service, but is to mistake the position and to undervalue the usefulness of the

Press of this country. I think the misapprehension has arisen because people have not quite understood what are the scope and extent of the service that the Newspaper Press renders to this country. The Newspaper Press is not a substitute for any one of the great institutions we have enjoyed and are proud of; but it makes them all more valuable. It is not a substitute for Parliament. One well known writer, who is not always to be taken seriously, has indeed suggested that when the newspapers have discussed public questions, Parliament has nothing useful left to do but to vote on the questions when they are put. It may have been meant as a joke; but the editorial columns of the newspapers can never supply the place of a report of parliamentary proceedings. The half-dozen shorthand writers who, taking turns, give the public the report of a great parliamentary speech, are doing more to educate and influence public opinion than the ablest leader-writer who ever sat down to write a column in the Press. Then, again, as regards public meetings. It has been suggested by some that our right of public meeting may be held cheap because popular feeling and ideas can ventilate themselves in the Press. I entirely and absolutely dissent from that. The precious and inalienable right of the people to meet in their own public places, which was not conferred by an Act of Parliament, and which it would be difficult to pass an Act of Parliament to take away, is one of the essential elements and safeguards of popular freedom. But though the newspaper does not supply the place of the public meeting, it does this: where the public meeting is held and the newspaper reporter is present, millions of readers are admitted to that meeting; they hear the orator's words; from the report they almost catch the enthusiasm of the meeting at which he speaks; and they, more fortunate than those who hear only, are able to read again and again the words he has spoken. In this way these great institutions of freedom of which we are proud, and by which we mean to stand—the free debates of Parliament, the free discussion in public meeting, are rendered a thousand times more valuable for the education and for the influencing of the people, by the fair and just freedom of a candid and a courageous Press. But, of course, I am not going to-night to argue questions with regard to the matter I have indicated. There is another aspect in which the Newspaper Press interests us. I am not speaking merely as to the education of opinion, nor merely as to the half-dozen newspapers, each of which has, on the best accountant authority, the largest circulation in the world, and each of which supplies its readers, not only with facts, but also with opinions, and even with the expressions of their daily conversation. But the daily marvel of the daily newspaper is something that we grow careless of. We grow so used to it. But every morning, when we take a

general newspaper in our hands, we see, as in a magic mirror, the whole work of the world. The whole course of human affairs at the time is laid before us. We study where we like, what subjects we like, as to what country we like. We can compare, as fifty years ago the best-informed statesman who had to deal with the responsibilities of public life could not compare, the circumstances, the opinions, the occurrences in every quarter of the globe. We see Germany, relieved for a moment from imminent anxiety, busying herself with a Ministerial crisis. We see in the home of the most modern type of civilization, enthusiastic persons, the chosen politicians of a great Republic, winding bandanna handkerchiefs round a marble bust, and getting up on their chairs to shout for fifteen minutes. We see in Spain an infant King making a royal progress through his dominions. We discuss the questions of the Chinese coming into Australia, of Portuguese on the west coast of Africa blocking up our improving stations. We learn all that is to be known of art, of literature, of commerce. All the area of the world is spread out before one in the column of the newspaper. We know where our ships are moving. We know the routes by which our friends come home from abroad. The merchant governs his commerce, the soldier plans his campaign, the statesman forms the combinations which go to make the peace and civilization of the world, by this daily study of materials brought to our own tables, with so much regularity and with so little expense to us, that we look carelessly at the sheet which on its pages mirrors to us the whole action of the world. But, if we pause for a moment to think of it, we begin to realize what an army of workers is engaged in bringing to us this information—from the chief leader-writer, who sits in his room to prepare the article required for the next morning, to the reporter, who at the most distant place is travelling after some vagrant member of Parliament to report his speech, and, when the meeting is over, rushing to catch a train at a station, and hurrying up to town to write out that speech. There are infinite diversities of occupation upon the Newspaper Press. Though to many it is a profession of great honour and of considerable emolument, there are hundreds and thousands of men in this country working hard in the service of the Press, men whose lives are very toilsome, men who by the very nature of their occupation are exposed to temptations and to risks—to personal risks—to the risk, amongst others, of falling out of employment, and who, in almost every branch of that employment, are dependent for their livelihood upon the sustained energy and vigour of their physical and their mental health. In such a profession, while there are many who succeed, there must be many who, from time to time, fall away. Sickness touches

