

Pilani Central Library

PILANI (Jaipur State)

Class No :- 327.42

Book No :- H 75

Accession No :- 9381

HOME RULE FROM THE TREASURY BENCH

SPEECHES DURING THE FIRST AND
SECOND READING DEBATES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THE RIGHT HON. H. H. ASQUITH, M.P.

T. FISHER UNWIN
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE
LEIPSIC: INSELSTRASSE 20

1912

(All rights reserved.)

INTRODUCTION

10, DOWNING STREET, S.W.

THE following pages contain a reprint of speeches delivered on behalf of his Majesty's Government on the occasion of the First and Second Reading debates on the Home Rule Bill of 1912. In them will be found a presentation of the case for Home Rule from different individual points of view, not indeed in full detail, but rather in the general terms appropriate to such discussions.

The demand for Home Rule still comes with unabated and unvarying force from four-fifths of the Irish representatives, and the people of England, Scotland, and Wales are now ready to consider the question stripped of prejudice and passion, and to come to a settlement based on justice, common sense, and Imperial conveni-

Introduction

ence. To such as desire a settlement on these lines I venture to commend this volume, with the hope that they will find in it an intelligible account of what the problem is, and of how the Liberal Government desires to solve it.

H. H. ASQUITH.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION BY THE RIGHT HON. H. H. ASQUITH	5

FIRST READING

THE RIGHT HON. H. H. ASQUITH	9
THE RIGHT HON. HERBERT SAMUEL	54
THE RIGHT HON. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL	90

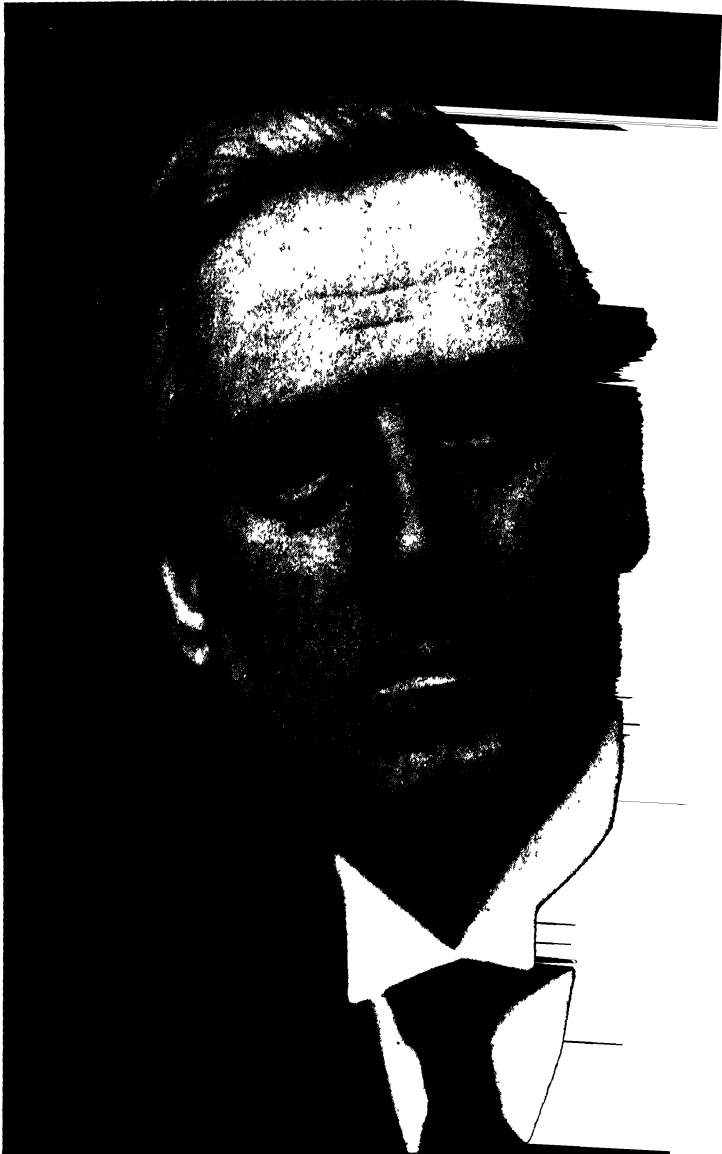
SECOND READING

THE RIGHT HON. WINSTON CHURCHILL	107
THE RIGHT HON. LIEUT.-COLONEL SEELY	142
THE RIGHT HON. SIR EDWARD GREY	162
THE RIGHT HON. SIR RUFUS ISAACS	188
THE RIGHT HON. HERBERT SAMUEL	226
THE RIGHT HON. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL	255
THE RIGHT HON. T. W. RUSSELL	285
THE RIGHT HON. H. H. ASQUITH	304

LIST OF PORTRAITS

THE RIGHT HON. H. H. ASQUITH, K.C., M.P. *Frontispiece*

	FACING PAGE
THE RIGHT HON. HERBERT LOUIS SAMUEL, M.P.	54
THE RIGHT HON. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL, K.C., M.P.	90
THE RIGHT HON. WINSTON CHURCHILL, M.P.	107
THE RIGHT HON. LIEUT-COLONEL SEELY, M.P., D.S.O.	142
THE RIGHT HON. SIR EDWARD GREY, K.G., D.L., D.C.L., M.P.	162
THE RIGHT HON. SIR RUFUS ISAACS, K.C.V.O., K.C., M.P.	188
THE RIGHT HON. T. W. RUSSELL, M.P.	285



W. W. Hoynes

HOME RULE FROM THE
TREASURY BENCH

THE FIRST READING

HOME RULE FROM THE TREASURY BENCH

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RIGHT
HON. H. H. ASQUITH, M.P., IN IN-
TRODUCING THE HOME RULE
BILL, *April 11, 1912.*

IT is nineteen years since Mr. Gladstone, in a memorable speech which is still fresh in the recollection of most of us who heard it, at this Table moved for leave to introduce the second and last of his measures to provide for the better government of Ireland. That speech, taken, as it must be, by way of supplement to the speech in which he introduced the earlier Bill of 1886, contains the classic exposition of what I may term the historic case as between Great Britain and Ireland. I shall not attempt to-day to retrace the ground which he covered. I do not presume to be able to bend the bow of Ulysses. But it is within my compass, and it is germane to the task which I have undertaken to-day, if before I enter upon any explanation of the pro-

Home Rule

visions of the Bill which I am about to introduce, I take up the narrative where Mr. Gladstone was obliged to leave it, and ask the House of Commons to consider how far the case for or against what is called Home Rule has been affected one way or another by the course of events since 1893.

That inquiry naturally subdivides itself into two branches, according as the problem is regarded from the point of view of Ireland alone or especially, or from the point of view of the United Kingdom and the Empire at large. Let us then first see how the case stands in regard to Ireland. As Mr. Gladstone pointed out, it was not till the General Election of 1885 that the democracy of Ireland was able to give effective utterance to its view as to the way in which it should be governed. From the first moment the Irish people was granted an articulate political voice it pronounced by a majority of four to one of its representatives in favour of Home Rule. That verdict was repeated substantially in the same proportions in 1886 and in 1892, and when Mr. Gladstone spoke in 1893 he had in support of the proposition that "Ireland demands Home Rule" the evidence of three successive General Elections.

Since then nearly twenty years have passed, and from the date of the extension of the Franchise in 1884 we have had eight General Elections. The fortunes of parties in this House have during that time ebbed and flowed ;

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

Governments have come and gone ; great personalities have filled the scene, and passed away. We have had as a nation peace and war, adversity and prosperity, shifting issues, changing policies ; but throughout the welter and confusion, amid all the varying phases and fields of our electoral and parliamentary campaigns, one thing has remained constant, subject neither to eclipse nor wane, the insistence and persistence of the Irish demand. It remains to-day, in April, 1912, what it was in January, 1886, and what in the interval it has never ceased to be, a demand preferred by four-fifths of the elected representatives of the Irish people. Analyse the figures a little more closely, and they become even more significant. Here in Great Britain, with the exception of a few peculiarly situated areas, we are accustomed to see the Parliamentary complexion of particular constituencies change from time to time in correspondence with the changes in public opinion, but over by far the larger part of Ireland, while this great issue of national self-government dominates the scene, you see nothing of the kind. The vast majority of the Nationalists' seats are not even contested by those who differ from them. Eighty per cent. at the last election of the Nationalist Members were returned without opposition. In the three provinces of Leinster, Munster, and Connaught, with, I believe, only three exceptions—one of them the borough of Galway, in which there was not a serious fight—the only pollings that

Home Rule

took place were between rival Nationalist candidates.

Ulster is the only province where there were real contests, and where opinion is genuinely divided. But look at Ulster. Taking Ulster as a whole, the province of Ulster is represented at this moment, how? By seventeen Unionists and sixteen Home Rulers. These figures in themselves are quite sufficient to show the misleading character of the pretence that Ulster would die rather than accept Home Rule. I have never under-estimated the force, and I have never spoken with disrespect of the motives of the strong and determined hostility which is felt to Home Rule by the majority in the north-eastern counties of Ulster, reinforced, I agree, by a powerful minority in other parts of that province. It is a factor which sane and prudent statesmanship cannot and ought not to leave out of account. I hope presently to show that we have not ignored it in the framing of this Bill. But we cannot admit, and we will not admit, the right of a minority of the people, and relatively a small minority—particularly when every possible care is being taken to safeguard their special interests and susceptibilities—to veto the verdict of the vast body of their countrymen. That verdict, I say again, is to-day as emphatic as it was twenty-five years ago. And if you refuse to recognise it, you are refusing to recognise the deliberate constitutional demands of the vast majority of the nation, repeated and

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

ratified— (*Hon. Members*: “What nation?”) What nation? The Irish nation—repeated and ratified time after time during the best part of the life of a generation. So far, then, Mr. Gladstone’s position is strongly fortified by our later experience.

But, while Ireland remains constant in her political claim, she has, in other respects, not stood still. And it is necessary to consider what is the bearing, if any, of these other changes which she has undergone upon the Home Rule case. I am glad to acknowledge that the improvement in the conditions of social order—due to a variety of causes, both material and moral—has deprived one of the arguments which used sometimes to be employed of much of its cogency and appositeness. Home Rule can no longer be represented as it used to be sometimes, as a counsel of despair, as a concession to violence, as an appeal to the fears and apprehensions of the British electorate. On the other hand, the social and economic conditions of Ireland and its relations to the United Kingdom have been largely affected since 1893 by Imperial legislation. There are the Local Government Act, the Land Purchase Act, the Labourers Act, the Universities Act, and last, but not least, the Acts for establishing Old Age Pensions and National Insurance. There are, I know, some critics who say that the mere enumeration of such a catalogue of beneficent measures is in itself a refutation of the supposed necessity for Home Rule,

Home Rule •

and ought to make an irresistible appeal to the gratitude of the Irish people. That is not, to my mind, a very formidable argument. I can, at any rate, imagine an Irishman—if I were an Irishman, talking as an Irishman—saying that there are still two sides to the account, and that measures such as these, even if they had been shaped more nearly than some have been in accordance with Irish wishes and Irish interests, were but a tardy and inadequate set-off against an irreparable past, against the evils wrought, as an Irishman would say and believe, by over-taxation, by depopulation, by the legalised confiscation of the property of the tillers of the soil, which went on unchecked during the forty years that elapsed between the grant of Catholic emancipation and the first of Mr. Gladstone's great remedial Acts.

But I do not wish to burn my feet in the embers of historical controversy. It is more to my purpose—more, at any rate, to my immediate purpose—to observe that the working of these new laws has already done much to weaken the force, and indeed to blunt the point of what twenty years ago were some of the most serviceable arrows in the Unionist quiver. Why do I say that? First because the operation of elective bodies, such as the county councils, which have now been at work for over fifteen years, has not been attended by the jobbery, maladministration, and persecution of minorities which were so glibly predicted as the inevitable

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

incidents of self-government in Ireland. Next—and this is really a more important point—the implication upon a large, I might say upon a colossal, scale of Imperial credit in the working out of Land Purchase and in the maintenance of Old Age Pensions makes the idea of separation between the two islands more unthinkable than it ever was. Carlyle used to speak with a certain amount of contempt of the substitution for a sentimental of a cash *nexus* between employers and employed; but a cash *nexus*, still more, perhaps, a credit *nexus* between two countries in the relative geographical and economic conditions of Great Britain and Ireland, is a sensible and measurable addition, if addition were needed, to the countless invisible and immaterial ties which have made them politically one, and which no mutation of time or circumstance can ever put asunder.

I wish now to ask the House to proceed to consider the same problem, and make the same survey, from a wider point of view, that of the United Kingdom and the Empire at large. I myself, while recognising to the full the priority and paramount urgency of the Irish claim, have always presented the case for Irish Home Rule as the first step, and only the first step, in a larger and more comprehensive policy. I said so with the utmost distinctness in a speech which I made on the Second Reading of the Bill of 1893, and in the twenty years which have since elapsed there is

Home Rule

not one year which has not illustrated and emphasised with ever-growing cogency and clearness the imperative need, in the interests of the United Kingdom and of the Empire as a whole, for the emancipation from local cares and local burdens of the Imperial Parliament. Look, first of all, at the effect of our present system upon purely domestic legislation and administration. It inflicts every year a double injury upon each of the component parts of the United Kingdom. For the moment I leave Ireland out of the account. In the first place there is no time or room to deal with their separate needs. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that when the season annually comes round for compiling the King's speech, the practical question for those concerned with its composition is what is the least instalment of that which is admittedly overdue by which England, Scotland, and Wales can respectively for the Session be bought off. That is what it comes to, and further, not only is our local legislation hopelessly in arrear, but under our existing arrangements it is constantly coloured and twisted and warped by the voices and votes of those who have no direct concern in the matter. Local experience, local sentiment, and local interest are over-ridden and set at naught. You will never get—I am speaking the lesson that has been taught me by a quarter of a century of Parliamentary experience—the separate concerns of the different parts of this United Kingdom treated either with

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

adequate time or with adequate knowledge and sympathy until you have the wisdom and the courage to hand them over to the representatives whom alone they immediately affect.

But scanty and insufficient as is, of necessity, the attention which Parliament has given to local legislation, what is the result in other directions of our honest and strenuous but ineffectual efforts to grapple with a desperate task. Let the House consider for a moment the extent and variety of the field over which we insist upon exercising daily and exclusive supervision. Look at the Question Paper of this House on a Monday or Thursday in any week you like to select. What does it include, or, rather, what does it not include? Delay in the postal service of some hamlet in Connemara, a dispute about trawling in the Moray Firth, a decision perhaps in a poaching case by some rural bench in Wales, a case of deportation in East Africa, the position of the Mohammedan community in the new Presidency of Bengal, the efficiency or inefficiency of the rifle that is served out to the Army or to the Territorial Force, the seaworthiness of the latest type of *Dreadnought*; and, perhaps, the international relations between Great Britain and Germany. I am sure the House will agree I am not exaggerating when I say that is a typical case, illustrated by the Order Paper, of almost any day in a week of the Parliamentary Session. These are but samples of the matters, varying from the infinitely great to the infinitely small, of

Home Rule

which the House of Commons, under our present system, requires, and properly requires, to be constantly informed.

Now I ask this question : Has any deliberative assembly in the history of the world ever taken upon itself such a grotesquely impossible task? People complain, both inside and outside the House, of the deterioration of the quality of our debates and of their excessive curtailment. These twenty years, since 1893, have seen the development in our procedure, stage by stage, both parties having had a hand in the process, of new accelerating expedients, and, in particular, the closure by what is called guillotine. Except as a safeguard, which is not often needed, against wanton repetition or obstruction, does any one welcome it? Is it satisfactory to any one, I do not care in what quarter of the House he sits, that large fragments of important legislation should pass without adequate debate, or sometimes without debate at all, or that vast sums of public money should at the end of every Session be voted, undiscussed, unexamined, silently, and *en bloc*? No ; there is no one who cares for the dignity and for the efficiency of the House of Commons who would use this modern machinery with anything but reluctance and, indeed, with repugnance. But it is the creature of our own self-imposed necessities, and, so long as you insist upon your present system of centralised impotence, resort to it may be, and often is, the less of two evils.

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

Meanwhile, how are we doing our duty to the Empire at large, with its ever-increasing appeals to our interests? I do not exaggerate when I say that if you were to sit continuously during the whole twelve months of the year, and worked through them with unremitting ardour and assiduity, you would find at the end, not only that there were still large arrears of legislation which you had not even attempted to overtake, not only enormous sums raised by taxation whose appropriation had never even been discussed, but that there were vast areas of the Empire—I do not now speak of the self-governing Dominions—for which we are still directly responsible as trustees, to whose concerns we had not been able to afford so much as one single night. From the Imperial point of view, that is the case for Home Rule. The claim of Ireland rightly comes first, and must be separately dealt with. (*Hon. Members:* “Why?”) Why? Because the task is too large and complex and the conditions too varied. (*Mr. Malcolm:* “Why Ireland first?”) That may not seem so to hon. gentlemen opposite. I say the task is too large and complex and the conditions are too varied to admit of its being accomplished by one blow and by a single measure. What we are doing now—I say this advisedly—we should do with the distinct and direct purpose of these further and fuller applications of the principle. (*Sir Edward Carson:* “Will the right hon. gentleman put the question

Home Rule

of Home Rule all round in the preamble?") That is a very premature interruption. I am going to explain the Bill presently, if the right hon. gentleman will exercise a little patience. Home Rule, in this larger sense, in my opinion, rests upon the necessities, is demanded by the responsibilities, and is indeed due to the honour of the Imperial Parliament.

Let me point out further and finally that such a process is in strict accordance with the spirit and the tendency of our Imperial development. Since 1893 we have seen within the Empire the formation of the Australian Commonwealth, the grant of self-government to the Transvaal, and the erection of the Union of South Africa. The case of the Transvaal—and some of us remember what was said about the Transvaal, and all of us now know how absolutely futile were the predictions which were then made, as futile as will be the predictions that are made in regard to this Bill—the case of the Transvaal is strictly analogous to that of Ireland. He would be a bold man—I do not know whether the noble lord (*Lord Hugh Cecil*) will undertake to do so—who would assert that the case of Ulster presents more difficulties or ought to be less capable of solution than that of Boer and Briton living side by side in a territory just recovering from the ravages of internecine war. In the cases of Australia and South Africa the object was to provide a central legislative and administrative authority to deal with matters of common interest

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

to a group of separate but adjacent States. In the pursuit of that object the utmost care was taken, as it had already been taken in the previous case of the Dominion of Canada, to keep alive and to preserve for the various States in all its integrity full local autonomy for local purposes. The Dominion started with separate States, which needed to be combined and centralised for matters of common concern. We start with a congested centre, which needs, if it is to do efficiently that which is common to the whole, to be relieved of everything else and to delegate local interests to local management. In a word, the great Dominions and ourselves, setting out from opposite poles, animated by the same purpose, are going to meet at the same goal. I do not believe there is one of them to-day of which the vast majority of the inhabitants are not in hearty sympathy with the spirit and purposes of the measure I am introducing.

I have said so much—I hope not too much—by way of introduction, because I want to make it quite clear what are the general grounds of policy on which his Majesty's Government are submitting this measure to the Imperial Parliament. I shall now proceed to ask a large measure of the indulgence of the House to explain, and so far as I can to elucidate, the provisions of the Bill itself. I preface that explanation with the statement that if it is to be at all clear and intelligible I must of necessity

Home Rule

omit a great many matters of detail—such matters, for instance, as the saving Clauses for vested rights of judges, Civil servants, and other officials, which, although not unimportant, are really uncontroversial. I shall content myself, and I ask the House to be content with, an exposition of the main governing provisions of the Bill. For convenience of explanation I think it will be desirable if I divide what I have to say into four separate heads or chapters. I will begin with the legislative powers which it is proposed to confer on the new Irish body. I shall then deal with the Executive, and then I shall proceed to consider finance. Finally, I shall deal with the position of Ireland after the grant of Home Rule in the Imperial Parliament here.

First of all, I will deal with legislation. There is no question here, as there was in the case of the Dominions, to which I have referred, of distribution and allocation, as between the central and the local bodies of the supreme legislative authority. We are here in the Imperial Parliament, and the Imperial Parliament can neither surrender nor share its supreme authority with any other body or any other part of his Majesty's dominions. That is the cardinal principle on which this Bill is founded; it is the cardinal principle upon which this Bill proceeds, and it is stated in express terms in its first Clause :—

“ Notwithstanding the establishment of the Irish Parliament or anything contained

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

in this Act, the supreme power and authority of Parliament in the United Kingdom shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters, and things within his Majesty's Dominions."

The supreme power and authority of the Imperial Parliament is to remain unimpaired and unchallenged.

We mean this Bill to confer upon Ireland, in regard to Irish concerns, local autonomy, subject only to such reservations and safeguards as the peculiar circumstances of the case require. The Bill, therefore, proceeds in the first Section and first Clause to declare that—

"after the appointed day there shall be in Ireland an Irish Parliament, consisting of his Majesty the King, and two Houses, namely, the Irish Senate and the Irish House of Commons."

What are to be the legislative powers of that body? It is to have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of Ireland. That is the general position. Now I come to consider and ask the House to consider what are the limitations of that general grant of legislative powers. In the first place it is limited by territorial limitations by the words I have quoted—

"power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of Ireland."

The Bill goes on to say that they shall only have power to make laws in respect of matters exclu-

Home Rule

sively relating to Ireland or some part thereof. You start with a territorial limitation, that is perfectly clear. In the next place we have excluded—and here we follow the precedent of the Bill of 1893—we have excluded certain matters which, although they may fall within the territorial limit, are matters which everybody will admit it is desirable should not be dealt with by the new body. These are substantially the same as the matters enumerated in the Bill of 1893—matters affecting the Crown, the making of peace and war, the Army, the Navy, treaties, dignities, treason, and a number of other matters as hon. Members will readily recognise by referring to the two Bills. We have found it necessary to-day, in consequence of legislation which has taken place between that time and this—or partly in consequence of that legislation—to propose the exclusion of certain Irish services—described in this Bill as reserved services—services reserved for the Imperial Parliament and the Imperial Executive.

First, and in some ways the most important, is the subject-matter of the Irish Land Purchase Act. It is, we think, of the utmost importance, in view of the history of this legislation and of future progress in its application and administration, that it should be made perfectly clear that the security of this system, which has been set up on the basis of Imperial credit, is not to be in any way affected—all matters connected with that security are to remain precisely as they

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

were before, both in relation to the fixing of prices, the collection of annuities, and the functions and appointment of the Estates Commissioners and the Land Judge. We have further provided in the Bill that any sums which, under the Land Purchase Acts, might have become chargeable to the Guarantee Fund, are, if the occasion should arise, to be made good by means of deductions from the transferred sum—the meaning of which I shall explain presently; it is sums to be transferred from the British to the Irish Exchequer in accordance with the proposals in the Bill. That is the first of the reserved services, together with the Old Age Pensions Acts, 1908 and 1911, and the National Insurance Act, 1911. The second of the reserved services is the Royal Irish Constabulary. The third is the Post Office Savings Banks; next, Public Loans, as far as respects loans made in Ireland before the passing of this Act; and finally, the collection of taxes other than duties of postage. The meaning of that will become clearer later on.

While we have treated these as reserved services, in regard to which the Irish Parliament will have neither the power of legislation nor of administration, we have provided in the Bill that in regard to some of them there shall be either an automatic transfer or a transfer at the option of the Irish Parliament. In regard to the Constabulary there will be automatically, in consequence of the provisions of the Bill itself,

Home Rule

a transfer of that force after the expiration of six years from the passing of the Act. In regard to Post Office Savings Banks, after ten years there may be a transfer at the wish of the Irish Parliament, after an adequate notice—a notice of six months—which will enable all depositors who are so minded to make their arrangements accordingly. I do not suppose for a moment that they will feel any disposition or temptation to do so. In regard to Old Age Pensions and National Insurance, we also give a power to the Irish Parliament to demand the transfer of those services after a year's notice. (*Laughter.*) I really do not understand that laughter. I think hon. gentlemen opposite might have the courtesy to wait until I come to deal with the financial provisions of the Bill, which are necessarily germane to a full understanding of this matter. In addition to these excluded topics embraced in the reserved services, we provide in the Bill that the Irish Parliament cannot repeal or alter any provisions of the Act itself, except in regard to certain subsidiary matters which are specially dealt with. Neither will it have the power to affect the right of appeal, which, as I shall presently show, we are going to give to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in all the questions which may arise as to the validity of the laws passed by that Parliament itself.

I come now to a further limitation. This, I think, vitally affects the main ground of the objection which is taken to the inclusion of Ulster,

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

or certain parts of Ulster, at any rate, within the ambit of the authority of the new legislative body. The Bill of 1893 contained, in its fourth Clause, a number of restrictions upon the powers of the Irish Legislature, which we do not in this Bill repeat. We do not do so for the reason, which we think is a good and sufficient reason, first of all that they were very vague in their terms, next because we believe them to be absolutely unnecessary so far as we can foresee the course of events; further, because they would give rise to infinite opportunity for litigation upon matters which are not very fit to be subject to the cognisance of the Courts of Law, and finally, because we believe that in so far as they were directed against real dangers, those dangers are amply provided against by the other safeguards provided in our Bill. We thought, and do think it right, to make special provisions for the protection and preservation of religious equality. I will read the exact terms of the Clause—it is Clause 3 in the Bill—which we shall submit for the consideration of the House:—

“ In the exercise of their power to make laws under this Act, the Irish Parliament shall not make a law so as either directly or indirectly to establish or endow any religion ”

—that was in the Bill of 1893—

“ or prohibit the free exercise thereof, or to give a preference, privilege, or advantage, or impose any disability or disadvan-

Home Rule

tage, on account of religious belief or religious or ecclesiastical status, or to make any religious belief or religious ceremony a condition of the validity of any marriage.”

These words, as the House will see, are chosen specially to exclude the possibility—I have never thought it myself even a possibility—of legislation on the part of this new Irish Parliament to attempt to give effect to either of those recent papal pronouncements which go by the name of the *Ne temere* and *Motu proprio* decrees, in other words, to establish any privileged status of clerical persons before the tribunals of the country, or in any way to interfere with the validity of mixed marriages between persons of different religious beliefs. These are the exclusions, limitations, and restrictions. We go on to provide, in order that the Irish Parliament may not transcend its constitutional limits, two additional safeguards.

In the first place there is the veto of the Lord Lieutenant under the seventh Clause of the Bill, which provides that he shall give or withhold his consent to Bills passed by the two Houses of the Irish Parliament subject to two limitations—namely, first, he shall comply with any instructions given by his Majesty—that means by the Imperial Executive of this country—in respect of any such Bill; and next, he shall, if so directed by his Majesty—that again refers to the Imperial Executive here—postpone giving the assent of his Majesty to any such Bill for such

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

period as his Majesty—that is, the Executive—may direct. So we reserve completely unimpaired, subject to the responsibility of the Executive here, the Imperial Parliament, the power of vetoing or postponing any legislation which the Irish Parliament may pass. Finally, there is and must remain, and it is expressly recognised, the over-riding force of Imperial legislation, which can at any time nullify, amend, or alter any Act of the Irish Parliament. To make that matter abundantly clear we have provided in the last Clause of the Bill in these terms :—

“ Where any Act of the Irish Parliament deals with any matter with respect to which the Irish Parliament have power to make laws, which is dealt with by any Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed after the passing of this Act and extending to Ireland, the Act of the Irish Parliament shall be read subject to the Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, and so far as it is repugnant to that Act, but no farther, it shall be void.”

So you have, first of all, in the veto of the Lord Lieutenant exercisable by the Imperial Executive, and subject to the control of the Imperial Parliament, and next in the inherent power expressly preserved in the Act of the Imperial Parliament itself, a complete and adequate safeguard for the maintenance of the ultimate sovereignty of the Imperial Parliament.

Home Rule

Now I come to the powers of the Legislature. If any question arise as to the validity of an Irish Act, as to whether it is or is not within the powers conferred by this Statute, the question will be settled—if it arise in the course of ordinary litigation which involves any such point—first of all by an appeal to the Irish Court of Appeal, and from it to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and next—even if the matter does not arise at all in the course of litigation but at the instance either of the Lord Lieutenant or of the Secretary of State here—by a special reference to the Judicial Committee, which shall determine the point even before the Act has come into operation at all.

So much for the legislative powers of the new Parliament. I now come to deal with its constitution. As I have said, we propose that it shall consist of two Houses—one to be called the Senate and the other the House of Commons. The Senate is to consist of forty Members, and the question, of course, arises in what manner and by what process those forty Members are to be selected. It will always be recognised, I think, that they should not be simply elected by the constituencies who return Members to the Lower House. In the Bill of 1893, where the number was, I think, forty-eight, they were to be elected, but elected upon a restricted franchise—a franchise confined to owners and occupiers of property over a certain rateable value. We do not think on consideration that that is a

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

satisfactory plan, and I believe that such is the opinion of Ireland. We have come to the conclusion—and it is a conclusion the reasonableness of which will, I think, become more clear when I state what are the character, the numbers, and the composition of the Lower House—that the best mode of dealing with this matter will be that the Senate should be a nominated body. We think so in view of the special circumstances of Ireland. It is most desirable to get in your Senate, if you can, representatives of the minority, persons who will safeguard the interests of the minority, persons who will not or who might not have a fair chance of being elected in a popular election, and it is still more desirable perhaps in Ireland than anywhere else that you should be able to draw for the purposes of your Senate upon resources which are not available in the case of elections. We believe that on the whole the exigencies of the case and the peculiar conditions of Ireland will be best satisfied by a nominated body—a body nominated, in the first instance, here by the Imperial Executive, the Members to hold office for eight years, and to retire by rotation, and as they retire their places to be filled up by the Irish Executive.

In the Bill of 1893 the Lower House consisted of 103 Members, the same number of Members as are returned to this House by Ireland. Experience shows—and the analogy of other legislative bodies in our Dominions seems to point to that conclusion—that the Lower House

Home Rule

should be of somewhat larger dimensions, and we propose that the numbers of the Lower House should be 164, elected by the existing Irish constituencies. The unit of population is to be 27,000. There will be no constituency with a population of less than 27,000 which will be entitled to return a Member. The effect will be this: Ulster will have 59 Members; Leinster, 41; Munster, 37; and Connaught, 25; and if you add the Universities, which we retain for this purpose, that makes a total of 164. If you divide that in another way it comes to this—Counties 128, Boroughs 34, Universities 2. The exact distribution is shown in a Schedule to the Bill. When there is disagreement between the two Houses, if such a contingency should arise, we have followed the precedent of the South African Constitution, and provided that the two Houses should sit together and vote together—that is to say, if the Lower House persists after the disagreement in its view on the particular measure in question. The House will now see that with an elected Chamber of 164 and a nominated Chamber of 40, sitting in joint session, there is every probability, at any rate, unless there be a very even division of parties, that full opportunity will be given for public opinion in Ireland to have effect.

So much for the composition of the Legislature. I now come to the position of the Executive. The head of the Executive will be, as now, the Lord Lieutenant, in whose appoint-

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

ment religious disability will no longer count. The office will be open to any of his Majesty's subjects without distinction of creed, and we propose, following the example of the Bill of 1893, that he shall hold his office for a fixed term of years. The Lord Lieutenant will be advised in regard to Irish matters by an Irish Executive, and I wish to make it perfectly clear that, as far as the Executive in Ireland is concerned, the area of its authority will be co-extensive with the legislative power of the Parliament—neither greater nor less. In other words, whatever matters are for the time being within the legislative competence of the Irish Parliament will, for administrative purposes, be within the ambit of the Irish Executive, and whatever matters are for the time being outside the legislative province of the Irish Parliament will remain under the control and subject to the administration of the Imperial Executive. That is all I need say upon that.

So much for the legislative and executive powers of the new body. I now come to a very difficult and complicated matter, namely, the matter of Finance. I spoke earlier of some of the changes which have come over Ireland since 1893. In no respect has the situation altered more completely than in the financial relations of Ireland to the United Kingdom as a whole. Under Mr. Gladstone's Bill of 1893 there was an estimated contribution from Ireland of over £2,000,000 to the Imperial Exchequer,

Home Rule

being roughly from that date the surplus of Irish revenue derived from taxation over Irish expenditure on local services. That was the state of things in 1893. What is the state of the account to-day?

We felt it to be a matter of so much difficulty and importance that we called to our aid the services of an expert Committee who were directed, amongst other things, to ascertain and consider the financial relations between Ireland and the other component parts of the United Kingdom as they exist to-day. The Committee, which was presided over by a very distinguished ex-Civil servant, Sir Henry Primrose, made an exhaustive examination, and presented last autumn an able and an instructive Report. We have not been able to adopt the scheme recommended by the Committee, but we have derived the greatest advantage from their conclusions and suggestions, and we are deeply indebted to them for the ability and the impartiality, with which they conducted their task. There is no longer any reason why their Report, which was made for the information of the Government in the first instance, should be treated as confidential, and it will in due course be laid before Parliament. The facts collected in that Report and other figures, which will be circulated in a White Paper with the Bill after the Bill is introduced, show, in short, that while in 1895-6 the true Irish revenue in round figures was £8,000,000, and the actual local expenditure on

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

Irish service was about £6,000,000, the former—that is, the true Irish revenue—has risen, according to our estimate for the coming financial year, 1912-13, to about £10,840,000, and the expenditure on Irish services to about £12,350,000. In other words, the surplus of £2,000,000 has been turned into a deficit, which will in all probability next year amount to about £1,500,000.

That is a remarkable transformation, and it is of the utmost importance that its causes and its significance should be accurately appreciated. (*Sir John Lonsdale*: “Does that include the contribution for National Insurance?”) I have purposely taken it for next year. This year the contribution for National Insurance does not come in, but next year it will. The growth of Irish revenue is largely due to increases in the rates existing, and to the imposition of new taxes since 1895. The increase in the proportionate yield of certain duties, such as those on tobacco and beer, has been more than set off by the decrease in the proportionate yield of other duties, and particularly the duty on spirits. But if you turn to the other side of the account, it will be found that the greater growth of Irish expenditure on local services has been slightly but substantially in excess of the same rate of growth in Great Britain. To what is that increase to be attributed? The answer is: To three distinct causes. In the first place, to new Irish requirements which have made success-

Home Rule

ful appeals to the Imperial Exchequer. Under that head fall Land Purchase, the Department of Agriculture, and the much larger provision for national education. That is the first reason. The second head is the Development Grant, which is due to the application of the theory of what is called Equivalent Grants. When a new grant is made to England, Scotland and Ireland at once step in and claim an equivalent whether they need it or not. The third head, and by far the larger part of the whole—some £3,000,000—may be put down to Old Age Pensions, National Insurance, Labour Exchanges, and Postal Services. I need not point out that under the existing system it is to no one's interest to be economical, and, on the other hand, it is to every one's interest to make fresh and growing demands upon the Imperial Exchequer. A poor country, mainly agricultural, is, for financial purposes, yoked with a rich country, mainly industrial, and the standard and scale of financial provision suitable to England has been necessarily, and almost automatically, applied to Ireland. That is conspicuously the case in regard to Old Age Pensions and Postal Services.

In this way, as I have said, a surplus of £2,000,000 has been converted into a large deficit. But let no one suppose that we have reached the end of the process. The charges under the Land Purchase and the Insurance Acts will increase year by year to a greater extent than those for Old Age Pensions will

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

diminish, and if you continue the present system, you will have to add to the deficit year by year. There is no other way in which you can finance Unionism as a working policy. In the speech made at Belfast this week by the right hon. gentleman the Leader of the Opposition (*Mr. Bonar Law*) he dealt with this topic, and in the name of the Unionist party he offered to Ireland not only Tariff Reform— (*Mr. Remnant*: “I thought you said it was dead.”) If it rises from the grave, it will be very curious some day to see the manner in which he will blend Irish and Colonial preference. He offered, not only Tariff Reform, but he went on to say—I quote his words—as to Unionist policy:—

“It will be our endeavour to develop in every possible way the resources of Ireland.” At whose cost? (*Mr. Bonar Law*: “The right hon. gentleman has left out one remark I made—‘so long as they are in partnership with us.’”) With all respect to the right hon. gentleman, in the whole course of my Parliamentary experience I have never known a more pointless interruption. That is what I was saying. If you continue what he calls this partnership—if, in other words, you continue to adopt Unionist methods for Ireland and refuse to grant Home Rule, you are going to develop Irish resources at the cost of the British taxpayer. That is what this sort of partnership means if it means anything, and that is why I say to the House of Commons that, although we have now to face a deficit of

Home Rule

£1,500,000 as compared with what twenty years ago was a surplus of £2,000,000, if you go on working this partnership on Unionist lines, the deficit of £1,500,000 will swell and swell and swell to dimensions which none of us can foresee.

Home Rule, as we believe, will be, among other things, a means of adjusting Irish finance to Irish needs, and giving Irishmen a direct interest in economy which under the partnership they have not got, and a direct responsibility for waste which under the partnership they have not got, and so of gradually reducing this deficit, and in time, as we hope and believe, of producing a surplus which will be available for future common purposes. The Bill, therefore, by recognising this deficit as a necessary starting-point, anticipates the future when Irish income will balance, and more than balance, Irish expenditure. Provision is made, as I shall show in a few moments, for dealing with that situation when it arises. In the meantime, the collection of all taxes other than duties of postage—we propose to transfer the Postal services altogether in Ireland to the Irish Executive—the collection of all taxes other than these, whether imposed by the Imperial Parliament or the Irish Parliament, is retained as an Imperial service, and the produce of all such taxes, whether Imperial or Irish, will be paid into the Imperial Exchequer.

How, then, will local finance in Ireland be in practice arranged? First, as regards expendi-

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

ture, the obligation will lie upon the Irish Parliament to pay the cost of all Irish services. I, of course, except the reserved services which, so long as they are reserved, and until one or other of them is transferred, will continue to be an Imperial charge. Secondly, from what funds and in what manner will the Irish Parliament be enabled to discharge their obligations? There will be every year transferred from the Imperial to the Irish Exchequer a sum, which is called in the Bill the "Transferred Sum," representing the cost, as determined by a body called the Joint Exchequer Board, to the Exchequer of the United Kingdom at the time of the passing of the Act of the Irish services other than postal. That is what the Transferred Sum represents. That will be the first head of the revenue of the Irish Executive. Secondly, they will get the Irish Postal revenue. That follows from the transfer of the Postal services to them. Further, as this Transferred Sum plus the Postal revenue would only suffice, and barely suffice, to balance the account and make both ends meet, it is, in our opinion, expedient and equitable that Ireland should be further enabled, not only to defray the necessary expense of setting up the new administration, but also be provided with a reasonable margin. A further sum will be given to them which will ultimately be £200,000, but which in the first years will amount for a short term to £500,000, and, after that term expires, will be reduced by £50,000 a year until it reaches

Home Rule

£200,000. The result of this arrangement is that Ireland will get the full benefit of all economies she makes in her local administration, but if she spends more than comes to her in the manner I have described, she will have to find the money for herself.