them, perhaps at the moment when the profits of their work are more than ever needed at their homes, and they are obliged to seek some helping hand in their distress. Now, gentlemen, we are here in prosperity to-day; let us think of the less prosperous ones who may be helped and comforted by our subscriptions in this year and in future years. This is not a costly institution in its administration. It is not one of those thriftless charities which scatter as much as they spend, and are over-burdened by the weight of their own machinery. This is a fund administered by men who are themselves old journalists, who have known the difficulties, the ups and downs of a journalist's life. They administer the resources of this fund in that secrecy which makes the charity doubly welcome—and with a special, personal, and constant care to seek only such objects of its help as may be deserving. Need I say more to commend to you this institution? I hope that, in your generosity to-night, you will express the feeling which I ask you now to manifest in the acceptance of this toast. I have said nothing as to the working of the fund. If that is to be spoken of, I will leave it to the friend who worthily occupies the position of President—Sir Algernon Borthwick—and whom I call upon to respond to the toast. I now ask you, my lords and gentlemen, to join me in drinking, with all sincerity, "Prosperity to the Newspaper Press Fund."

*Speech delivered at the Dinner of the Exeter
Working-men's Conservative Union.*

IN RESPONSE TO THE TOAST OF "THE GUEST OF THE
EVENING."

NOVEMBER 20, 1889.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES, MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN, It is not quite usual to me, but I confess I feel some embarrassment in responding to the toast you have just so cordially honoured. I did not expect that it could ever be my lot again to be the guest of the evening at a "coming of age" gathering. (Laughter.) You must not be deceived by my appearance. I am more than twenty-one—(laughter)—and if I can claim, as I can claim, that this is in some sense a coming of age to me, it is to me a coming of age in exactly the same sense as it is that of the Working-men's Conservative Union and organization in Exeter. We both entered political life together, for you have now reached the

twenty-first year of the existence of your organization, and my first public speech upon politics was made in the year 1868, and the first speech that I made upon a political platform was printed as the first pamphlet of the National Union of Conservative Associations which in that year began the work that was so splendidly successful in the course of the few years that followed. Now, gentlemen, those twenty-one years have been an interesting time, and when I speak on this occasion, and look back to the time at which your Association was founded, I remember that in the autumn of 1868 the country was finishing the long and hotly contested General Election, which was the first General Election that followed on the Enfranchising Bill of the Conservative Government in 1867. The result of that General Election, like the result of each General Election which has taken place immediately after a great enlargement of the franchise, was disastrous to the Tory party. It was believed at the time by sanguine Radicals and by despondent Tories that it was not only disastrous, but fatal. And I well remember how towards the close of the year 1868, when we saw the new Parliament assemble with Mr. Gladstone at the head of a compact party—not an alliance, but a compact and single party, with a majority of eighty or ninety in the House of Commons—I well remember the despondent Tories and enthusiastic Radicals declaring that the Tory party must abandon for ever its hope of success and of power in this country. They could not imagine at that time of great Radical success that there could be any causes which would bring back the Tory party into a majority in Parliament and an ascendancy in the country. I ventured to remonstrate with my despondent friends. I remember making a speech towards the end of 1868 to protest against the abandonment of hope by those who had been so defeated at the polls. And what happened? That happened which has happened in each case of a great enlargement of the franchise—that where the first election gave a great majority to the Radicals the second election gave a great majority to the Tories. Well, gentlemen, an unchecked Radical misdoing was enough to disgust the country, and in 1874 the Tories came back for the first time since their betrayal and disorganization in 1846, to a position of ascendancy and power. But that is not all. If we look back from now to the time when the Reform Bill of 1867 was passed we shall find that there is a period of twenty-two years and a half. Of those twenty-two years and a half the Tory party has been in power for eleven years and a half, and the Radical party only for eleven years. There is no need, then, to speak with anything but satisfaction of the history of these twenty-one or twenty-two years. They have been marked by great events. They were marked by an event in 1884—the dealing with the

question of the franchise and the redistribution of political power—which was one of the most conspicuous successes that the leader of our party ever achieved. It had been hoped by Mr. Gladstone and his lieutenants that they would be allowed again to deal with the question of our representative institutions and of the distribution of political power in a way which would suit their party, and they were checked; they were checked by the resolute action of Lord Salisbury and by the resolution of the great assembly in which he sits, and for which Lord Sidmouth has to-night claimed, and claimed with full justification, the regard and the respect of the people of this country. I only stop for a moment to make an observation upon one thing which Lord Sidmouth said. He told us that he thought I should acknowledge that the House of Lords had done its duty to the country well. I think it has, indeed, done its duty to the country well. And he went on to say that he believed there were a good many members of the House of Commons who would be content to exchange the seats they hold in that Assembly for seats in the calmer atmosphere of the House of Lords. (Lord Sidmouth.—I did not say that.) I thought he did, and I was going to say I agree with him. I think there are many members in the House of Commons who would be very happy to have seats in the House of Lords, and although they are warned by Lord Sidmouth that the actual benches are not quite so comfortable as the benches on which they now sit, they would be content to put up with that small discomfort in consideration, at any rate, that they would never find themselves without any seat at all. Well, I have mentioned one great event that has happened in the course of these twenty-one years. There was another, and to my thinking a still more important and dangerous crisis, and that was when the constituencies were asked by Mr. Gladstone to accept at his hands the ill-considered scheme of Home Rule which was thrown before the country at the end of 1885. We can give credit to the constituencies of the country for the way in which that proposal was received. They met it with a sense on the part of the whole of our people of the gravity of the issue, and the responsibility of the decision which then was to be taken, which showed that the enlarged constituencies, enlarged even beyond the enlargement of 1867, by the operation of the Bill of 1884, were perfectly capable of bearing the responsibility of dealing with a sudden and difficult question. And now, at the end of twenty-one years, we have many things upon which to congratulate ourselves. We have, in the first place, a Government in power in which those who are allied to us in political opinion have, I believe, the fullest confidence. We have a Government in power which has during three years achieved—

I claim for it—a great success in all departments of administration, and signally in that most difficult department, the difficulties of which have been enormously increased by the proposals of the Home Rule scheme of Mr. Gladstone. We have not only a Government in power, but we have—what scarcely existed twenty-one years ago—a Conservative Government, an assembly of experienced administrators pledged to act together in the public service, and able at any moment to accept the responsibilities of dealing in Parliament with the affairs of the State. And, sir, we have also a very widely extended and popular organization of the Conservative party. I believe you are well served in Exeter. I know that we are well organized in my borough of Plymouth, and we have been steadily making strides through all parts of the country with respect to organization, which twenty years ago was only to be found in some exceptional boroughs in the north of England—the organization which, while it does not diminish in the least the influence and authority of those who are the natural leaders of the Constitutional cause, at the same time brings home to every part of the constituency, and every individual in it, the sense of personal responsibility for the result of the contest. And now, with these conditions, with these leaders, and with these organizations, we have to face a new set of questions. I am not going to discuss in detail this evening the course of legislation during the past three years. I shall have to indicate to you something of its character, but there is a special reason why I should not care to dwell upon the Parliamentary history of the last three years, but why I should address myself to other topics, speaking to you here to-night. This is a Working-men's Conservative Union, and we are faced by, and I am very glad to say we are beginning seriously to discuss, questions more associated with the interests of the working classes of this country. We have great questions to consider. We have to see how far the party to which we belong is capable of dealing with, and prepared to deal with, these great questions. Sir, we are to some extent by our success as a Government the cause of these questions coming to the front. It is really partly because the Government has been so successful in its administration of foreign affairs and in its dealing with domestic difficulties, that questions of the kind to which I refer have forced themselves upon the attention of politicians. During the last three years there has been maintained peace, and that peace which alone the Tory party glories in—a peace with unstained honour, a peace which is not purchased by yielding in difficult questions to claims which we ought to have withstood, or to pretensions which might hereafter prove to be fruitful in injury to our people or commerce—but a peace which