This brings me to explain what are the powers of taxation which, under the new state of things, will be exercisable in Ireland so far as taxation is concerned. First of all, the Imperial Parliament will continue to tax the whole of the United Kingdom. Next, the Irish Parliament will have the power, first, to reduce or discontinue from Ireland any Imperial tax, with the result that, if it does, the Transferred Sum will be correspondingly reduced—that is to say, reduced by the amount of the diminished yield. Next the Irish Parliament will have power to impose Irish taxes of their own, whether by way of addition to Imperial taxes or otherwise, with the result that the taxes will be collected, as I have said, by Imperial officers, and the Transferred Sum will be correspondingly increased—that is to say, increased by the amount that the new increased taxation will yield. This latter power, the power of the Irish Parliament to add to Imperial taxes or to impose taxes of their own, is subject to certain restrictions. In the first place they cannot impose any Customs Duty except upon articles which are for the time being dutiable by way of Customs in the United Kingdom. Further, the Irish Parliament will not be able to add to

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

any Imperial duty of Customs except on beer or spirits, or of Income Tax, or of Estate Duty, more than will produce a 10 per cent. increase. With regard to Excise their hands will be free. (*Mr. Mitchell-Thomson*: "Is the 10 per cent. on the yield or on the amount?") On the yield. In the event of differential Customs or Excise duties in the two countries the Bill provides for the necessary adjustments by way of rebate or countervailing duty. Further, there is another restriction on the taxing powers of the Irish Parliament. There are certain Stamp Duties, relating mainly to bills of exchange, policies of marine insurance, stock exchange transactions, letters of allotment, and other matters connected with joint-stock companies, which are all enumerated in the Schedule, and which ought to be uniform throughout the United Kingdom, and these the Irish Parliament may not alter. Broadly stated, the effect will be this: Subject to the restrictions which I have mentioned, the Irish Parliament will have power to devise new taxes; the Irish Parliament can reduce any tax, except the enumerated Stamp Duties, to any extent, and at the price of an equivalent diminution in the Transferred Sum. The Irish Parliament can freely add to all Excise Duties. In regard to Customs, other than Customs Duties on beer and spirits, which follow the powers with regard to Excise, and with regard to Income Tax and Death Duty, they can add, but only to the extent of giving an additional yield of 10 per

Home Rule

cent. On the other hand, from the Imperial side, the Transferred Sum remaining substantially the same, all growth in the receipts from Irish revenue, other than from taxes imposed by the Irish Parliament itself, will diminish and ultimately extinguish the deficit.

To make what I have said more plain, suppose the Bill passes into law this year, let us see what will be the estimated balance-sheet, as far as we can estimate it, first the Irish balance-sheet, and then the Imperial balance-sheet, in regard to this matter. Take the Irish balance-sheet first. On the revenue side of the account, the Irish Government will receive the Transferred Sum of £6,350,000, and they will get, in addition, the Post Office receipts of £1,350,000, which, together, make a total revenue of £7,700,000. On the other hand, the expenditure on Irish services—that is, excluding the reserved services—is £5,600,000, and the expenditure on the Post Office is £1,600,000, which makes a total expenditure of £7,200,000, and this will leave a margin for surplus of £500,000, there being thus £7,700,000 on each side. (*Sir E. Carson*: "Will the right hon. gentleman say what the cost of the reserved services is?") Yes. That comes under the Imperial balance-sheet, which I will now take.

On the revenue side, there is the whole of the Irish revenue, except the Post Office, namely, £9,485,000, or, say, £9,500,000. Now take the expenditure. There is, first of all, the Trans-

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

ferred Sum, £6,350,000. Then there is Old Age Pensions, which is a reserved service, £2,660,000; then National Insurance—I am using round figures—£190,000; and Land Purchase, £616,000; then there is Constabulary, £1,380,000; and the Collection of Revenue, which is, roughly speaking, £300,000. This makes a total expenditure of some £11,500,000, which leaves a deficit of almost exactly £2,000,000. That is to say, the Transferred Sum, plus the cost of the reserved services, plus the collection of revenue, exceeds the Irish revenue, under the machinery of the Imperial Government, by about £2,000,000. That is the state of the account as far as the Imperial Revenue is concerned. The House will observe that the reserved services, roughly speaking, cost £5,000,000. The Irish revenue, retained by the Imperial Government over the Transferred Sum, is £3,000,000. The deficit, therefore, is £2,000,000, of which £1,500,000 represents the present excess of Irish expenditure over Irish revenue, and the remaining £500,000 represents the margin to which I have referred.

Certain points, however, remain to be added. There will be a separate Irish Exchequer and Consolidated Fund, under the control of an Auditor-General, and a system of audit similar to the one which prevails in the United Kingdom, which will, among other things, secure what never existed in the old Irish Parliament, the responsibility of the Executive. Next, we

Home Rule

propose to set up a Joint Exchequer Board, consisting of five persons, two to be appointed by the Imperial Government and two by the Irish Treasury, with the chairman nominated by the Crown, to adjust the accounts between the two Exchequers in accordance with the Act. Its main functions will be concerned with ascertaining, in the first instance, the amount of the Transferred Sum, based on their view of what is the actual cost at the present time of Irish services ; next, in the event of the Irish Parliament diminishing or adding to Imperial taxes, the amount by which the transferred sum is in consequence to be diminished or increased ; and thirdly, in the event of transferring services, the equivalent saving to the Exchequer of the United Kingdom. Finally, if and when the time arrives when Irish revenue, derived from both Imperial and Irish taxes, exceeds the cost of Irish administration, including the Reserved Services, and the Joint Board determines that such an excess has continued for not less than three successive years, they will report accordingly. Such a report will, under the Act, be a ground for the revision of the financial provisions, with a view to securing the proper contribution from Ireland towards the common expenditure of the United Kingdom, and to extending the powers of the Irish Parliament in respect of the collection of taxes and general financial control and the machinery to be set up. That is all I have to say under the head of Finance.

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

Now I come to the last point—that is, the future representation of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament. The House will remember that under Mr. Gladstone's first Bill, in 1886, the Irish Members were entirely excluded from this House. In the Bill of 1893 they were retained, to the number of eighty, that number being fixed as Ireland's proportion, according to the population, comparing Ireland with the other parts of the United Kingdom. They were retained, as those who are familiar with the history of this legislation will know, in the first instance, with powers only to vote on matters of general concern. That was called the "in and out" Clause. Then when that Clause was withdrawn, as it was in deference to criticism in the course of the debates, they were given power to vote on all subjects. That is the history.

We regard the retention of the Irish Members at Westminster as essential. (*Ironic cheers from certain members of the Opposition.*) Hon. gentlemen will be wise if they reserve their cheering. There never was a worse calculated cheer than that. I say that we regard the retention of the Irish representatives at Westminster as essential, for reasons which I have already indicated and which I will presently sum up; but in regard to numbers, our proposal differs widely from that of 1893. We do not think that where Ireland has obtained full control of her own affairs, either justice or policy requires Ireland to continue to be represented here on the same

Home Rule

footing in regard to population as the other component parts of the United Kingdom, for whom this House will still continue to be the organ of legislation ; nor do we believe that the Irish people themselves are prepared to advance any such claim. Under our plan, the Irish representation at Westminster will be reduced to forty-two ; in other words, Ireland will have a Member here, roughly, for every 100,000 of her population. This arrangement does not necessitate any general redistribution ; but it involves the merger of some of the Irish boroughs and counties, and the grouping together of some counties which at present have separate representation. Three boroughs will be left : Belfast will have four Members, Dublin three, and Cork one. The Universities for this purpose will cease to be represented. There will be eight borough Members and thirty-four county Members. I may point out that on the assumption that the Irish representation here continues for party purposes to be divided in something like the same proportions as it has been for the last five and twenty years—that, of course, is a mere assumption, but upon that assumption—the forty-two Members will consist roughly of eight Unionists and thirty-four Nationalists, showing a Nationalist majority of twenty-six votes. (*An Hon. Member*: “Very useful!”) There have been very few Houses of Parliament in my experience of over a quarter of a century—only, I think, one—in which such a number has sufficed

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

to turn the scale of political fortune between the two great British parties.

It may be asked, Why do we retain as many as forty-two, or, indeed, any Irish Members at all? Ireland, it may be said, will at first, at any rate, be making no contribution to Imperial expenditure, and why should she have a vote in its determination? That is an argument that may be used with equal truth and with much greater cogency at the present moment. Ireland is not now making any contribution to Imperial expenditure—not a halfpenny—of any sort or kind, yet we have with us one hundred and three Irish members with the same right of voting as the rest of us. The justification for the retention of a reduced number of Irish Members rests upon much broader grounds. In the first place, the Imperial House of Commons will still continue to tax the whole of the United Kingdom. Next, for some years at any rate, this House of Commons and the Imperial Executive will be responsible for the administration of all the reserved services in which Ireland is vitally interested. But, further, in our view, whatever other changes may be made, and however far the devolution of local affairs to local bodies may be carried, the House of Commons must continue to be the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, fairly representing all its constituent parts and inviting the co-operation of each of them in the supervision of their common interests, the transaction of their common

Home Rule

business, and the discharge of their joint and corporate trust to the Empire as a whole. It is true that for a time, and until there are further applications of the principle of devolution, Irish Members will be here with an unfettered right to vote. For the reasons I have already given, a very substantial reduction in their number makes that a matter of much less practical importance than it was, and we think it may well be found to be the duty of the House of Commons—after this Bill has become the law of the land—the duty of the House of Commons, which is absolute master of its own procedure, to anticipate in some degree further developments of statutory devolution by so moulding its own Standing Orders as to secure the effective consideration and discussion of legislation affecting only one part of the United Kingdom by those who, as representing that part, are alone directly interested.

I have detained the House longer than I had hoped. I trust I have succeeded in making plain the proposals of the Government. These are the lines upon which we ask Parliament to proceed in taking the first, the most urgent and the most momentous, step towards the settlement of the controversy which, as between ourselves and Ireland, has lasted for more than a century, and of a problem—and I lay great stress on this—which, even apart from the special circumstances of Ireland, has every year, year by year, become increasingly vital to the efficiency

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

of Parliament itself. We maintain by this Bill unimpaired, and beyond the reach of challenge or of question, the supremacy, absolute and sovereign, of the Imperial Parliament. The powers which we propose to give to Ireland of taxation, of administration, of legislation, are delegated powers, but within the limits of that delegation they embrace at once, with the exception of the reserved services, all matters of local concern. If, as we believe will be the case, as certainly has been the case elsewhere, power carries with it a sense of responsibility, that will give to the Irish people a free and ample field for the development of their own national life and at the same time bind them to us and the Empire by a sense of voluntary co-operation, and, as I believe, in sincere and loyal attachment. At the same time this Imperial Parliament will have begun to break its own bonds and will be set free by the process, of which this is the first stage, for a fuller and more adequate discharge of its Imperial duties.

I read a speech of the right hon. gentleman opposite (*Mr. Bonar Law*), delivered to an audience in Belfast early in the present week. I gather from that speech that he can see in all the proposals of this Bill, and in the attitude and action of the Government in regard to it, "nothing better," to use his own words, "than the latest move in a conspiracy as treacherous as has ever been formed against the life of a great nation." He tells us, and he told the people

Home Rule

of Ulster—"The present Government have turned the House of Commons into a market-place where everything is bought and sold." He added—"In order to remain for a few months longer in office, his Majesty's Government have sold the Constitution." We have sold ourselves. This, Mr. Speaker, is the new style. I can understand why the party opposite are so enthusiastic. Presumably because of the completeness of the contrast which it presents to anything to which they or we have hitherto been accustomed. This is all very well for Ulster, but what about the House of Commons? (*Mr. Bonar Law*: "I have said it here.") Am I to understand that the right hon. gentleman repeats here, or is prepared to repeat on the floor of the House of Commons— (*Mr. Bonar Law*: "Yes.") Let us see exactly what it is. It is that I and my colleagues are selling our convictions. (*Mr. Bonar Law*: "You have not got any.") We are getting on with the new style. The right hon. gentleman said that I and my colleagues are selling our convictions, that we are producing a Bill which the right hon. gentleman said, elsewhere in the same speech, does not represent our views, in order that for a few months longer we may cling to office. Does he really believe that? What have I to gain, what have my colleagues to gain by a transaction to purchase for us a short further spell of the burdens and responsibilities which we have borne in very difficult and troublous times, now for the best

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

part of seven years, at the price of surrendering our convictions and soiling for all time our personal and political honour? How many people, I wonder, in this House really believe that?

We put this Bill forward as the responsible advisers of the Crown as the embodiment of our own honest and deliberate judgment. What is your alternative? Are you satisfied with the present system? (*Hon. Members*: "Quite.") Were you satisfied with it two years ago? What do you propose to put in its place? Have you any answer to the demand of Ireland beyond the naked veto of an irreconcilable minority, and the promise of a freer and more copious outflow to Ireland of Imperial doles? There are at this moment between twenty and thirty self-governing Legislatures under the allegiance of the Crown. They have solved, under every diversity of conditions, economic, racial, and religious, the problem of reconciling local autonomy with Imperial unity. Are we going to break up the Empire by adding one more? The claim comes this time, not from remote, outlying quarters, but from a people close to our own doors, associated with us by every tie of kindred, of interest, of social and industrial intercourse, who have borne and are bearing their share, and a noble share it has been, in the building up and the holding together of the greatest Empire in history. That claim no longer falls on deaf ears. There has been reserved for this Parliament, this House of Commons, the double honour of reconciling Ireland and emancipating herself.

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE
RIGHT HON. HERBERT L. SAMUEL,
M.P., ON THE FIRST READING,
April 15, 1912

THOSE of us in this House who on political grounds have most reason to regret the return to our debates of so formidable a controversialist as the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Balfour) are not amongst the last to welcome on personal grounds his return to this House. The reception which he received from all quarters of the House of Commons to-day was, as we anticipated, the prelude to a speech of equal interest, eloquence, and force. The right hon. gentleman, in the course of his speech, advanced many arguments against the policy of the Bill which is now before the House, but the one to which he himself declared that he attached most importance, the one which carried the most conviction to his own mind, and was most responsible for guiding his actions, was that he held that in proposing this measure of Home Rule for Ireland we were going contrary to a world tendency; that while the rest of the nations of mankind were unifying their Governments, we were proceeding to disintegrate ours. The



Herbert Samuel

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

Leader of the Opposition, in his recent speech at Belfast, laid much stress upon the same argument. I remember a speech also by the noble lord the Member for Oxford University dealing with the same point. It is clear that the Opposition attach prime weight to this consideration. They hold that it gives a sound philosophical foundation to their opposition to Home Rule. I venture to suggest that the answer is this: It is true that in our age in many countries throughout the world a unifying process is proceeding. But it is also the case that countries with large areas and large populations find it necessary to have above the areas of local government, above what we might call the county area, two grades governing institutions in the hierarchy of Legislature. They find they need State Governments; they find that they need also a central national Government. Those countries which only had State Governments, like South Africa, like Australia, like some other countries which have been mentioned, found it essential that they should establish as the crown of their legislative system a unifying and national Government as well. Those which, like ourselves, have only one central national Government find it necessary to establish between that and the county area a system of State Legislatures.

When the United States finds that one of its territories, hitherto not endowed with autonomous institutions, reaches a size, that its population

Home Rule

reaches such numbers, as will enable it to govern itself, the central Legislature devolves from the centre powers of self-government to that territory. When the German Empire quite recently found that the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine had reached a position of political development which in the opinion of the German Government would warrant the conferment upon them of some measure of autonomy, the German Government ran counter to what the right hon. gentleman said was a universal world-wide movement, and devolved from the centre to the localities self-governing powers. No, there is neither a unifying nor a disintegrating process at work in the world; there is what one might call a groping, unmethodical, illogical movement of the nations to try and find the most convenient form of government, and the most convenient governing areas. The chief question is not which comes first in any country, the establishment of State institutions or the establishment of national institutions; the important thing is that sooner or later the right hierarchy of institutions, as I have called it, should be established.

In the arguments which the right hon. gentleman in his final and weighty words addressed to the House, he warned us in the interests of Empire against breaking up the central Constitution. That argument, in the same words, might have been advanced to this House at any time whenever a question of setting up a colonial

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

Constitution has been before it. Indeed, I well remember sitting on this bench six years ago and hearing the right hon. gentleman, at that box, use terms almost identical with those he has now employed. He spoke with equal emphasis.

“ I think,” he said, “ the Government are attempting an experiment of the most dangerous description. . . . I am astonished that any Government or any party, that cherishes the British connection in the Transvaal should desire so audacious an experiment to be tried. What is the real reason for it? We know that it is done solely because the Government are desirous of getting rid of the embarrassments and economic difficulties that their rash promises at the General Election have brought upon them.”

The right hon. gentleman continued that so far as he was concerned, for himself and his party, he refused to share in the responsibility for what he regarded

“ as the most reckless experiment ever tried in the development of a great colonial policy. For this reason he looked with alarm and distrust to the future.”

Who was right there—the right hon. gentleman with his forebodings, or Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and his Ministry, when they resolved to apply the same healing medicine that had proved a sovereign cure in other

Home Rule

quarters of the Empire? Hon. gentlemen opposite always have the name of " Empire " on their lips. If only they would learn the lesson which is written plainly on every page of the history of that Empire ; if only they would realise that the experience of the last hundred and fifty years has proved to demonstration that it is the denial of Home Rule and not the granting of Home Rule which leads to separatist tendencies ! The right hon. gentleman the Leader of the Opposition is himself a Canadian, born in the province of New Brunswick. His very presence here in this House is a living reminder of the fact that Canadian autonomy is not inconsistent with Imperial unity, and that the autonomy of the province of New Brunswick is not inconsistent with the unity of the Canadian Dominion. Not only is colonial autonomy not inconsistent with, it is indispensable to Imperial unity. Right hon. gentlemen opposite often tell us in another sphere of politics to consult the Dominions, to consider their views. This is a matter in which the views of the Dominions are entitled to weight, for it is not purely a matter of domestic politics. The strength, and also the credit, of the Empire as a whole is involved in the manner in which we deal with the question of Ireland. From every quarter of the Empire year after year have come resolutions, appeals, petitions, from Parliament after Parliament in favour of Home Rule. Five times have the Canadian House of Commons passed Addresses

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

to the Crown appealing for Home Rule for Ireland.

MR. BONAR LAW: When was the last?

In 1903. The Australian Parliament, again, has done the same. One of the first actions of that Parliament, after the establishment of a Central Dominion Parliament in Australia, was to pass an Address in favour of Home Rule being granted to Ireland. We have only to read our newspapers in these days to find that in all quarters of the Empire statesmen, not only of Irish race and nationality, but such statesmen as Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Sir Joseph Ward, Mr. Fisher, General Botha, and many more, have sent messages to the home country expressing their own opinion and that of the people among whom they live, in favour of the measure which is now before the House. From the grave Cecil Rhodes, an empire-builder if ever there was one, speaks to this House in favour of the granting of a similar measure of self-government to Ireland as those which he found so successful in other parts of the Empire.