is maintained by a firm and courteous assertion of the rights of England, and a firm protection of the interests of her people ; a peace which gives security and courage to her enterprises, and under which the industries of our people expand and flourish, and bring advantage and comfort to all classes of our community. Sir, that is the sort of peace we have succeeded in maintaining during these three years, and the natural result is that the wage-earning classes among us are claiming to have their share in the prosperity of the country. They are putting forward a fair and reasonable claim that capital shall not get all the benefits, but that labour shall get some immediate and tangible reward and have its share in the national prosperity ; and it is partly because of the great success which the Government has achieved, and of the great prosperity which is beginning to show itself in all the industries of our country, that we are brought face to face with problems which are alarming, and, I am afraid, are demoralizing some of our friends. Now, sir, what are these problems? I am going to speak with perfect frankness upon them to-night. If you are good enough to attribute to me a youthful age you must expect from me some of the indiscretions of a boyhood just passed. We have a claim from the wage-earning classes of this country, a claim for larger and more steady wages, a claim for better and healthier homes, a claim for shorter hours of labour, a claim for larger means of occupying and enjoying the hours of relaxation that may be left to them. Sir, in a great measure these are fair and reasonable claims, claims to be admitted and to be satisfied, if satisfied they can be—and I believe they can—without injury to any class of the community, and without breaking any of the rules which ought to guide the legislation of an honourable State. Let me say at once I am not in the least afraid of facing problems of this kind, and I cannot understand why a Tory should be. Sir, I am making an observation which has its limits, which might be qualified by reference to circumstances which I am not to-night dealing with ; but, sir, with regard to problems of this kind, there is no room for a new party, and there is no need for a new name. The old party under the old name has shown it is perfectly able to cope with questions such as these, and to render good service to the country in matters of this kind. Sir, I am amazed sometimes to hear persons who have authority in the Tory party speaking with horror of the advance of Socialism, and speaking of Socialists as if they were a body of people who were unpatriotic to a degree and almost hostile to the human race. I do not understand it, sir. There is a Socialism that is false. There is a Socialism that would disregard the rights of property ; there is a Socialism that would disregard the rights of

labour; would leave no man free in the enjoyment of his own, and would leave no workman free in the direction of his course in life. That Socialism is mischievous. But no one can deny that there is a Socialism that is true. There is a Christian Socialism which guides our conduct to our fellows—and should and must guide the conduct of every Christian State, and in that sense it is too late to protest against the introduction of Socialism into our legislation. Not only has Socialist principle, looked at in its true sense, been long ago accepted in this country, but it is the great pride and boast that I make on behalf of the Tory party that it is that party which has recognized the guides and limits of true Socialism in this country, and has put its principles upon that subject into legislation of the deepest advantage to the people. Sir, let me just for a moment refer to its advocacy of principles, which might to some seem startling. Socialism, rightly understood, is that a State should not only have reference to the individual, but should have reference to the general welfare of the whole people—should look upon the condition of the people as gathered together in a State or in a city; should be prepared to do for the people from the funds which they themselves provide things which can be better done by the State than by the individual. How far have we gone on that principle? Why, sir, the greatest Socialist (in its true sense) of this century was that great and illustrious leader to whom our party must always feel in bonds of deepest gratitude—Mr. Disraeli. And when I hear our opponents put forth claims to be the originators and the patentees of new projects of social improvement I think they presume too much upon the forgetfulness of the people with regard to the great speeches and writings of Mr. Disraeli. Forty years ago he taught lessons of the duty of the State with regard to its working population. At that time his ideas were unfashionable. He was jested at, sneered at, and derided. But the day came when the long hope that he had cherished was fulfilled, when he stood in the House of Commons the leader of the Tory majority in that House, and at once he set his hand to the work which during those years he had looked forward to, and placed upon the Statute-book measures which now we are entitled to rest upon as the claim of the Tory party to the confidence of the people of this country. Let me examine one step further. The working-man of this country asks that his home shall be healthy. He asks that his wife and his children shall not be forced by unchecked competition to hours of labour which destroy at once the home and the health. He asks that there shall be, even for the town-living artisan, some open space where he may breathe the fresh air. He asks that his savings