I do not propose to follow the right hon. gentleman into his retrospect of past events. In regard to the title of this House elected at the last General Election to legislate on this question I will only say this: that there was not a man in Great Britain at the last election who, if he voted for the Liberal party, did not know that he was voting for the Parliament Bill in order that the road might be clear, through

Home Rule

the veto of the House of Lords, for measures of Liberal reform—and first and foremost amongst them for a measure of Home Rule for Ireland.

The right hon. gentleman, in the course of his speech, urged that a new and grave objection to our proposals arises from the fact that they are avowedly a preliminary to further and later measures of devolution. When, he said, we get to Committee every line of this Bill must be scrutinised, not merely in its reference to Ireland, but also with a view to its future application to other portions of the United Kingdom. That is not so. The Government do not accede to that proposition. Our measure must indeed not be inconsistent with the further measures which are contemplated in the future. It may point the way to them. But we have never said, and do not hold, that in every particular and in every detail what is provided for Ireland must necessarily be provided for other portions of the United Kingdom. Different needs in different circumstances may require different ways to meet them. The right hon. gentleman referred to what he termed the piecemeal character of this method of setting up a Federal Constitution, or of setting up any Constitution. He said it was unprecedented, futile, ridiculous. Sir, the present constitutional arrangements of the British Empire have not grown full blown in a night. No Siéyès has sat down in his library to draw up a logical Imperial Constitution for the British Dominions. If we had in this

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

measure proposed to Parliament a complete, logical, carefully co-ordinated, symmetrically planned Constitution for every part of the British Islands, to be established throughout them all simultaneously, I can well imagine the speech the right hon. gentleman would have delivered to this House, tearing to tatters a piece of legislation which he would have described as being a mere scheme of political pedantry, and denouncing the Government for having, out of the mere desire for constitutional tidiness, forced on changes before they were ripe, and have ridiculed that because it was necessary to deal with the Irish problem the Government should prematurely deal with the other problems as well. I say to the House, following the right hon. gentleman, that I would much prefer to face the criticism to which we have just listened on our present scheme, than to face the speech that the right hon. gentleman would have made had we followed the course which to-day he has invited us to take. Our method, I venture to claim, is consonant with the very genius of our Constitution and with our history. Our Constitution has not been made. It has not been planned like an architect's drawing, logical, symmetrical, complete. It has grown in accordance with the needs of the times. That is its strength. It is in harmony with all the best traditions of the development of our Constitution that we make the proposals that are now before the House.

Home Rule

There is one other point with which I should like to deal before I turn to the right hon. gentleman's criticism of our scheme of finance. He has questioned our proposals in regard to the number of Irish representatives. He is not satisfied with forty-two. I wonder whether the right hon. gentleman considers that our suggested number of forty-two Irish representatives in this House is too many or whether he thinks that it is too few? When we get into Committee it will be most interesting to see which form of amendment he will support. The Irish Members, every one agrees, are too numerous now in proportion to population, but I would venture to point this out to hon. Members opposite—a consideration which they seldom bear in mind—that the Act of Union which gives its name to their party, which they are here primarily to maintain, the Act of Union, which in its text declares itself to be a treaty embodying articles of agreement between the Parliament of Great Britain and the then Parliament of Ireland, declares that Ireland shall have for ever in the Parliament of the United Kingdom one hundred Members. That is an article in a treaty which cannot be broken or abrogated except with the consent of the two parties, and hon. Members opposite cannot with honour, without breaking the faith of England pledged to Ireland at the time of the Union, reduce the Irish representatives to below one hundred Members. Therefore it is only by a general settlement such as we propose that this

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

House will ever be able without ignominy to reduce to proper proportions the number of Irish representatives in this House.

Mr. RONALD M'NEILL: What about the Irish Church?

The Church was guaranteed in the Act of Union, but it was disestablished with the consent of both parties. Now I come to the financial proposals of the Bill, proposals on which I am afraid the right hon. gentleman did not look with a wholly impartial eye. Let me first ask the House to consider what are the conditions of the problem with which the Government has to deal, assuming that hon. Members opposite will do us the honour for the moment to suppose that there is to be a scheme of Home Rule at all. The first and outstanding fact is that in this year the revenue from Ireland is short of the expenditure upon Irish purposes by a sum of £1,500,000. I know there are some students of this question who have suggested that Irish revenue should be taken as if it were revenue as collected and not revenue as contributed, and that that would show upon the credit side of Ireland an additional sum of about £2,000,000 which would enable the account comfortably to balance. That cannot be done. Irish revenue as collected is not true Irish revenue—it is not revenue contributed by the Irish taxpayer. For example, large sums are collected in Ireland in the form of duty upon spirits, those spirits being consumed in Great Britain, and unless you are to apply the

Home Rule

doctrine that it is the producer who pays the tax and not the consumer, a doctrine which in that connection I do not think any one in this House will advance, you must hold the view that the revenue paid by the Irish taxpayer is only the revenue on so much of those spirits as are consumed in Ireland, and that revenue alone can be put to the credit of the Irish account. Secondly, if we had taken the collected revenue instead of the true revenue as our basis, the whole scheme of finance could at any time have been upset by the transfer of those spirits in bond to Great Britain, and by the payment of the taxation in this country, instead of in Dublin, or wherever the spirits may have been manufactured. That is the first fact—that there is this deficit of £1,500,000.

The second consideration is that it is neither practicable, nor politic, nor just to throw upon the new Irish Government the whole burden of that deficit. That deficit is the result, not of any action on the part of the Irish; it is the result of the British management of Ireland's finances. Her revenue is controlled by others, her expenditure is controlled by others. The deficit arises from the fact that her revenue is paid upon the Irish scale, while her expenditure is based upon the British scale, and it would be a proposition obviously wrong and indefensible if, having accustomed the Irish people to this rate of expenditure, we were to throw upon them the burden of finding the necessary taxation to meet

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

the whole of that expenditure the result would be that the new Irish Parliament in its first year would have to face a deficit of nearly one-fifth of the whole of its revenue, and would have to increase all its taxation by an average amount of 20 per cent. The next consideration which has to be borne in mind is that, on the other hand, it is not right that this deficit should permanently be borne by the British taxpayer. If Ireland prospers, as we hope she will, then in equity the burden upon the British taxpayer *pro tanto* should be lessened, and I feel sure that the Irish people themselves would desire that. Possessing self-government, enjoying greater prosperity, they would not wish, it would not be consonant with their national pride, to depend for the revenue of their Government upon gifts from others, and when the resources of Ireland allow I feel sure that she will not be unwilling to bear such share as her circumstances permit in the burdens of the Empire which her sons have helped to build up, and from the trade of which she directly or indirectly benefits.

The next consideration that should be taken into account is that the Irish Parliament must have at its command, should it need to increase Irish revenue, adequate sources of taxation; and yet, on the other hand, it is necessary that there must be left to the Imperial Parliament a sufficient field of Imperial taxation, especially, though not solely, in case international danger should threaten both Ireland and Great Britain alike,

Home Rule

and additional revenue should be needed for the purposes of national defence. Further, it is necessary that there should be adequate security for the great loans issued upon the guarantee of Imperial credit, for land purchase and for other purposes. Next, our scheme must be so devised that the finance of one country shall not be appreciably disturbed by changes effected in the finances of the other by the Parliament of the other ; in other words, that the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer should not have his Budget upset by any action that may be taken by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in this House, and, conversely, that the Imperial finances should not be affected by changes which the Irish Parliament may find it necessary to make in the other island. Again, the Irish Parliament should properly be called upon to bear the burden of any increase which they make in Irish expenditure, and, on the other hand, if they are able to make economies in Irish expenditure the Irish Parliament should have the benefit of those economies. If not, there would be very little inducement to effect economies in government. If every decrease in expenditure went to the advantage of the Imperial Exchequer probably you would find those decreases remarkably few. And I think it is essential—and this is a point of great importance—that if the Irish Parliament is able to effect economies and to reduce taxation they should be free to reduce whatever taxation they choose, and especially that they

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

should be in a position to reduce those taxes which press most heavily upon the poorer classes, namely, the Customs duties, particularly upon tea and sugar. It is worth while to submit even to some complications and difficulties in order not to withhold from the Irish Parliament the right of reducing taxation, if it is in a position to do so, on the poorer classes of Irish taxpayers.

Lastly, it is not practicable in the opinion of the Government to give to the Irish Parliament full and unfettered control of Customs. Such a measure would indeed be inconsistent with devolution to the other parts of the United Kingdom and the general policy of government in these islands which his Majesty's Ministers have in view. In this connection I should like to say a few words to the House with regard to the Report of the Committee of financial experts which was recently appointed by the Government, and whose Report will shortly be laid upon the Table of the House. I do not think when that Report is published it will give very much consolation to the Members of the Opposition. So impressed was that Committee with the utter unsoundness of the present system of Irish and British finances that they came to the conclusion that the only course was to propose a heroic remedy and to give to Ireland complete fiscal autonomy. The Government consider that the almost necessary consequence of that would be the exclusion of the Irish Members from this

Home Rule

House. The Committee also proposed that at the outset there should be placed at the disposal of the new Irish Government and Parliament, at the cost of the British Exchequer, an annual sum of over £900,000; but—and there was a very important qualification—they proposed to deal with the existing deficit in this way: They recommended that all existing old age pensions now payable should continue to be paid by the Imperial Exchequer, but that all new pensions for persons who reached the age of seventy should be paid for out of Irish taxes. The consequence of that would have been that the Irish Parliament would be called upon to provide year by year a growing sum for old age pensions, and unless they effected a drastic reduction in the amount of those pensions the effect would have been that in four years the whole of their initial surplus of over £900,000 would have gone; that in five years they would have a deficit and would be obliged either to effect more economies or else to increase taxation; that in ten years they would have a deficit of £1,000,000 and later on £1,250,000. There was no specific provision for any contribution, either at once or in the future, to the general expenses of the United Kingdom. For reasons which have already been indicated, these were proposals which the Government could not see their way to accept.

The conditions, therefore, with which we are confronted are these: there is a deficit of £1,500,000 which ought not to be thrown

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

upon the new Government, but which, on the other hand, ought not to rest permanently upon the shoulders of the British taxpayer. The Irish Parliament should be provided with adequate resources of taxation. There should be left a sufficient field for Imperial taxation and a sufficient security for loans already made. The finance of Ireland ought not to be disturbed by actions in the Imperial Parliament, and vice versa. The Irish Parliament should be allowed to benefit by any economies it is able to effect, and, on the other hand, should bear the burden of any increased expenditure in which it engages. Those are the conditions of the problem of Irish finance. I think in all quarters of the House it will be realised that all these propositions are reasonable, and I claim that all of them are fulfilled in the proposals now before the House.

But in order to meet all those varied conditions it is necessary to propose a scheme of some elaboration, and it is not possible by any rough-and-ready means to fulfil so many and such different requirements. In explaining somewhat more fully than the Prime Minister was in a position to do in his opening speech the system of financial relations proposed in the Bill, I will ask the House first to consider the system as it will be established on its initiation, apart from any subsequent action that may be taken by the Imperial Parliament or the Irish Parliament. The whole of the Irish revenues will flow into the Imperial

Home Rule

Exchequer so long as the deficit lasts. That is essential, because it is the very central point of the scheme that all normal increases in revenue due to greater prosperity and growth of population should go into the Imperial Exchequer, and should remain there to help to pay the deficit which now rests upon the British taxpayer. Out of these revenues will be paid to the Irish Exchequer the Transferred Sum, which will cover the present cost of Irish services—that is, those services for which the Irish Parliament will be responsible—and it will include the existing deficiency on the annual working of the Post Office, which now amounts to about £250,000. Further, the Transferred Sum, as the Prime Minister indicated, will include the surplus to be at the disposal of the Irish Parliament, which for three years will be a sum of £500,000, subject to a gradual deduction of £50,000 a year, so that after six more years it will be reduced to £200,000, at which figure it will remain.

The Transferred Sum will be at first rather more than £6,000,000, and will be reduced in the course of eight or nine years by a sum of about £300,000. This £6,000,000 is not, as it has been represented in some organs of the Press, a grant from the British taxpayer. The whole of this amount is from Irish taxes, and it might more strictly be termed a retransferred sum, because it is all Irish money. There will be left with the Imperial Exchequer an annual amount of about £3,000,000, and this sum will

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

go far towards covering the cost of the reserved services, such as old age pensions and insurance. Labour Exchanges are also included in the reserved services, because their administration is most closely bound up with the administration of the unemployment part of the National Insurance Act. Land purchase and police are also included. The right hon. gentleman asked who would have control of the police. The police will be under the orders of their own Inspector-General of Constabulary, and he in turn will be under the orders of the Lord Lieutenant. The Lord Lieutenant, like colonial Governors, will have a dual capacity. So far as Imperial services are concerned, he is under the general direction of the Imperial authorities, and so far as Local Government is concerned he acts upon the advice of his constitutional Ministers. The arrangement as to police is a temporary provision during the first six years. The collection of Irish taxes is also one of the reserved services. The total cost of the reserved services is about £5,000,000, including £190,000 which forms part of this year's Estimates in respect of the charges under the National Insurance Act. The cost of the reserved services will, of course, be subject to some variations, and would be subject to some variations apart from Home Rule ; for the charge for insurance will increase and the charge for land purchase will increase, while the charge for old age pensions is now practically at its maximum, and will gradually decline year by

Home Rule

year, ultimately by about £200,000. The charge for police, it is hoped, may be in some degree decreased. The annual loss that will remain at the outset will be £2,000,000, and all the growth of Irish revenue due to greater prosperity and larger population goes to the gradual diminution of this loss. Last year, 1911-12, the Irish revenue showed a most remarkable and satisfactory increase. Some part of that increase was what I may call fortuitous, due to the transfer of the telephones, a small sum in respect of the new telephone revenue which had been the National Telephone Company's income there; but putting that aside, last year's revenue may be compared to the average revenue of the two preceding years. As the House knows, one must take the average for the two preceding years on account of the disturbance of our finances owing to the rejection of the Budget of 1909. Comparing last year's revenue with the average of the two preceding years, it shows an increase of no less than £700,000. It is not to be expected for a moment that that increase, which was distributed over Income Tax, Customs, and Excise, will be repeated in future years, but if the average increase in future years is £200,000—that perhaps is an over-sanguine estimate, for no man can tell what it will be—that would mean that in ten years' time the whole of the existing Irish deficit will disappear and Ireland will no longer be a charge upon the British taxpayer. If there were a decrease—which is not to be expected,

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

because all Irish tendencies are the other way—then the situation would be the same as if no Home Rule were passed, and the deficit would be correspondingly increased. If the annual increase of revenue is less than £200,000, as it may well be, the deficit period will be longer than ten years, and if it is more then it will be shorter than ten years. The Bill proposes also that the guarantee on land purchase loans shall be continued as a lien on the transferred sum. That is the whole scheme, the whole financial scheme on its initiation, apart from any alteration that may subsequently be made by the action of one Parliament or the other.

I come now to the modifications which may in future be effected. The Imperial Parliament retains its general control over taxes, but if it imposes additional taxation, or if it reduces taxation in Ireland, that will not affect the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget. His finance will not be swung, this way or that, by the movement of Imperial finances—a consideration which I think is of prime importance—because the Transferred Sum will remain the same whether the Imperial Parliament adds to taxation or reduces taxation in Ireland. With respect to the powers of the Irish Parliament, if it eventually finds itself in the position to remit taxation, it is free to do so. It can reduce any of the taxes levied in Ireland with the exception of certain Stamp Duties, which it is of importance should not be at a lower figure in one part

Home Rule

of the United Kingdom than another on account of Stock Exchange competition, and for other reasons which I need not enter into now. If the Irish Parliament finds it necessary to call upon the taxpayers of Ireland for further sacrifices to provide more money for the development of the country, then it has at its command certain powers of imposing additional taxation. It may add according to its will to the Excise Duties, and since it has complete control of the Excise Duties, as a necessary consequence, it must also have control over the rates of Customs Duties on beer and spirits, because they must vary with the rates of Excise. It will have power in the second place to impose any new taxes which are not levied by the Imperial Parliament now. The Inhabited House Duty is not at present levied in Ireland and certain establishment Excise Duties are not levied there. It can devise new taxes which do not form part of the Imperial system. Thirdly, it can, if it so desires, add to any of the other main heads of taxation, Income Tax, Death Duties, Customs Duties other than beer and spirits, to an extent limited to 10 per cent. of their yield. That 10 per cent. limitation is imposed so that the Irish Parliament should not trench unduly upon the proper area of Imperial taxation. If the Irish Parliament finds it necessary and expedient to exercise any of these powers—very likely they may not do so at all—but if they should find it advisable to do so, the Imperial Exchequer will remain altogether

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

unaffected by their action. If they decrease one of the taxes, for example, the consequence would be that the Imperial Treasury would collect less in Ireland under that tax, and, having collected less, it would pay over less in the Transferred Sum, and the Imperial Exchequer would remain extent; if they increase taxation, they add to any of our taxes or impose new taxation, then the Imperial Treasury will collect more money in Ireland. If it collects more, it pays over more. The variation will be reflected in the Transferred Sum, which will vary as the amount collected in Ireland varies following the alteration of the tax up or down by the Irish Parliament. If the Irish Parliament remit taxes they lose revenue to that extent; if they increase taxation, they increase their revenue by the proceeds of that increase. I should like to say a further word with respect to what is in our national finance a novel proposition, the 10 per cent. additions. It is novel in our national finance, but it is the very basis of the local government finance of other great States, particularly France and Germany. The whole of the local government finance in France is based upon the *centimes additionels*. To the main taxation imposed by the French Parliament local authorities can add; to the franc imposed by the State they can add if they like 10, 15, or 20 centimes, or what they will. Both in France and Germany the limitations upon these additions are very high. They can add in Germany 100 per cent., and even more, and,

Home Rule

consequently, the field of the Imperial tax-gatherer is very limited. We impose a 10 per cent. limitation in order that the field of the Imperial tax-gatherer may not be unduly gleaned before he appears on it.

But we need not go so far afield, we need not go abroad, for precedents. Our own local finance is almost wholly based upon the principle that one authority collects the rate and other authorities may add to it. Our County Councils, our Town Councils, and our Parish Councils collect no rates of their own. It is the Board of Guardians which declares the amount of the Poor Rate, and it is the overseers who collect the Poor Rate, and other local authorities can make additions to that Poor Rate at their will. They levy a rate by way of precept upon the overseers, and while one authority collects the tax, the amount of the tax is determined by several authorities, and the yield is distributed among the several authorities that determine the amount. I do not think it probable that the Irish Parliament is likely to exercise this power of making a 10 per cent. addition to such portion of the Income Tax as is collected at the source. That would involve very great difficulties of collection which I need not enter into. The difficulty and annoyance to the taxpayers would be so great that I cannot conceive that the Irish Parliament would propose such a tax. But it might add to the Income Tax, and possibly will, so far as it is levied by virtue of individual declaration—

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

that is to say, to such portion of the Income Tax as is affected by abatements on the one hand or by Super-tax additions on the other. The check of 10 per cent. is not on the rate of the tax. There is no limit of 10 per cent. on the rate of the tax imposed by the Bill; the check is upon the yield, because, owing to abatements and the difficulties of assessing precisely what is the yield of a particular rate, it is not practicable to impose this limitation by way of rate; it must be effected by way of yield.

MR. CAVE: How can you foretell the yield?

You cannot foretell the yield with precision. I did not want to go into these details, but, since the hon. and learned gentleman has asked me, I will tell him what is proposed. The objection is, of course, foreseen in the Bill, and the Irish Parliament have a very effective deterrent imposed upon them to dissuade them from putting on an addition to the tax which will yield more than 10 per cent., because it is provided that only an amount not exceeding 10 per cent. shall be handed over to them in the Transferred Sum, and if it does exceed the 10 per cent. then the rest goes to the British Exchequer. I think the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer will exercise all his powers of ingenuity so as not to impose by his tax more than 10 per cent. addition to the original tax. The right hon. gentleman asks whether a 10 per cent. addition to Customs can be levied differentially as between different countries. That, of course, is

Home Rule

not so. If they take the Imperial Tea Duty as it stands, they may add an amount not exceeding 10 per cent. to the whole of that duty, and if they wish to add to the Tobacco Duty, they may do so similarly. It is distinctly the method of the *centimes additionels*.

Whatever Customs duties are levied by the Imperial Government may be added to by the Irish Government, but the Irish Parliament cannot tax any article which is not included in the Imperial tariff for the time being. If by virtue of the exercise of these powers the rate of Customs or Excise Duties on any article is different in the one country from what it is in the other, then there will be a differential duty or drawback on the goods passing from one country to the other. For instance, if the Irish Parliament were animated by strong temperance sympathies, and were to raise revenue by increasing the tax on Irish whisky, the whisky which came from Ireland to Great Britain would have the advantage of a drawback equal to the amount of the additional duty put upon it in Ireland. If, on the other hand, they reduced the tax on Irish whisky, Irish whisky would not be allowed to come into this country and undersell Scotch whisky by the advantage given to it by the lighter duty, but a countervailing duty would be put upon it here.

With respect to differential duties, no difficulty in practice is likely to arise, and you will not, as a matter of fact, have Irish whisky paying

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

first one duty in Ireland and then paying another duty on transfer to England, because the movements of all these taxable commodities are always made in bond, and, as a matter of practice, the duty which will be ultimately payable will be the only one which will in fact be charged. With respect to loans, if the new Government desires to borrow money for drainage or for other purposes of national development, they will, of course, have power to do so. I believe it is possible, as they are a new Government, that the rate of interest would be higher than would be payable by an old-established Government, though I believe, if necessary—

MR. T. M. HEALY: What security have you left us to offer?

The whole of the revenue of the Irish Government. The Transferred Sum of six millions a year will be in the hands of the Irish Government, and they can borrow on that security. I do not suppose that the hon. and learned gentleman suggests the Irish Parliament ought to borrow money without having money to pay the interest and Sinking Fund. It must pay the interest and Sinking Fund out of taxation or out of the revenues in hand. I was about to describe another provision in the Bill with respect to loans. It may possibly be found to be a great advantage to the Irish Government should they have occasion to borrow, and, should they wish not to depend only on the internal resources of Ireland for such a loan, to have an alternative

Home Rule

power placed in their hands. They will be enabled to arrange, by legislation, with the Joint Exchequer Board of Great Britain and Ireland, whose composition has been described by my right hon. friend the Prime Minister—consisting of two representatives of the Imperial Treasury, two representatives of the Irish Treasury, and a Chairman appointed by his Majesty—for that Board to issue the loan on their behalf, and to make provision for the payment of interest and Sinking Fund charges out of Irish revenues by way of deductions from the Transferred Sum before the Transferred Sum goes over to the Irish Exchequer. It may be said this is indeed a natural consequence of the collection of Irish revenue by Imperial officers, and the provision I hope will make the Irish people more ready to acquiesce in their revenues being collected by some authority outside themselves.

The Irish Parliament will have the power to take over certain reserved services. The Royal Irish Constabulary will go over automatically in six years, and pensions or insurance may go over at a year's notice, at the will of the Irish Parliament. When any transfer is effected there will, of course, be a corresponding financial adjustment, but the amount to be transferred to the Irish Exchequer in respect of any of these reserved services will not necessarily be fixed upon the basis of the cost of that service at the moment. For example, the cost of old age pensions is a decreasing charge, and if the Irish

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

Parliament take over old age pensions, they will not have with it a revenue equal to the charge for old age pensions at the maximum, but the Joint Exchequer Board will fix how much is an equitable sum to be paid over corresponding to the relief which will be experienced by the Imperial Exchequer; and, *per contra*, if the Insurance Act were taken over by the Irish Parliament, consideration would have to be given to any causes operating at the time of the transfer which would lead to an increased charge. Of course, once the service had been transferred, if the Irish Government were able to administer old age pensions more economically, they would benefit by their economies just as they would be able to benefit by any other economies they might effect in the services.

MR. BALFOUR: I do not know whether this is a convenient moment to ask what is to be done about the Local Loans Fund?

The Local Loans Fund—loans that have already been issued—are a reserved service altogether, and the Irish Government does not touch them so far as administration is concerned. Perhaps the right hon. gentleman means the collection of the contributions?

MR. WYNDHAM: A good deal of money now lent in Ireland is quite separate from land purchase. Is the Local Loans Fund reserved, just as land purchase is reserved?

Yes, existing local loans are entirely a reserved service. It will be necessary for a

Home Rule

Treasury Department in Ireland to collect the contributions, because the existing Office of Works will probably become an Irish Department.

MR. WYNDHAM: Will the new loans go on?

New loans for Irish local development will be an Irish service, and Ireland will have power—if she considers it so she will have the duty,—to make provision for the continuance of that part of Irish administration. The House will have marked that there is the transfer of certain services at intervals of years, and this is an advantage, not only for financial reasons, but on general and broader grounds. It is not desirable to load the new Government with its full weight at the outset. It is expedient to enable the new Irish Government to begin its work without being charged with the whole of the duties of administration which will ultimately fall upon its shoulders. The Joint Exchequer Board which I have described will not deal with questions of policy in any case, but only with questions of fact.

MR. BUTCHER: Who is to pay for the Royal Irish Constabulary after that service is transferred?

As with all the transferred services, there will be an addition made to the Transferred Sum corresponding to the cost of the Royal Irish Constabulary to the Imperial Exchequer. With the service goes the money to pay for it. I should like to say that the figures which I have

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

quoted to-day, and which the Prime Minister quoted previously, are based upon what is known as the Treasury White Paper. But these figures, both of Irish revenue and Irish expenditure, are not presented as being necessarily accurate in every particular, and, therefore, they do not form part of the Bill and are not embodied in it. If we had embodied the actual figures in the Bill, it would have been necessary either for this House to have engaged in a prolonged investigation into the detailed figures included in the White Paper or for us to have asked it to accept on trust Treasury figures which have long been the subject of heated controversy. Therefore the Bill does not rest upon those figures. The actual amount of Irish expenditure and of Irish revenue will be determined in the first year after the passing of the Act by the Joint Exchequer Board on the basis of the much fuller returns which they will be able to obtain under the powers provided by the Act. These are the provisions which will operate during what is termed the deficit period.

MR. WALTER GUINNESS: With regard to new taxation which may be imposed either on Customs or Excise, will it go equally to the Imperial Exchequer and to the deficit in Ireland?

Any taxation imposed by the Irish Government will go to the Irish Exchequer, but any new taxation imposed by the Imperial Parliament will go to the Imperial Exchequer.

SIR E. CARSON: Will the taxes imposed by

Home Rule

the Irish Parliament be collected by the English Exchequer?

They will be collected by the Imperial Exchequer, and they will be transferred to the Irish Exchequer in the form of an addition to the Transferred Sum.

MR. THOMPSON: Will there be any power to put a tax on industrial machinery?

The Irish Government have power to devise new taxes. The Irish Parliament will be under the control of the Irish electorate, and the Irish electorate would not, conceivably, elect any body of men so foolish as deliberately to set to work to destroy the prosperity of their own country. At the end of the deficit period it is contemplated that Parliament shall reopen the present settlement and shall provide for a contribution to the common expenses of the United Kingdom proportionate to the then resources of Ireland, and at the same time transfer to the Irish Government the collection and control of such taxes as may appear to be expedient. We were most anxious to render the process of providing for a contribution to the Imperial expenditure automatic, without the necessity for the existing financial settlement to be reopened, but, after very prolonged consideration, it was found to be impracticable to devise any method by which the proper Imperial contribution from Ireland could be assessed. The period when that contribution will be payable is not likely to be very close at hand. We cannot tell what may be

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

the services which will be at that time reserved and paid for by the Imperial Exchequer. We cannot tell what loans there may be or what security may be needed for loans. We cannot tell what experiments may have been tried by that time in methods of raising taxation. So that, on all grounds, it has been found necessary and desirable to leave to the Parliament of that day the decision of these matters.

In effect, then, the scheme is this. This Parliament will, if the Bill passes into law, say to the Irish Parliament: "You will be charged with the main services of Irish government; you will have placed at your disposal whatever sum those services now cost. In addition to that you will have £200,000 a year at your disposal. In the first eight years you will have a somewhat larger sum. Irishmen now urge that the government of your country is extravagant. We agree, but we cannot reduce that expenditure while the Irish services are conducted on the same scale, by virtue of the same statutes, and on the same lines as the services of Great Britain. If you are able to effect what we have been unable to do, and to conduct your government with less expense, then you will have those savings at your own disposal. You may reduce taxation on your taxpayers or you may spend the money so saved on other purposes. If, on the other hand, you choose to spend more, you must provide the extra expenditure from your own taxation, and, to achieve that end, you

Home Rule

have powers entrusted to you. If you think you can save on the administration of old age pensions or national insurance, or if you desire to adapt the Old Age Pensions Act or the National Insurance Act to Irish needs more than hitherto, you are free to take over those services, and you will be provided with the sum of money they cost the Imperial Government." And to the British taxpayer, who, after all, is a person not to be left out of account in this connection, we say: "Twenty years ago Ireland was paying her way and her revenue contributed £2,000,000 a year towards the Army and Navy and other expenses of the United Kingdom. Now Ireland contributes nothing to those expenses. Not under Home Rule but under a Unionist system of government, Ireland contributes nothing towards these common services. On the contrary, there comes from the British taxpayer's pocket year by year a sum of a million and a half, which is being given to Ireland in order to meet the deficit on her services." It says further to the British taxpayer: "It is impossible at once to shift this burden on to the Irish people; it would be ungenerous and unjust. But it is to your interest, on the narrowest grounds of financial motive, to alter the system which has resulted in the situation we are now faced with. This Bill will stop further commitments for expenditure in Ireland. It will provide that any future normal increase of Irish revenue will go to lessen the existing deficit. In return for that,

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

the Imperial Parliament is asked to make a contribution in the first eight years of a sum which will average £400,000, and, afterwards, £200,000."

It is totally untrue to say that this Bill imposes on the British taxpayer a new burden of £2,000,000 a year. It is absolutely untrue, and any one who says that misrepresents the facts. The sum of £200,000, which after the first eight years is the only additional charge, is a little more than one-thousandth part of our present revenue; it is equal to about a farthing in the pound on our Imperial revenue; and that sum will help to promote the prosperity of the country in which the British taxpayer has the most direct financial interest. The scheme as a whole, is reasonable, workable, and equitable both to the one party and to the other.

Lastly, what is the alternative in matters of finance which is put forward to this Bill. Will the right hon. gentlemen opposite guarantee that, if this Bill is rejected, and they become responsible for Irish government—will they guarantee that the burden on the British taxpayer will not increase? On the contrary, they guarantee precisely the opposite. The right hon. gentleman the Leader of the Opposition recently, at Belfast, said that his policy in regard to Ireland embraced two proposals—the first involving a large further grant of Imperial money, which would have the effect of adding to the existing deficit, and the second a measure of

Home Rule

Tariff Reform "to be framed with special and anxious regard to the interests of Ireland." To the right hon. gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, who, I understand, is to take part in this debate to-morrow, I will put a question—a course I seldom venture to take in this House—and I will ask him—very likely he will not answer—a simple question asked many times before, and capable of a concise and simple answer. It is this: "Is it the purpose, and will it be the consequence of your measure of Tariff Reform to raise the prices of farm produce?" If it is not, if the prices of farm produce are not to be raised, what advantage will Tariff Reform be to any farmer in Ireland? If the prices are to be raised, what becomes of your pledges with respect to effecting no increase in the cost of living in this country? That question has often been asked. It will often be asked again. It is the Tariff Reformer's dilemma, from which there is no escape. It is indeed an inviting prospect to the British taxpayer: on the one hand, an increase in the burdens which now rest upon his shoulders for Irish administration; and on the other hand, an increase in the cost of food for the working classes of this country. At the end it will make no difference to the Home Rule demand.

You asked for twenty years of resolute government. There have been more than twenty years of resolute government. You spoke of killing Home Rule by kindness. After a quarter of a century of killing Home Rule by kindness the

The Right Hon. Herbert L. Samuel

demand remains precisely the same as it was in 1886 and precisely the same as in 1893. You will be very bitterly disappointed if you think that Irish loyalty and Irish friendship are likely to be bought by further grants of Imperial money. No Western country has ever been ready to surrender its natural desire for self-government, to surrender its proper demand for a Parliament, and all that a Parliament typifies—the healthy development of national spirit, a name and a place in history—in exchange for grants of money. I think that perhaps in the whole course of history there is no more pathetic figure than that of Ireland, year after year standing at the gate of her more powerful neighbour, patiently and persistently, received sometimes with blows, sometimes with gifts, sometimes with indifference, always asking the same thing, the elementary right of managing her own local affairs. If your policy has its way, ten years or twenty years may pass, and at the end of the ten or twenty years the Irish problem will remain precisely the same, altered only in this, that the deficit, which is now one and a half millions, will be four or five millions then. It will be our task to make it plain to the people of this country that those who wish to add to the burdens of the British taxpayer by increasing the Irish deficit are there (pointing to the Opposition), that those who offer to the British taxpayer the prospects of relief from the weight which now presses upon him are those who ask Parliament to pass this Bill.

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RIGHT
HON. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL, M.P.,
ON THE FIRST READING, *April*
16, 1912

THE Bill which my right hon. friend asked leave to introduce the other night is entitled a "Bill to amend the provision for the government of Ireland." That is a subject which this House has been busily engaged in discussing for the last hundred years. Numberless debates have already taken place on that subject, and we are assured in many of the speeches of hon. gentlemen opposite that the Act of Union, which we are now modifying and altering most materially—I agree—that that Act of Union brought about a result of which its name, at all events, gave some indication. But if you ask what are the feast days, the holidays and the gala days of this Act of Union during that hundred years, you will find them in the pages of "Hansard" on the eighty-six different occasions when the representatives responsible for the government of this House have come down to it and have asked for what are commonly called Acts of coercion. These are the



Augustine Inrell

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

only symbols you can produce of this so-called Act of Union, and every one of us knows, every historian knows, every foreign critic of our relations with Ireland knows perfectly well that of union, in the true and real sense, there never has been any. While there has been no union, there has, however, been—and it has been admitted quite frankly by hon. gentlemen opposite—there has been a revolution. Everything during that last hundred years, everything in Ireland has changed, except one thing—one thing, and one thing only, has remained permanent and immutable, and that is the demand of the great majority of the Irish people for a change in the form and in the aspect, perhaps even more in the aspect than in the form, of their internal self-government. We are entitled, on an occasion like this, to bear these things in mind. Englishmen are the most stolid race in the whole world. They do the most astonishing things in every country except, indeed, in their own, where they are, I admit, somewhat sluggish. In every country but their own they do the most astonishing things, and then they forget all about them; go away indifferent, look on something else, consider something else, and then are surprised when, perhaps, after a long lapse of years, they are told that they have not only sanctioned, not only promoted, but accomplished a revolution. During these hundred years there has been, and nobody knows it better than the right hon. gentlemen who have been personally concerned

Home Rule

with the government of Ireland, a revolution in Ireland,

The Irish landlords have lost nearly all their influence, and have parted with half their territorial possessions—parted with them to a race, a hungry race, a land-hungry race, of small peasant proprietors. I say nothing against the old Irish gentry. Peace to their memory! I am quite prepared, with the hon. Member for Cork (Mr. William O'Brien) to invoke a blessing upon the bonus which undoubtedly accelerated their departure. The Irish landlords were in no sense of the word bad fellows. They were the victims of the very worst system of land tenure that any diligent student of that dreary subject has ever come across. However, they have gone. The Parliamentary representation of the Irish counties, once their proud appanage, has disappeared from them, and passed into very different hands. The old names have disappeared, I hope not for ever, from our Division lists. Old country houses, which did so much to maintain the proud and jovial traditions of Irish hospitality, famous all the world over, are now, as everybody who travels about the country notices—even I confess I do so myself with regret—closed, or else they have become public institutions, schools, and colleges (an *hon. Member*: "Workhouses")—no, not workhouses—and it may be religious institutions, where the only guests who are ever entertained are the inspectors of the Local Government Board or the Diocesan

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

Visitor. What greater sign of revolution could you have than that referred to in the powerful speech made earlier in the evening by the hon. Member for North-East Cork (Mr. T. M. Healy)? You, the Tory party, ruthlessly, I think bravely, and in the result wisely, you ruthlessly tore away from the country gentlemen their one public vocation in life. They had plenty of avocations, but their one public vocation in life was the discharge of country and county business. You took it away from them completely and handed it over to the small farmer and to the small shopkeeper. No completer somersault was ever made by any country, at any time, in the throes of any revolution. You did this, a most remarkable and startling thing. Somebody has asked me what is my opinion of these new Irish County Councils. I am not much addicted to panegyrising any body of men, whether they be directors of the Bank of England or members of a County Council. And, of course, as President of the Irish Local Government Board, my attention is never called to their well-doings but only to their occasional evil or irregular doings. This much I can say for them: The action, the courageous, the rash but none the less courageous action, of 1898 has been fully justified in the result, for every year that has passed since the commencement of the operations of the Act has heightened the character and increased the efficiency, and has, I think, already gone far completely to establish the reputation of these County Councils.

Home Rule

It is an extraordinary thing to my mind that you should find these things not only in rural Ireland but also in urban Ireland. The towns of Ireland—I am not speaking of the great towns, but of the very numerous smaller towns in Ireland—are awakening to a public life, to a public sense of duty, and to demands far too long delayed, though again and again recommended in some of those innumerable Reports with which the Irish Office is simply blocked, Reports of Commissioners, of examiners, and of persons who have been appointed to go all about Ireland and say what things should be done. Long years ago one of these Commissioners said that one of the most absolute essentials for Ireland was that these small towns should have their areas so increased that their rateable value might be sufficient to enable them to carry out themselves those sanitary operations which are necessary for their existence. But now all over Ireland, not only in the rural but in the urban districts, there is this same new and public life. I was very glad when the hon. Member (Mr. Ramsay Macdonald) referred to Belfast. Belfast does not spend all its time in remembering the battle of the Boyne—not at all—or even in reciting the history of the siege of Derry. It is a great, throbbing, living community of working men, and their days and their hours are passed, not merely in unremitting toil, but in sharing hopes, aspirations, and ambitions which will require and will receive a full working out

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

when the opportunity is given them. So it is all through Ireland. But—and this is the point—most of these revolutionary changes, of these new ideas, of this yeast of thought and improved feeling, of those aspirations in literature, poetry, the drama—despise these things if you choose: they are something in the history of nations and the history of a people—all these changes, all these emotions, all these feelings, whither are they tending? in what direction do they move? Are they making for or against self-government—Irish self-government on Irish soil?