shall be made the subject of a special and careful protection by the State. He asks that he shall be free, and protected in his freedom to combine with his fellow-workmen, in order to make terms with their employer as to the wages which their labour is to receive. And he asks that when he differs with an employer as to the reward of his work he and the employer shall be on equal terms before the law when their question comes to be debated. I have put these as claims on behalf of the working-man. They are not claims, they are facts. He has those rights now, and there is not a clause of the sentence I have just uttered which does not point to a statute put upon the Statute-book by a Tory Government in which the people of this country find security for their interests. The working-man desires that his home should be healthy. The Artisans and Labourers' Dwellings Act of the Tory Government has done more than any other statute for that purpose—taken with the Public Health Act, which is also the work of the Tory Government. He asks that his wife and children should not be, by the unchecked competition of labour, forced to excessive toil. (I shall have a word to say upon that in a moment when I quote some one else.) He asks for open spaces. They were saved to him by the legislation of a Tory Government. He asks that he may be free to combine with his fellow working-men in order to discuss with their employers the wages they are to have for their labour. That was secured to him by a Tory Government. He asks that if he and his employers differ they shall be absolutely equal before the law in the discussion of his claims. That was done for him by a Tory Government. Before 1875 if the workman broke his contract he was a criminal before a magistrate; if an employer broke his contract he was a litigant in the County Court. That Tory Government passed an Act which put employer and workman on absolutely the same level in those matters. Sir, I pass for a moment to the question of the claim of the workman that his wife and children shall not be forced into the labour market and so destroy home and health, and I turn aside to read three or four lines from a very interesting speech which was made last night—a speech which I should very much like to have heard, and which I should have still more liked to have followed—the speech which Mr. John Morley made at the Eighty Club. I do not stop to discuss that speech. It will want analysis, and more critical analysis than I have time for to-night. But I quote these words:—"I have always regarded, and I always shall regard, factory legislation as one of the most blessed chapters in our Statute-book. It has saved our working population, and by saving them it has enabled us though we work shorter

hours, to command the industrial supremacy of the world." Sir, I wonder when Mr. John Morley spoke these words, with every syllable of which I cordially agree—I wonder when he spoke these words if he remembered the history of the Factory Acts. The old fighters in that great struggle have almost all gone. There is one stately figure left, the Duke of Rutland, who, as Lord John Manners, many and many years ago pleaded the cause of the factory operatives. And those Factory Acts, of which now the chief champions of the Liberal party and the Radical party speak in such well-deserved terms of enthusiastic eulogium, were only passed by the persistent efforts of the members of the Tory party after the bitterest and most prolonged struggle against some of the then leaders of the Radical organization in this country. And they were completed, and it remained, happily indeed, for a Tory Government to finish the work, when in the year 1875 the Government of which I have spoken completed the whole series of the Factory Acts in this country. Sir, I have almost gone far enough in pointing out the claim of the Tory party to be listened to on this subject, but let me mention one thing more. It was when Mr. Disraeli was out of office, before the year 1874, that he spoke in the great towns of this country upon the question of the dwellings of the working-man and the importance of a healthy home as the foundation of national happiness and prosperity—and, sir, it was ridiculed by his opponents as a policy of sewage. They looked with contempt upon the man who could devote his attention to things so common and so humble as to bring before the public the question of the drainage of towns, and the rendering wholesome the houses of the working-man. And these very people, whose party fifteen years ago derided Mr. Disraeli for taking up the question of the homes of the working-men, are now trying to masquerade upon political platforms as being the only true friends the working-man ever had. Sir, we despise their pretensions. We challenge them to point out in any part of the Statute-book the work which has been done by a Liberal or Radical Government in this direction. And when they say, as I notice Mr. John Morley said, that they were the persons who had trust in the people, and wanted to extend and increase the local self-government of this country, I wonder he did not stop to mention that while they, after their fashion, had chattered about it for many years, and would have gone on chattering for another quarter of a century if they had been allowed to, the work was taken in hand and done by the Government the Session before last, and there has been established all over the country a system of local self-government which, with these

developments which were contemplated as part of the original scheme, will, I believe, satisfy the just claims of the people of this country for a direct influence upon their local affairs. Well now, sir, having done so much as this, what is there to prevent our dealing with these questions of the condition of the people? I believe the Tory party is in an excellent position for dealing with these questions. We are not likely to again have any great shifting of political power, any great enlargement of the enfranchised body. I hope we shall have some enlargement. I hope we shall have an opportunity of making some amendment in the registration laws which will prevent the unnecessary and vexatious exclusion from the franchise of these who belong to the classes to which Parliament has intended to give the vote, but who, by some accidental circumstance, find themselves excluded from the register. I am satisfied that an amendment of the registration laws would do good and no harm to the party prospects of the Tory party, and at all events I am anxious to sweep away some of the vexatious matters with regard to them. But I do not think there will be any very large extension of the franchise.

And speaking now, if you will allow me, for myself, and for myself alone, I would say that one of the greatest services that have been rendered to the country by that most excellent and deserving body, the Primrose League, has been that it has put the proposal for women's franchise—(cheers)—you should have heard what I was going to say first—(laughter)—one of its greatest services has been that it has put the proposal for women's franchise out of the field of practical politics.

Therefore, I do not think there will be any great modification of the electoral body with which we have to deal. There can be electorally no step by step alteration which can again purchase for the Radical party a succession of friendships of those whom they are going to introduce to the franchise. And further, with this body to work upon, with this experience and this tradition in respect of our work, surely we can face those questions which are coming to the front. It is a good thing that full advantage should be taken by the working-people of this country of the measure passed in 1875 by a Tory Government, which allowed them to combine without interference for the purpose of deciding their trade affairs with their employers. It is a good thing, and not a bad thing, that instead of having the terrible experience of forty years ago, burnt ricks, ruined mansions, and fights in our towns, we now have organizations of working-men in Trades Unions and other bodies, which, although they may be mistaken or misguided in some particular question in the dispute, at any rate have the feeling of responsibility and self-

restraint, which is most important in the settlement of our affairs. And we have men by whom these questions can be properly faced and dealt with. If you want to forecast the future of political parties do not look only at the programmes they send out with the idea that at a particular moment a particular set of words will catch votes. Look at the men who have to carry them into effect. If I wanted to show you how utterly baseless is the idea that Mr. Parnell and his party would ever succeed in the adventure they have undertaken I should find it in this fact, that Mr. Parnell, after years of undisputed supremacy over what calls itself the National party, cannot get men of position and repute to join him; he is obliged to fill the benches of the House of Commons which belong to the National party with men against whom I say nothing personally. Indeed, if I had anything to say against them personally it is in the House of Commons that I should say it. I make no accusation against them personally, but nobody imagines that Mr. Parnell's obedient followers in the House of Commons are representatives of the Irish people. I believe no one ever perpetrated such a gross libel on the Irish nation as to say that it was fairly represented by the people who follow Mr. Parnell. Now, gentlemen, let us apply the same test to other parties. Gentlemen, we have to see who are the new recruits in one party and in the other, and I should be quite contented to compare the two new recruits on the Gladstonian side with the two latest recruits on the Tory side. The Gladstonians sent to Parliament Mr. Keay and Mr. Morton, while our Tory party sent to Parliament, from Dover and from Brighton, Mr. Wyndham and Mr. Loder. We have, sir, not only the old traditions, we have not only the leaders with experience, but we have the young men with courage, energy, and ability to deal with the problems which are coming to the front.