I have observed this as closely as I possibly could during the five years and more that I have held the office entrusted to me, and I have no hesitation whatsoever in saying that the whole movement, this new movement in this new Ireland, which you yourselves, I frankly admit, have done so much to create, is in the direction of the demand to which this Bill gives, if you like to say it, inadequate expression. Are not these, at all events, the things which we ought at this hour mostly to consider? It is a new Ireland that has got to be governed. How do you propose to govern Ireland? I was much struck with that part of the right hon. gentleman's speech which described, with evident sincerity, the sensations which he experienced on his late visit to Belfast. He seems to have no difficulty in thinking that the people in North-East Ulster are a separate people, almost a separate nationality. He witnessed there what

Home Rule

he described as the soul of a people, and he felt how moving it was. But is there not another Ireland, and would he not be moved equally much were he to see a great assembly and a great representation of hundreds of thousands of Irish Nationalists passionately demanding self-government for their country? Very well, let us, at all events, agree that there is not only in North-East Ulster, but in other parts and throughout the whole length and breadth of Ireland the same national demand, the same passionate feeling, and the same soul of a nation as he witnessed in Belfast the other day. But I confess that the point which I am most anxious to impress upon this House is—for God's sake do not make the cardinal error of supposing that at this moment the old Irish problem with which we are so familiar, and with which the whole House has been familiar for the last hundred years, has worked itself out. Do not go away and say, "Everything is all right for Ireland." We have been told by hon. gentlemen opposite—it forms part of their case—that Ireland is peaceful, prosperous, and happy, that the whole horizon is without a cloud, that everything is going perfectly well, that a rich harvest is ripening under the sun, and that everything will be all right if you will only remember Lord Melbourne's favourite remark, "Why not leave it alone." That is all, it is said, that Ireland needs at the present moment. I confess that it does not seem to me so very long ago that

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

I stood at this box, baited and badgered by the Tory party, to prove myself a man, to throw off the horrible yoke of hon. gentlemen below the Gangway and to assert courageously that the condition of Ireland was such as to demand the suspension, or the setting aside, of the ordinary law, and to put people in gaol and keep them there without trial. All these things were forced upon me. As I had not the faintest intention of doing anything of the kind, it did not affect me very much. But I feel bound now to remind hon. Members opposite that all is not perfectly well in Ireland, and I assert unhesitatingly that, both administratively and legislatively, nothing can be perfectly well in Ireland, and that Ireland can never be in the position her genius, her character, and her resources entitle her to unless you reform her, both administratively and legislatively, so as to impose upon the people themselves the necessity of maintaining a strong Executive in Ireland. Why! the greatest and most distinguished, or, at all events, in my judgment the most distinguished man who ever led the Tory party, Mr. Disraeli, in one of his illuminating remarks familiar to everybody, and uttered, oddly enough, in this House, attributed the weakness of Ireland to an alien Church, to absentee landlords, and to the weakest Executive in the world. That was before me. I doubt very much whether my parents were so much as married at that time. The weakest Executive in the world, and the weakest

Home Rule

Executive in the world it has ever since remained, whether the Chief Secretary of the day called himself a Tory or a Liberal. Weak it always was, and weak it must always remain until it has behind it the full force of the people of the country. They, and they alone, can put down village ruffianism. They, and they alone, can properly deal with concerted tyranny.

And as regards legislation, really I am amazed that hon. gentlemen opposite from Ulster should be able to look me in the face and deny how constantly they have pestered me, and rightly they have pestered me, in order to introduce legislation for Ireland. Take the Poor Law, a question in which the people of Ireland, irrespective of party politics, are concerned. There was a Report upon the Poor Law, an admirable Report, four or five years ago which laid the path for immediate legislation upon that most important subject. Gentlemen opposite are just as much interested in it as gentlemen below the Gangway. They have pestered me to bring it in. How can I bring it in? There is no time to bring it in. You did not bring it in, anyhow. It was pressed just as much in your time as it has been in mine. (*Hon. Members:* "It was your Report.") There may have been no report, but there was a very general consensus of opinion on the subject, and after all, we all feel, everybody must feel, apart from religious prejudice in the matter, that such a question as that peculiarly touching Ireland, such as the Irish

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

members or people absolutely concerned with the government of Ireland only can pretend to understand, would be dealt with far more quickly, and, I think, far more wisely, in a Parliament in which everybody, we hope, would be fully represented than by this House. Somebody said to me about the Education Question, "What do you propose to do with the Education Question?" God knows the Education Question requires to be dealt with in Ireland. I have laboured in that cause as hard as any mortal in my position could do, and without vanity I can say at all events, *non omnis moriar*. What, however, I have succeeded in doing is indeed small. The question of primary education and secondary education and the position of the teacher in the secondary schools—all these things weigh more heavily on my heart than almost anything else, except some of the scenes of disorder which I know still do occur in Ireland. You have not cured that evil yet. These things must weigh heavily on the heart and the almost impotent hands of any Chief Secretary for Ireland. I care not whether he is a man of ten times my ability. Why cannot you now deal with this question of self-government? We have been told over and over again it is because in Ireland there are two camps and two religions. I am the last man in the world to dispute the gravity of religious sectarian differences. I have had charge of an Education Bill. I do not know whether the noble lord the

Home Rule

Member for Oxford University (Lord Hugh Cecil) will support me in this matter now. I think he followed me pretty closely at that time. I have never underrated the importance of these differences or pretended for a single moment that they can be put upon one side, but when we are told that there are two religions in Ireland, I am compelled to inquire which of them is the Christian religion? And what by any chance is the name of the other? In Ireland there is an overwhelming majority of the adherents of what used to be called in this country the "old religion"—that is, they belonged to the Church of Rome. Is the Church of Rome a Christian Church, or is it not? I do not hear any answer to the question. There are the Presbyterians in the north on the Scotch model. There are all over Ireland, beloved wherever they are, the Methodists, up and down, east and west, north and south. There are the Quakers, maintaining nobly the traditions of that marvellous community. There are Baptists and Congregationalists on the English model, and, of course, there are the Protestant Episcopalians, representing the most prosperous and successful survivors of the Elizabethan Establishment. We have all these people in England; I know all of them perfectly well; but—and I honour you for the self-restraint that a great number of members have exercised—you do not speak evil of the Church of Rome; you do not speak blasphemously or unkindly of her central services

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

or of her creed or of her ritual. You do not do it. But what you do, in effect, say, I think—one has said it out aloud in some meeting or other—is that you can only trust Roman Catholics when they are swamped in a great Protestant majority over the whole of the United Kingdom. If that is really your true view, if you cannot trust Roman Catholics in Ireland because in Ireland they are in the majority, if you insist on throwing them in hotch-potch so that the great Protestant majority here may swamp them, I say that is Protestant ascendancy. I do not believe that there is any truth in the statement that Roman Catholics are only fit to have civil rights and to be vested with the vote, and to be able to sit in Parliament when they are in a permanent and perpetual minority.

It has been said over and over again. (*Hon. Members*: "Name!") Then nobody has said it; therefore the objection to the Roman Catholics in Ireland is not that they are in a majority. Then, I ask, if that is not the objection, what are you frightened for? The right hon. gentleman himself distinctly said that he was rather indisposed to believe it, but that he was perfectly certain that the great body of Protestants in Ireland did really believe that were there to be an Irish Parliament entrusted with Irish affairs, inasmuch as the majority, possibly for a century or two to come at all events, of its members would belong to the Roman Catholic faith, they as Protestants would go in peril of

Home Rule

something—either their lives or property, or at all events they would be under great political disadvantages. I do not believe that for a single moment. The right hon. gentleman himself did not say that he believed in it, but he said that other people believed in it. Then it is a question of casuistry, How far are people entitled to put themselves across the line of a great demand for the better government of the country, simply because they say, "We do not think that under your new constitution we should be allowed to carry on our work, or to go about our business in the way we are at present"? I really do not believe in this hypothetical and anticipatory treason. We are all of us potential rebels. I have no sympathy with persons who say, "Oh, no; you must never in any circumstances speak as if you would rebel." I am capable, even myself, in my old age, of becoming a rebel—my imagination is not so lethargic but I could conceive circumstances in which I possibly might, but I do think that any majority is bound, absolutely bound, to wait until there are some overt acts, until something is done to place them under those unreasonable restraints; and if they were, need the Protestants of Ulster be alarmed? They do not need to invoke elderly barristers to lead them into the field. (Interruption and *Hon. Members*: "Withdraw.") They will have—— (*Hon. Members*: "Withdraw.") I think hon. members are unduly squeamish. Surely the House of Commons is not reduced to

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

the level of a nunnery, and we are entitled—
(*Hon. Members:* “Withdraw.”) I say they would have behind them the whole forces of the Empire. When Ulster tells me she will fight and that she will be right, I answer, unhesitatingly, “Of course you will fight, and of course you will be right whenever your religion is oppressed or your property differentiated and despoiled. Well, but are you entitled, or is any minority entitled to say, “We will boycott, and stop, and put an end to any alteration of which the vast or the great majority of our countrymen approve”? (*Hon. Members:* “Never.”) Very well, that is the issue, and the people of this country will have no difficulty in forming their own opinion. (*An hon. Member:* “Give them the chance.”) You had plenty of chances. (*Hon. Members:* “When?”) Does the hon. and gallant gentleman, for whom I have a great personal respect— (*Captain Craig:* “I do not want it.”) The hon. gentleman cannot help it if I respect him. I do not wish to delay the House from this Division. (*Hon. Members:* “What about the Bill?”) At the close of a debate like this there is not the fullest and amplest time for discussion. Certainly, many of the speakers who preceded me, though certainly not the right hon. gentleman, made speeches on the assumption that we were already in eternity. The time has gone by for this. I do not quarrel with them in the least. I have not lost my temper, I hope, at all.

THE SECOND READING



Winston Churchill

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RIGHT
HON. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P.,
ON THE SECOND READING, *April*
30, 1912

THE precedents of former years, following the example of Mr. Gladstone, would seem to require that the Second Reading of a Home Rule Bill should not be moved without some general observations from a Minister of the Crown, and I would ask the House to accord me the goodwill and indulgence usually shown to a Member who has a difficult task to discharge, and to accord me also that full liberty of debate which we, for our part, shall gladly give to our opponents on this subject. I desire, not at undue length, I hope, to address my argument to the House conceived from the point of view of one of the many of its younger Members to whom the controversies of the 'eighties and even the controversies of the 'nineties have never made their appeal, and one of those many Members of the House whose active political life lies wholly or almost wholly in the new century into which we have now begun to make some headway. There are many of us here, and in the debates on this Bill no doubt we cannot contribute to the dis-

Home Rule

cussions the experience which those who have been over this extensive battlefield before are endowed with. We cannot have the experience or the knowledge of those who fought in 1893, and still less of the veterans of 1886. All that we can hope to bring to the lengthy discussions in which the House is now to embark is the modern eye. That we can contribute. We have seen a century begin in war and we have all the nations of the world embarking on military preparations and naval preparations on a scale altogether without example for many generations. We have witnessed a vast expansion in the scale and business and functions of government. We have seen an enormous expansion of science and wealth, the fruit of science. We have seen the most striking development of internationalism both as affecting capital and labour; we have seen the growing consolidation of the British Empire under a system of many Parliaments. We have seen a South African settlement and its consequences, and we now perceive that the two most formidable and powerful and progressive Powers of the modern world, the United States of America and the Empire of Germany, conduct their business and carry on their development through a gigantic system of federated States and subordinate Legislatures. These are the features of the landscape as it opens to the modern eye, and it is in relation to them and in proportion to them that we are led to look at this question of Home Rule about

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

which our fathers used to get so angry and about which they used to fight such invigorating party battles in the good old days.

The first impression which I venture to think this class of Members to whom I refer will sustain as they approach this question, is that Irish Home Rule is no longer as big a question for Great Britain as it used to be. The seriousness of a grant of autonomy or a division of the powers of self-government in a State is necessarily affected by the relative size and population of the two countries concerned. Norway and Sweden, Holland and Belgium, and Austria and Hungary were, I believe I am correct in saying, though I have not got the statistics at hand, equal or almost equal bodies. (*Hon. Members*: "No.") At any rate, they were both great and important bodies, but even at the time of the Union the population of Great Britain was twice as big as the population of Ireland, so that the question of the relations between the two countries was never such a great question to us as it has been to these other States whose names I have mentioned. But a change has taken place since the Union—it has been continually in progress, and there is no evidence that the change is not still in progress—in the relative power and wealth and population of the two countries. The population of Great Britain is no longer twice as great as that of Ireland; it is now ten times as great. That has made a very great difference in the scale and import-

Home Rule

ance of the problem to British eyes. There is no arguing against a change like that ; it obviously alters the proportion all through. I do not say that it alters the merits of the controversy, but it alters the proportion of things. We are told that Home Rule involves the disruption of our country. If a hundred years ago Home Rule for Ireland would have disrupted the United Kingdom to the extent of one-third, and if in 1886 it would have disrupted the United Kingdom to the extent of one-sixth, it is at any rate open to those who urge this argument of disruption to console themselves in our discussion with the reflection that at the present time it can only disrupt the United Kingdom to the extent of one-tenth. (*Hon. Members*: "No.") I am anxious so long as possible to avoid controversy. Therefore I begin with a proposition which, of course, is absolutely indisputable. It is undoubted that the complete change in the proportion of the two countries has made all Irish questions less vital to the security and safety of this country. If you work out the ratio of the wealth of the two countries, which is, I suppose, some measure of their relative power—wealth can be easily converted into armed force—far greater changes will be seen to have taken place in the relative proportion in the period which I have mentioned. There is another reason why the importance of the Irish question to English eyes has diminished with the passage of time. The violence of the Irish

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

movement has been steadily reduced as time has passed. The fierce revolutionary agitation for the repeal of the Union which was led by O'Connell in the forties, and the serious disturbance of 1848, were far less horrible and dangerous in their character and course than the rebellion of 1798. The Fenian movement of the 'sixties was less dangerous in its manifestation than the agitation of O'Connell, and the land movement of the 'eighties, though marked by many shocking incidents, was less violent than its precursor in the sixties, and since Mr. Gladstone in 1886 identified one of the great English parties with the Home Rule cause no scenes or incidents of violence have been witnessed in Ireland more serious than those which have attended labour disputes in Great Britain.

If the methods of violence have sensibly diminished, it is also true to say that the influence of extremists and of extreme views upon the form which the settlement should take has also been steadily reduced. From the days of its inception by Mr. Butt, I believe it to be historically true to say that the Home Rule movement has never been a Separatist movement. It is very important you should realise our view in order that you may be able to contradict or correct it when opportunity serves. By that, I do not mean that many Separatists have not supported the Home Rule movement, nor that many Home Rulers have not made Separatist speeches. But I say that the Home Rule movement in its whole

Home Rule

course and character has been a modifying and a moderating movement designed to secure the recognition of Irish claims within the circuit of the British Empire. Why, the very name of Home Rule, I have been told, was chosen by Mr. Butt with the express object of avoiding excitement and raising prejudices and ill-feeling, and with the intention of conciliating British public opinion. And the character of this movement as a non-Separatist movement was maintained by Mr. Parnell, and has been continued by the hon. and learned Member for Waterford (Mr. John Redmond). (*Hon. Members*: "Oh, oh!"). It is quite easy to point to speeches of Irish leaders which are in conflict with this view. That does not alter the general truth of the statement I have just submitted to the judgment of the House. When men are fighting desperately and agitating strenuously for political change, when their hopes are forlorn and they have every need to rally to their party even the most extreme and turbulent forces in their country (*hon. Members*: "Hear, hear")—I am delighted to find some assent is given to that proposition—when they are in that position, it is not wonderful that they should be led into excited language and into violent demands.

What is remarkable is that through all these years of struggle, uncheered by fortune, and even abandoned by hope, the great mass of Irish Nationalist opinion should have assented at every important juncture to the formal and deliberate

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

statement and restatement of their claims in a form absolutely antagonistic to the separation of the two kingdoms. I say that the Irish demand now put forward, and now met by this measure, which has been accepted as a full settlement by almost every important element in Irish life, is an essentially moderate and reasonable demand. It is no demand for a divorce of the two kingdoms; it is no demand for separation from the United Kingdom or for separation from the British Empire; it is not even a demand for the termination of the parliamentary Union; it is not even a demand for colonial autonomy; it is, as the hon. Member for Cork (Mr. Healy), in his brilliant speech the other day, contended with perfect truth, the acceptance of a measure which implements, amplifies, and carries out the union of the two countries under forms which for the first time will receive the assent of the Irish people. All the time that this modified process has been in progress, let me remind the House, the diminution both in the violence of method and in the extravagance of demand which has been taking place has not been accompanied by any diminution in the volume of opinion in Ireland in favour of the restoration of their Parliament. On the contrary, it is perfectly true to say that never before has so little been asked, and never before have so many people asked for it. The character of our Bill is displeasing to the Opposition, and why is it displeasing? They do not

Home Rule

give us at present quite a clear indication as to the main direction in which their dislike of it lies. Is it displeasing because it is so moderate, or is it displeasing because it is so extreme?

They employ both arguments. At one moment they turn to the hon. and learned Member for Waterford and his friends, and say, with incredulity in their tone, "Surely you are not going to accept this wretched, restricted measure? It is an insult to your national claim. If your national aspirations mean anything, they mean absolute separation from the British Empire. This is not even what Mr. Gladstone offered you." Then, in the very next, they inform the country that the Empire has been riven in twain, and that Ireland is free to make an alliance with Germany. We must, no doubt, expect that there will be a simultaneous continuance of these two lines of thought. As a matter of fact, our Bill in some respects falls short of Mr. Gladstone's proposals, and in others goes beyond them. The most notable instance in which it goes beyond them is in the definite gift to Ireland of a Parliament under the name of Parliament, and a House of Commons. I have been told very often, in these debates, and challenged upon it, that there is no finality in the settlement which this Bill embodies. Let us see what is meant by that. If you mean by finality that we are to regard this Bill as a final adjustment in every clause and detail of the administrative and financial arrangements between the two

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

Islands, I say I do not think it will be final in that sense. It seems to me highly probable that it will require a good deal of alteration before we have achieved a complete federal system for the United Kingdom, and we see no difficulty or cause for apprehension in that. I say quite frankly that I regard this Home Rule Bill as standing in the same relation to the establishment of a complete system of self-government for the different countries and portions of the United Kingdom in which the Transvaal Constitution stood to the Union of South Africa. The Transvaal Constitution never referred to the Union of South Africa, and many of its provisions were affected by the Act of Union and altered by that Act. But the Transvaal Constitution was the necessary parent and forerunner of the Union, and there would have been no chance of carrying the Union unless we had first of all terminated the quarrel by a bold grant of self-government. And that is what we mean when we speak of finality in Ireland. We mean that we shall have reached the end of the quarrel, and that the dissensions that have disturbed us so long and injured us so deeply will have been laid finally to rest, and that we shall have come to terms with the Irish people on the basis of union both of Crown and Parliament.