Looking back over these twenty-one years, I congratulate you in Exeter on the work which you, in company with many other Associations in other parts of the country, have so worthily done. And looking forward to the future, which I do without any fear at all, I am persuaded in that the future we shall find our principles take a stronger root, and that our doctrines will be still more courageously upheld by the people. Every day the people of this country are becoming more thrifty, more sober, more educated, more intelligent, and more conscious of the privileges and responsibilities of free men, and there is no danger to the great institutions we are pledged to defend. This change that has taken place, this acceptance of stronger will and larger mind of the whole people of the country, will strengthen an honourable throne; it will extend

and deepen the authority of an aristocracy which is wortay of its traditions ; will offer a wider and more fruitful field to the energies of our great Church, and to its labours, and to its teachings ; and I look forward with this confidence because I am sure that no privilege, no technical rule, will half so well guard the Throne, the Monarchy, and the Church as they will be guarded by the intelligent and loyal devotion of a people who have been trusted, and who are worthy of trust.

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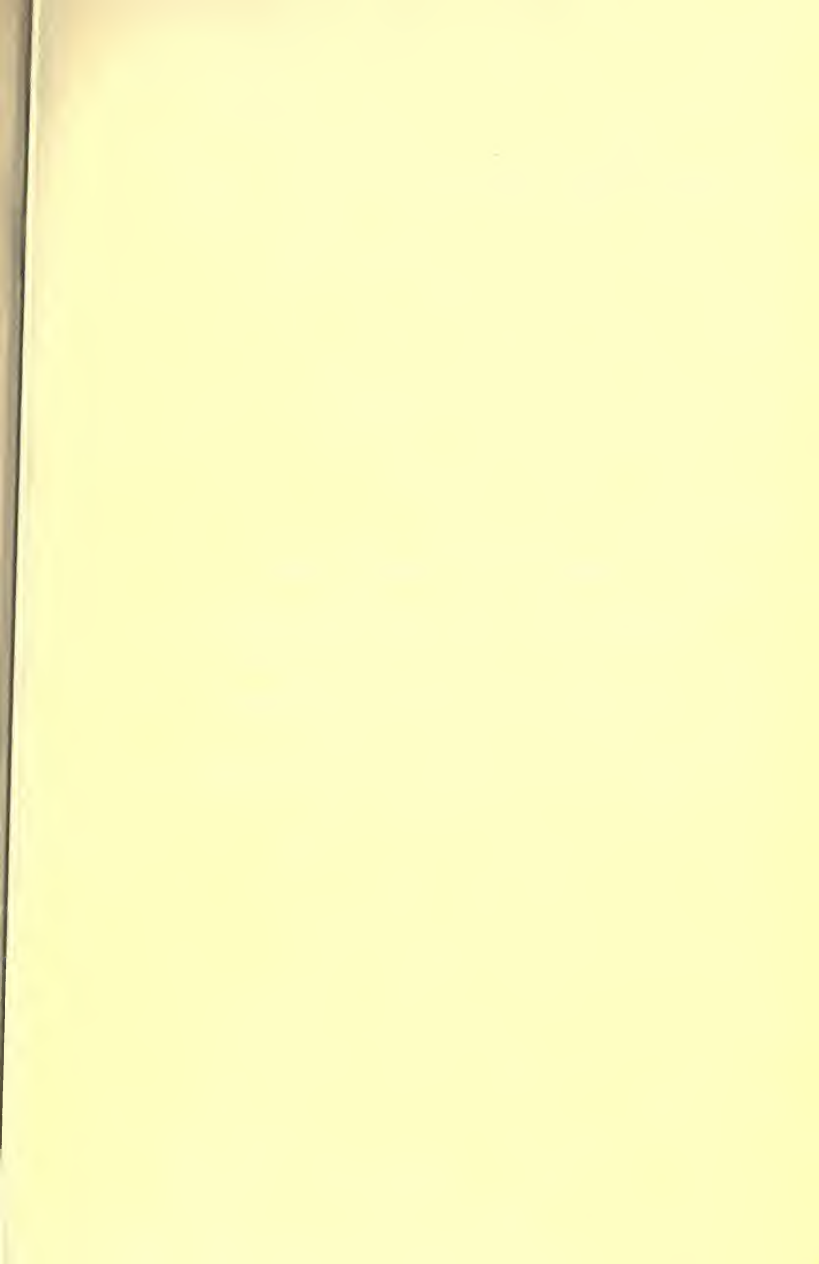
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