I was saying, at the outset of my remarks, that we ought not to exaggerate the importance of the Irish question. It is a great, difficult,

Home Rule

and historic problem, but it is not so important as it was one hundred years ago from the British point of view. Its importance has been altered by the great increase in the scale of other things. The whole scale of our business and affairs has multiplied and expanded vastly, perhaps beyond our power to realise. The great questions of the Victorian era which convulsed the politics of the 'eighties, which seemed then to absorb the whole mind of the nation, are as much out-classed by the questions of the present time as the battleships and liners of 1880 are dwarfed by the vessels we are launching now; and the dangers which Mr. Pitt apprehended, and properly apprehended, are as obsolete as are the three-deckers with which he surmounted them. Every one in this House, wherever he may sit, knows perfectly well, even the representatives of Ulster know it, that events might happen on the frontiers of India or in the North Sea—nay, they might happen here at home, on our railways, in our colliery districts, on our great markets and exchanges—incomparably more important to the welfare of the whole masses of the people of this country, incomparably more important to the structure and form of our society, and to the general welfare of the realm, than anything which could happen in Ireland. We are confronted in this Parliament, in these times in which we live, and upon which we are entering with two tremendous groups of questions, one internal the other external, both of such pro-

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

found gravity and import that party strife is hushed in their presence. We have to face the growing discontent of the immense labouring population of this country with the social and economic conditions under which they dwell. We have somehow or other to create for them decent and fair conditions of living and of labour. We have also, at the same time, to guard and maintain our interests and position in the world, filled with mighty nations and empires, whose minds and energies are turned more and more each year to the science and preparation of war. We have got to succeed in solving both those great sets of questions, both those great sets of problems, if we are to maintain our station in the world as it has been handed to us by those who have gone before.

Every one knows, whatever opinion he may hold upon Irish policy, that it raises no issue comparable to either of those two questions I have mentioned. I am going to subject this statement to one very crude test. I am going to test the statement that the Home Rule question, important and vital as it is to Irishmen, does not touch vitally British issues. (*Hon. Members*: "Oh!") That is my contention. I may be wrong. I am going to subject it to the crude test of bringing it before the tribunal of absolute force, by asking, as I asked last year in a few sentences, whether our military security is in any way affected by such a measure as this. This matter was referred to by the right

Home Rule

hon. gentleman the Member for the City of London (Mr. Balfour) in his powerful and suggestive speech the other day, to which we all listened with such deep attention. And I take it that this question, Will Home Rule weaken our power or security in war? is one which we are bound to discuss quite early in the debate upon this measure. Could anything be done by a Parliament in Dublin, as constituted by the Bill, to add to our military risks or impair the effectiveness or integrity of our military measures? To examine this question fairly one ought to assume—what I believe to be impossible, and as I shall presently endeavour to show is extremely unlikely—namely, that there will be a violent divergence of opinion and sentiment between the British and Irish Parliaments during the course of a war of first magnitude. Let us assume for the purpose of argument that such a divergence takes place. Is there anything that an Irish Government or Parliament could do if they were unfriendly that would sensibly affect the efficiency of our defences, particularly of our naval defences? The answer to that question is, I submit to the House, that there is absolutely nothing. Even putting it at its very worst, and even assuming the impossible, the action of an Irish Parliament upon our naval defences would be practically negligible. The fact that such an answer can be given now shows the enormous change that has come over the Irish question as time has passed, for what was

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

the preoccupation, the great preoccupation of our ancestors? What was it that drew them to Ireland and led them to encounter all the exertions and risks then contingent on the Union? It was the continual apprehension of a continental descent upon the Irish coasts from France or from Spain, which in those days of sailing ships and practically no certain communication would be unknown for many weeks or many months, and which could not be coped with by means of another army perhaps for the greater part of a year.

That was the nightmare which haunted the statesmen of Elizabeth and the statesmen of George III., and it was, I have no hesitation in saying, the main preoccupation which guided them and impelled them in the course which they took in regard to Ireland. Now the conditions have absolutely changed. The conditions of modern war are such that there is no possibility of such a descent being effected now. As I said to the House last year, so long as we hold command of the seas no descent from a foreign country is possible in Ireland, and if we lose command of the seas it is not on Ireland that the descent will be made. There are half a dozen countries, whose names I shall not mention, entirely independent of this country, with whose affairs we do not meddle, but whose action or inaction might sensibly affect our interests in great emergencies, but Ireland is not among

Home Rule

them. If Ireland did her best for us in a war she could help us greatly, but if she did her worst against us she could not—I am speaking purely from the military point of view—materially affect our operations, and we should be able to plough through quite unaffected, if we had made good arrangements.

I proceed to ask whether such a divergence of view and of sentiment is likely. I have been showing that if it occurred it would not be detrimental, and now I proceed to ask whether it is likely in a great crisis. The circumstances of the relations between the two countries are without parallel in the history of the whole world. Never before has the smaller and weaker country succeeded, while it has been quite unreconciled in the system of the larger Power, in exacting tribute from the stronger Power. In nearly every case the weaker nation has been made to pay, and the stronger has profited from the union. For generations this was the rule between England and Ireland, for generations the poorer island was made to contribute taxes even in times of its greatest penury, even during years of famine, to the prosperity of her wealthier neighbour, who had her by the throat. But the irresistible march of events, though perhaps scarcely perceived even by those who directed them, has altered the situation entirely, and had first wiped out all the profit which British revenue derived from Ireland and has then turned the balance decisively the other way, so that we are now actually paying

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

£1,500,000 per year with certain increases naturally maturing and in prospect in the future. That is the fact. It is our policy on this side of the House to prolong those payments for periods which are indefinite; it is your policy on the other side of the House to increase them and to make them perpetual. I say, therefore, that the financial relations between the two countries are without precedent or parallel, and constitute one of the dominant facts of the situation. I do not wish to overrate material influences. To do so is to take an unworthy view of our human nature, but it is the contention of the Unionist party that those material advantages will by themselves overbear the national sentiment of Ireland if time be given. That is what you call "killing Home Rule by kindness." If you are right in thinking that unity can be obtained by overbearing national sentiment with material benefits, how much more hopeful is our prospect, which combines in one alliance community of interests and national reconciliation!

I shall be asked what about the South African War, and did not the Irish cheer for the Boers? The South African War was a very expensive colonial war, but it was not a great war in the sense of the great wars and struggles of history. It was not a war which came home to the people of the United Kingdom in the same way in which the great wars and struggles of history on the Continent of Europe

Home Rule

came home to the nations who were dwelling side by side. It was a war about which we could afford to differ, and about which we did differ, but if it had come nearer I believe, even under the circumstances which then existed, the instinct of self-preservation would, as the danger became greater and closer, have united the peoples of the United Kingdom, and all parties among them, in a common league to meet a common danger. Quite apart from that, the Irish were, at the time of that war, engaged in a bitter political controversy and a great political battle and struggle with the people of this country to procure for themselves the grant of self-government—(*Hon. Members*: “No, no”)—for which they are now asking. Certainly, they had seen on two occasions their hopes defeated, and they were still united in equal strength and pressing forward their demands, and you cannot argue that the action which they took when they were unreconciled would be any guide to the action which they would take if a settlement had been reached, for there is no statement more devoid of deep truth, whatever superficial plausibilities may attach to it, than the common statement, “England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity.” But I believe it has never been true, and when this Bill has passed, and when every ground of quarrel has been obliterated between the two peoples, when Ireland is not only economically, but financially dependent upon Great Britain, and when no bar

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

of national sentiment divides, and when every prompting of self-interest unites and every tie of custom and convenience welds them together, then I say the identity of interest between Ireland and England will be absolute, and I respectfully defy you by the utmost exercise of your imagination to conjure up or picture any set of circumstances in which the ruin of England would not mean the ruin of Ireland also.

It is the same identity of interests on which we rely to make this Bill work smoothly, to make its safeguards thoroughly effective, and to prevent friction and divergence between the two Governments and the two Parliaments. Why should we not rely with confidence upon the identity of interests? What conceivable reason would any Irish Government have to put itself on bad terms with the Government of Great Britain? To maintain good relations with each successive British administration will be the first interest of Ireland, unless we are to assume what our daily experience shows us is absurd and untrue, that Irishmen are absolutely blind to their own interests. Unless we are to make that assumption, that they are so blind to their own interests that no sooner had they obtained a Constitution than they would endeavour to wreck it, those dangers are illusory. There is hardly any step which a British Government could take even on matters unconnected with Ireland that would not in many ways affect

Home Rule

Irish interests, and to be considered to stand well with the Imperial Government, and to have good and cordial relations with the Ministry of the day will be the pride and constant care of Irish statesmen called upon to direct the affairs of the smaller island. (*Hon. Members*: "How do you know?") I am not prophesying, I am drawing a conclusion from an argument. My premise is that there is an identity of interests and that there is continuity in the relations of mutual interest between the two countries. From that I argue as a fair deduction that it is unlikely that persons not blind to their own interests, and who have managed their own affairs whenever they have had the chance with great grit and discretion, will be anxious to quarrel with those with whom they have so many intricate and important relations. That is my proposition.

I say we see these forces at work every day, and year, in bringing about closer union with all parts of the British Empire. But the Dominions are far off, they are at the end of the world; they are self-supporting; they are not represented in our body; they have no great and continual volume of business with us—(*Hon. Members*: "Oh, oh!")—such as undoubtedly would occur between the two sister islands. Ireland is close by. I am putting a proposition about which, of course, like every other proposition in connection with Ireland, there would be two opinions. I say Ireland is close by, and I say Ireland will be thrown into continual, serious,

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

and close intimate business and political relations with this country to the end of the world. Our affairs are interwoven; our interests are the same; they can help us often, and we can help them always. Remove the cause of quarrel, restore their national self-respect, give them a fair Constitution, and you will find, swiftly and surely, results beyond your utmost dreams. That is prophecy, I admit; but I will run the risk of it. But suppose we are wrong, suppose there is one island in the world and one race upon the surface of the earth so curiously disposed, so strangely fashioned, that self-interest does not stir them, that the desire of prosperity does not dwell in their hearts; suppose there were a race whose two fiercest passions were, first of all, to quarrel with their own bread-and-butter, and, secondly, to cut off their noses to spite their faces; suppose there were such a people, suppose that the Irish were that people, suppose they deliberately set themselves—all this concatenation of absurd suppositions must be made—to wreck and ruin the Constitution they had so painfully acquired, to bring about a deadlock, to infuriate or to irritate their all-powerful neighbour, to quarrel with the great protecting, credit-giving, revenue-paying, and produce-purchasing Power—what then? Why, then, even for this inverted pyramid of absurd and unnatural assumptions there is full provision in the Bill. The Imperial Parliament, in which the Irish will be represented, will have not only the legal but

Home Rule

the moral right to legislate. The Imperial Parliament can resume its delegated powers in whole or in part. It can legislate as it chooses for Ireland. It can justify force by law, and, if necessary, vindicate law by force.

We believe that immense benefits will be derived by the British Empire, particularly in its colonial and foreign relations, from a thorough good feeling between the British and the Irish people. We are sensibly hampered at the present time in the progress of our colonial policy by hostility and distrust in every one of the great English-speaking dominions, which, traced home to its source, arises from the presence of unreconciled Irish in positions of prosperity and honour in their midst. Every one knows that this influence has worked much evil in our relations with the great English-speaking Republic on the other side of the Atlantic, but though there are great advantages to be gained, though Ireland has great gifts to give us, which we have never enjoyed so far, I believe it to be true, and I have been trying to submit the argument to the House, that no serious injury worse than we suffer now can come to us from Ireland. The gain to the Empire by a settlement would be very great. The risk to Britain even from failure is small. We have much to hope for; we have nothing to fear. It is no doubt a realisation of this last fact that leads the Opposition to permit themselves in dealing with Ireland a latitude that they would never think of using in

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

matters more vital from the British point of view. Take the right hon. gentleman the leader of the Opposition. When he speaks on foreign affairs, upon Imperial defence, or upon the coal strike, he uses language in form worthy of the leader of a great party, and not unfitting a statesman who is looking confidently forward to assuming the responsibilities of the First Minister of the Crown. But when Ireland comes along, a palpable sigh of relief goes up, and the Opposition and their Leader feel that here at last, thank Heaven! is a question upon which they can afford to have a regular good party row. But I am going to plead very respectfully, that the Irish question, although not so vital or so momentous as these others, should receive fair and statesmanlike consideration from all parties in the House. After all, our relations with Ireland do deserve our unprejudiced attention, as well as our relations with any foreign Power. After all, the demands from the Irish Nationalists have a claim on the statesmanship of the House of Commons as a whole, as well as the demands and claims, we will say, of the Miners' Federation, or some other great trade union engaged in a labour dispute.

Although in the British Isles there are greater questions, Home Rule is the greatest and the most agitating question of all to every Orangeman and Nationalist in Ireland. On those benches sit the representatives of the two opposing Irish parties, differing one from another

Home Rule

so sharply, severed from each other by all the sorrowful events of the long quarrel into which, through no fault of either party, they have been plunged. This question to them is one of life or death, as they believe it to be. It is in view of these two parties sitting side by side in this House that I, speaking as a British Member to other British Members, would ask, What is our duty as British Members? It is an Irish quarrel in the first instance. Ought we to make it a British quarrel too? Ought the two great parties to draw out their lines of battle and the standards of Orange and Green, which are not their standards, and to fall to? Ought we to set these two cocks to fight, and stake our party fortunes on the upshot? As good and faithful citizens, with dangers to face in common, with treasures to enjoy in common, with work to do in common, are we not bound to do our best to appease and not to foment Irish hatred, and to effect an honourable and lasting settlement if we can? There is one form of argument which I myself do not like very much to employ, and that is for a Government to appeal to an Opposition with whom they have been fighting hammer and tongs at party politics, and to say to them, "Be generous, be conciliatory, be statesmanlike, be patriotic—and keep us in office *ad infinitum*." I much prefer another style of political controversy. But this Irish question and its solution matters as much to the Conservative party as to the Liberal party. It is your interest

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

as much as ours, perhaps more, to have it settled. It is your duty as much as ours to try to settle it.

Can you say that you are satisfied with the existing condition of things? Is not your whole political argument at the present time one long complaint that the Irish Members hold the balance in the House of Commons, that Bills are passed, that Budgets are passed, that Ministries are maintained in power largely by the Irish vote? That is what you tell us night and day. You reproach us harshly for the consequences and conditions which you yourselves have decreed, and which you declare you are resolved to maintain unaltered. You say that Ireland is to be represented at Westminster, and only there. What position and what status do you accord to four-fifths of her representatives? They are to remain here, but they are to be regarded as political pariahs. (*Several hon. Members: "Why?"*) Any one who co-operates with them or accepts their co-operation in the ordinary working of parliamentary business—(*several hon. Members: "Oh!"*)—we are told is guilty of dishonourable and contemptible conduct, of paltering with the unclean thing. That is your contention. (*Several hon. Members: "No."*) What other contention than that could justify the stream of strong, harsh, and insulting words which we heard from the hon. Member for Warrington (Mr. H. Smith) this afternoon? Any one who has political relations with the Irish Nationalist party is guilty of something like

Home Rule

treachery to the country. According to the language that is held—I am honestly doing my very best to meet the charges which are made, and the very generally accepted opinion in Conservative circles—there ought to be a tacit understanding that whatever differences may sunder British parties, neither is to be influenced by nor to profit from the Irish vote. I remember, when my right hon. and gallant friend the Under-Secretary of State for War (Colonel Seely) and I were followers of the right hon. Member for the City of London (Mr. A. J. Balfour)—and, I am bound to admit, we had the misfortune to differ from him on one or two occasions—the right hon. gentleman made a speech in which he referred to the Members who were attacking the Government—I am not sure that the noble lord (Lord H. Cecil) was not included—and said that there were certain Members of the party who were in it but not of it. That is the kind of position which, according to much of the language that we hear and in harmony with the charges that are made, is to be assigned to the Irish Members in the House of Commons. They are to be in it but not of it. That voting strength, given to them for their express use and protection, which is the one substitute that you offer them in exchange for a Parliament of their own, is to be nullified and neutralised and made ineffective by the superior voting strength of the two great English parties. As for the Irishmen in their own country,

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

they are, to put it bluntly, to be held down and kept in order by a great system of constabulary directed from across the sea.

This is the situation in our Parliament and in their own island which is offered to an ancient people, famous in history, influential all over the English-speaking world, whose blood has been shed on our battlefields, whose martial qualities have adorned our ensigns, whose humour has cheered our spirits, whose poetry has touched our hearts, whose private virtues may serve as no unworthy example to our homes. They are to be content with that. They are even to be enthusiastic about that. They are to sing "Rule, Britannia," and rejoice that, whatever may happen to Irishmen, Britons, at any rate, never will be slaves. Young English Members of Parliament will rise in their places and let off little speeches proving that the Irish are naturally, intellectually, and temperamentally incapable of managing their own affairs, that they are a very agreeable people when taken the right way, but that there is something about their nature which makes it necessary for them to be treated like children, like aborigines, and kept in a state of tutelage and subjection. An argument like that will be used by Members of this House, when all the time the hon. Member for Waterford (Mr. J. Redmond), the hon. Member for Cork (Mr. T. Healy), the hon. Member for West Belfast (Mr. Devlin), and others, who, in the broad and just judgment

Home Rule

of the House of Commons, stand in the very first rank of the Parliamentary debaters of the day, are sitting silently and critically behind them. All I can say is, when I contemplate the real meaning of the status and position which you offer to the Irish Members of this House, and to the Irish people in their own land, that I should not envy the nation that tried to put such treatment upon John Bull. Of this I am sure, that until we have comforted the soul of Ireland, until we have given to her national honour the solace of mutual forgiveness—of which we both stand in need—until we have made her a freely consenting party to an act of reconciliation, we shall never secure integrity in national action or unity in Imperial structure.

I have never believed in the nonsense which crops up from time to time in the Press about there being no alternative Government. The personnel of several good administrations can always be found in the House of Commons. But I would ask it amicably and earnestly of the Opposition, Have you not a real interest with us in making a settlement, and in getting this question cleared out of the way? What are your own remedies for it? Can you feel any great confidence in them? Will you really—I ask the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Austen Chamberlain)—give to Ireland a preferential tariff as against Canada? Do you think that that would be a good plan? Do you really think that would be a consolidating measure for the

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

Empire? If you do, do you suppose for one moment that will buy off the Irish national movement? What shall a nation have in exchange for its soul—a tax on imported butter? Despair, attendant on the failure of this Bill, would produce disastrous consequences. (*An hon. Member*: “No.”) Yes. Can any one—for others are in earnest besides the hon. member; others feel deeply and strongly, and are prepared, perhaps, to risk their lives—can any one look forward to being a Minister in a Government committed from the outset to a policy of coercion? Can any one who has used the language and the doctrine of civil war—I have no doubt under great stress of strong, sincere personal feeling—violence always arises from very strong and sincere feelings—promulgated on that Bench, look forward with pleasure or without an anxious conscience to having to discharge his duty in such a situation, and having to mete out to others that measure which has not been meted out to him? What about Irish representation here? Do you mean to keep the Irish members as an extraneous body under the insulting conditions of inferiority to which I have referred, and just vote them down, or do you propose without their agreement to cut down their representation from the numbers fixed in the Treaty of Union without giving them any compensating increase in their control over their own domestic affairs? Is that your remedy, your reconciliation? Is that to be the

Home Rule

final word which the governing genius of Britain, successful in so many lands, has to speak upon the melancholy relations between the two kingdoms? Even this relief, if such you consider it, is distant, and cannot be attained until another Parliament beyond this one has run its appointed course. The march of history may in that period bring us to many grave events at home and abroad, whoever is in power, and we shall all of us be glad to have by our side a reconciled Ireland and a friendly Irish party to share our hopes and fears, not a hostile band in our very citadel to raise their cry of unappeased resentment at the position in which they are placed. That is my argument to the Conservative party as a great power in the country.

I know well the answer that we shall receive to this. The answer will be that Ulster bars the way; that the Unionist party is bound in honour to Ulster. I am not going to indulge in recrimination. These are, so far as I can see them, the facts that lie before us. It is because Ulster, or rather because North-East Ulster, objects that the whole settlement by agreement is to be prevented for ever. The right hon. gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, indeed, thinks so seriously of the Ulster case that he seems to apprehend that the limit of conflict will not be confined to this world, but will trench upon celestial regions. Did he not in a powerful sentence say, "If Home Rule is passed Heaven help Ulster, but God help the Government"? Apparently

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

we are threatened with a renewal of those divine incidents which form the subject of "Paradise Lost." I had always hoped that they had happily ceased in the concluding canto of "Paradise Regained." But I admit that the perfectly genuine apprehensions of the majority of the people of North-East Ulster constitute the most serious, and in my humble judgment the only serious obstacle to a thoroughly satisfactory settlement of this question. It is impossible for a Liberal Government to treat cavalierly or contemptuously, for any British Government to ignore, the sincere sentiments of a numerous and well-defined community like the Protestants of the North of Ireland. We may think them wrong; we may think them unreasonable; but there they are! We may think that their opinions are prejudiced, but their opinions are facts of a most stubborn kind. We are not likely to underrate the forces and the influences which they can exercise upon the party opposite. We are not likely to underrate forces that drove Mr. Gerald Balfour from the Irish Office—(*an hon. Member*: "Wyndham")—and, though we all hope only for the time being, have interrupted the career of the right hon. gentleman the Member for Dover.

We are not likely to underrate these forces. We know perfectly well how firm is the grip which Ulster politicians have upon the main-springs of the Unionist party. For reminder—if reminder were needed—there sits opposite the

Home Rule

right hon. and learned gentleman, a horseman armed with whip and spur, resolved at all costs to drive Orange colours to the fore! What are the legitimate rights of Ulster? No one on this side of the House, no Liberal, will deny that it is the right of every citizen, nay a duty, provided the circumstances are sufficient, to resist oppression. That is a great and far-reaching principle. But it can only be applied with great moderation if societies and states into which men have formed themselves are to retain coherent structure. Let me ask another question. Have citizens the right, even if there is no oppression, to resist an Act of Parliament which they dislike? Not only in Ulster but in various parts of the country, in different circumstances, we feel the growth of this disposition to offer unconstitutional resistance, passive resistance, to the acts of the Legislature. I do most seriously ask the House to consider the great dangers which the continued development and exaggeration of this new feature will undoubtedly cause to our national life. I daresay I may some time or other be confronted with some quotations from the late Lord Randolph Churchill's speeches in this House, or out of it. I do not know whether the noble lord will do this, but, at any rate, I am going to carry the war into his own country, and to treat him to a quotation from the late Lord Salisbury. I was reading the other day again the essay which the late Lord Salisbury wrote many years ago on the Polish Constitution.

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

Lord Salisbury was showing all the defects in the Constitution of Poland which led them inevitably to the evil fate which ultimately befel them. All these defects, he wrote,

“ were as nothing compared to the great obstacle to all reform which lay in the singular institution of ‘Confederations.’ They have been aptly described as legalised rebellions. Whenever anything in the conduct of the diet, or of the king, displeased a considerable number of persons, they deemed themselves at liberty to combine together in an armed league, and to enforce, as far as they could, their own views upon their opponents at the sword’s point. If they were strong enough, the obnoxious law or election was annulled ; if they failed, they were not treated as traitors, or held to have done anything unpatriotic. Among an excitable race, little used to restraint, such an abuse, once allowed to take root, throve and multiplied. Confederations became the ordinary resources of a minority. At every critical point of Polish history one or more of these confederations make their appearance. Any foreign Power that desired it could generally procure the formation of one. The merits of rival candidates to the throne, the griefs of Dissidents against Catholics, the proposals of reformers, or the complaints of reactionaries, were decided, as a

Home Rule

matter of course, not by any legal vote, but by this systematised civil war. It was a curious evidence of the unpractical character of Rousseau's mind that this was the institution above all others in the Polish system that excited his admiration. It was the strongest negation of absolute power that it was possible for a political Constitution to pronounce. Experience, however, proved what calmer reasoners had foreseen, that complete anarchy, and the dependence which necessarily follows in its train, were the only fruits that so irrational a system could be expected to produce."

It is for us to draw our own moral from the fate of Poland. But on one point I think there will be very little dispute. Whatever Ulster's rights may be, she cannot stand in the way of the whole of the rest of Ireland. Half a province cannot impose a permanent veto on the nation. Half a province cannot obstruct for ever the reconciliation between the British and the Irish democracies, and deny all satisfaction to the united wishes of the British Empire. The utmost they can claim is for themselves. I ask, do they claim separate treatment for themselves? Do the counties of Down and Antrim and Londonderry, for instance, ask to be excepted from the scope of the Bill? Do they ask for a Parliament of their own, or do they wish to remain here? Is that their demand? We ought to know.

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

I listened with profound interest to the colloquy which took place in the debate on the introduction of this measure between the hon. and learned Member for Waterford (Mr. John Redmond) and the right hon. gentleman the Member for Trinity College (Sir Edward Carson), and I think I am stating the views of the House as a whole when I say we should have liked to hear that colloquy carried farther. It would be a great disaster to Ireland if the Protestant population in the north stood aloof from a national Parliament. It would be deeply injurious to the balance, interest, power, and distinction of the new Assembly. It would sensibly diminish the hopes which we attach to the establishment of self-government. We seek no quarrel with Ulster. We contemplate no violence ; we seek to make friends, not foes ; to make peace, not war ; to redress grievances, and not to create them ; to appease, not to offend ; to enfranchise, and not to enthrall. But Ulster has duties as well as rights. There is a plain duty upon the Protestants of Ulster, though I am afraid hon. gentlemen opposite will not agree as to what that duty is, but perhaps they will permit me to say what I believe it to be ; there is a plain duty laid upon the Protestants, on the Loyalists of Ulster as Mr. Gladstone used to call them, a duty which they owe first of all to the land of their birth, and in the second place to their friends and co-religionists all over Ireland, and, thirdly, to the self-governing

Home Rule

dominions of the Empire of which they are proud, and that duty is to stand by the ship and bring it safely into port. It is no doubt a great sacrifice that is asked of them, but a great opportunity is also offered to them.

No man can measure in words, or can tell, the blessing that Ulster men have it in their power to bestow upon their fellow-countrymen or the benefits which they would confer upon the State, or the fame and honour they would reap themselves, if they would lead a united Ireland home. At one stroke of the wand they could sweep the Irish question out of life into history and free the British realm from the canker which has poisoned its heart for generations. If they refuse, if they take to the boats, all we say is they shall not obstruct the work of salvage, and that shall go forward at any rate to the end. We present this Bill with good faith and good will to the House of Commons. We think the Irish have too much power in this country and not enough in their own. We feel that the growth of business requires a complete recasting of the Parliamentary machine. We intend this Bill to be the forerunner of a general system of devolution in the United Kingdom, and we are sure it is an indispensable preliminary to any such reform or any large improvement in Imperial organisation. We believe it will reconcile the two kingdoms, and bring the Irish race closely and truly into the British Empire, and make them loyal to the monarchy and good

The Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill

friends and comrades of the British people. We are convinced that there are no inconveniences and dangers in this policy which are not smaller than those under which we now lie, and we ask most earnestly for a fair and faithful consideration for that policy; and we believe, should this Bill pass into law and ultimately receive the full embodiment which we expect and ask for it, that men will look back across the gulf of years to that great statesman, first of all British parliamentarians, who had the wisdom and the courage to point with unerring finger the true path along which the States and peoples of the British Empire might march to power and peace.

-

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RIGHT
HON. LIEUT.-COLONEL SEELY,
M.P., ON THE SECOND READING,
May 1, 1912

THE right hon. and learned gentleman opposite (Sir R. Finlay) concluded a somewhat lengthy speech by accusing us of fraud. When I first came into this House a word of that kind was seldom employed, but it seems to be a commonplace now in our controversies. The particular point about which the right hon. gentleman has used such a very violent word is that we do not propose to submit the details of this Bill to the electors. What a flimsy pretext, coming from a right hon. and learned gentleman who sat on these benches for many long years, as a member of a Government who during that time never once adopted the principle that they should go to the country for a general mandate and then go back to the country for a particular mandate. Whence comes this new-born zeal to set up an entirely new constitutional precedent? Did the right hon. and learned gentleman opposite ever do it, or did the



John Bernard Veely

The Right Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Seely

Member for the City of London (Mr. Balfour) ever do it? Not once in the whole of the experience of any one in this House has that been done. It only requires stating to show that the claim now made is one that cannot possibly be sustained by argument, and when the right hon. and learned gentleman applies to that absurd suggestion, which he never adopted himself when in power, a suggestion of fraud, I think he will on reflection regret he ever made that accusation.

The right hon. and learned gentleman has complained that we have not talked about the Bill, and that we have not answered the criticisms that have been made. The right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand (Mr. Long) and other speakers have made the same complaint. May I tell the House why? It is because if we answer their criticisms it is impossible to discuss the Bill. Hon. gentlemen and right hon. gentlemen opposite have set up a bogey of their own imagination. (*Hon. Members*: "Oh, oh!") Well, I will endeavour to make my words good as well as I can. They have set up a bogey of their own imagining, and have proceeded to pummel it; but it is not the Bill. May I endeavour very briefly,—and I will try, and follow your request to be brief—point out how that is, and why the matter stands as it does. The first objection raised by the Opposition is that this measure is going to lead to religious persecution and oppression. That has been the

Home Rule

burden of nearly every speech, and I have either heard or read every one of them.

MR. LONG: If the right hon. gentleman refers to me personally, it was not one of my arguments.

COL. SEELY: No, it was not, but I am coming to the right hon. gentleman, and he dealt with the other three. Where is that in the Bill? Where is there anything that could lead to religious persecution in the Bill? So far from it being in the Bill, it is expressly excluded by the Bill. I am going to talk about the Bill now. This is to lead to religious persecution. In the Bill, in Clause 3, it is laid down that—

“in the exercise of their power to make laws under this Act the Irish Parliament shall not make a law so as either directly or indirectly to establish or endow any religion, or prohibit the free exercise thereof, or give a preference, privilege, or advantage, or impose any disability or disadvantage on account of religious belief.”

In the Bill religious intolerance is impossible. (*Hon. Members:* “Oh, oh!”) Yes, I submit to the House you have either—(an *hon. Member:* “On paper”)—yes, on paper quite. That is the point I am making. You have either to assume that the responsible leaders of Irish opinion, who will, no doubt, form the executive under this Bill, are speaking and acting a lie, or else you must admit that religious persecution will not take place under the Bill. There

The Right Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Seely

is no escape from that dilemma. If the executive obey the law—and they have assured us openly again and again that they will—there will not be religious persecution under the Bill. The next point is one on which the right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand Division (Mr. Long) laid great stress, and it is one used constantly throughout the country. It is what they call the Union Jack argument. He said they did not want to serve under an Orange flag.

MR. LONG indicated dissent.

COL. SEELY: Yes, those are the words.

MR. LONG: I beg the right hon. gentleman's pardon. That was not one of the four questions I asked. I was answering the First Lord of the Admiralty, who charged us with a desire to raise the standards of Orange and Green, and it was not one of the questions I asked.

COL. SEELY: Really, I quoted the words he used, but if the right hon. gentleman means to withdraw them I shall certainly be glad to hear it.

MR. LONG: Certainly not.

COL. SEELY: What he did say was—

“those whom we represent claim to be allowed to remain under the Union Jack.”

Is that still the objection?

MR. LONG: I adhere to every word I said. I was not enumerating the objections to the Bill in the passage quoted by the hon. and gallant gentleman. I was dealing with a statement made by the First Lord of the Admiralty and showing

Home Rule

it was ill-founded. It was not one of my criticisms of the Bill, nor was it one of the four questions I asked.

COL. SEELY: But it is one of the objections of the right hon. gentleman to the Bill, is it not? And he adheres to the statement that those whom he represents claim to remain under the Union Jack? The right hon. gentleman must not think he is the only person to whom I have the honour of referring, for I heard all the other speeches, and the same arguments were used by others, including the hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Cave) who spoke last night. He attempted to show that the danger of this was that we were thrusting out the people of Ulster from under the shelter of the Union Jack.

MR. LONG: Hear, hear.

COL. SEELY: Where is that in the Bill? Turn to Clause 1, Sub-sections (1) and (2), and to Clause 2, both sub-sections, and where do you find it in the Bill? It is the exact opposite that is laid down there. The Bill begins—

“There shall be in Ireland an Irish Parliament consisting of his Majesty the King and two Houses, namely, the Irish Senate and the Irish House of Commons . . . and the authority of the Parliament of the United Kingdom shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters, and things within his Majesty's dominions.”

The Right Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Seely

I presume a "flag" is a "thing." It is the emblem of the Sovereign. Does any one mean to suggest that under the terms of this Bill it is possible for the Union Jack to be withdrawn from Ireland as the emblem of the Sovereign. You must either assume, as I have said, that those who represent Nationalist Ireland are acting and speaking a lie or else you must know that the Union Jack will be more respected than before under the terms of this Bill. If hon. Members will read the Bill from beginning to end, they will find that, in addition to the clauses I have mentioned, there are many others which make it absolutely clear that in such a matter as the flag representing the Sovereign it is perfectly impossible for any withdrawal of the British flag to take place under this Bill. The next point made is that under this Bill grave military and naval dangers will ensue to this country and to Ireland. That was a point made by the right hon. and learned gentleman who has just spoken, and, I think, by almost every speaker on the opposite side in this debate. It has been the subject of an interesting argument by the noble lord the Member for Portsmouth (Lord Charles Beresford), it has been the subject of an article by Lord Percy, and it has been the subject of a book by General Fraser. I have read all these articles with much interest, especially the one by the noble lord, and I say, frankly and honestly to the House the conclusion I have come

Home Rule

to is that it would be a great advantage, assuming their premises as to the strategic position of this country, to pass this Bill if the Bill is honourably carried out.

LORD C. BERESFORD : " If."

COL. SEELY : Yes, I keep saying " if." I am not now discussing the question whether that will happen or not. I will endeavour to give reasons to show it is likely it will be carried out honestly, before I sit down, but we are now discussing what will happen if it is honourably carried out, and I can perceive there will be great advantages under this Bill if and when it becomes an Act from the military and naval point of view, and for this reason. All the noble lord and his friends prove is that a hostile Ireland is a very real danger.

LORD C. BERESFORD : Hear, hear.

COL. SEELY : We must all admit that. Now comes the question, Supposing the terms of this Bill are honestly carried out, will Ireland be more or less hostile? Of course, that admits of only one answer. Nobody has ever suggested that Ulster, because they disapprove of the form of government proposed, will join our country's enemies and fight against us. (*Hon. Members*: " Oh, yes!") Well, there has been no such serious suggestion by anybody, to whom any one in this House would ever pay attention. Nationalist Ireland has told us again and again they will accept this Bill as an honest settlement, and I think few people who are in this House are

The Right Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Seely

likely to forget the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Waterford (Mr. John Redmond) on the First Reading of the Bill, and those who may not remember that speech may have heard the speech from a veteran Member of this House, the hon. Member for East Cavan (Mr. S. Young) last night, in which he said this Bill was going to heal the feud of centuries, and they looked forward to having one King, one Army, and one Navy, and to taking their share with us in the burden and glory of Empire. Hon. Members may say they do not believe all these things; but, supposing they are speaking the truth—and it is conceivable Members of the House of Commons may speak the truth even when they differ from the noble lord, and he will be the first to admit it—this will be a great advantage, for Nationalist Ireland will be less hostile, and Ulster will be the first to say no change of Government will make them join their country's enemies. There was a very interesting point made by the right hon. and learned gentleman who has just sat down. People seem to me to have a curious confusion of thought in this matter. He said it was absolutely essential there should be an Ireland which should supply men and money to us in time of war.

LORD C. BERESFORD: I pay my countrymen below the Gangway the compliment of believing what they say, but if the right hon. gentleman thinks they do not mean what they say, and he has such absolute confidence in them, why

Home Rule

does he not allow them the Territorial Army at once?

COL. SEELY: I think this is most interesting. It only shows, when we come to discuss this in a spirit of absolute frankness, as we are doing now, that Irishmen do not disagree in these matters. The noble lord on behalf of his countrymen has accepted the word of the hon. and learned Member for Waterford, that "in so far as he can bind his people he will accept this Bill as a final settlement"; and he asks if that is so and they are going to be a friendly people, why not allow them the Territorial Force at once. I will certainly convey that view to the Prime Minister. I was coming, when he interrupted me, to the point raised by the right hon. and learned gentleman who has just sat down and who said, "men and money." I do not suppose the financial provisions of this Bill will make any serious difference to us in the event of a great war, but how does he propose to get men for the Army from Ireland? Only those who have served with them in the field know how valuable Irish soldiers are. What is there to prevent us getting men from Ireland under this Bill? Will the right hon. gentleman turn to Clause 2, Sub-section (3):—

"The Navy, the Army, the Territorial Force, or any other naval or military force"

is exempted. Is he going to get men by conscription? Has he forgotten that we enlist our

The Right Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Seely

Army by voluntary enlistment? If this Bill is going to be accepted as a final settlement and Irishmen are going to be more friendly, will they not in point of fact enlist in greater numbers? Had the right hon. gentleman not used that argument, I was going to advert to it in a word or two. It is a fact, which no one would deny, that Irishmen, both Protestants and Catholics, make extraordinarily good soldiers, but it does happen that the Catholics are by far the more numerous in the Irish race. It is also the fact that Nationalist Ireland feels herself grievously wronged by the refusal of this country to restore to her the Parliament taken from her by fraud. (*Hon. Members:* "Oh, oh!") Nobody disputes it was taken from her by fraud. I do not think it needs arguing. Every Unionist writer, Lecky among others, has used the word "fraud," but I do not wish to make a controversial point of this. It is the fact that Irishmen are discouraged, not so much openly as by general feeling of discontent, from joining the Army, which, when they do join, they serve so extraordinarily gallantly and well. Therefore, again, if we are to trust what we are told, we shall under the terms of this Bill get more Irish soldiers, and, *pro tanto*, the safety of this kingdom and the Empire will be increased. Again I doubt whether the noble lord will dispute my reasoning. Let us now come to the last point, of any substance or seriousness, which it is alleged has not been dealt with. It is said that

Home Rule

no proper provision is made in the Bill for the Civil Service. Several hon. and right hon. gentlemen have complained with regard to the Civil Service and the police that insufficient provision is made to prevent hardship and injury upon them under an Irish Executive when it is set up. Again I say, that is not in the Bill. What is in the Bill? Look at Clauses 32 to 37, beginning with the judges and going on to the police, and there you find dozens of safeguards of the position and pensionable interests of Civil servants and police in Ireland. I have taken the trouble to compare the safeguards here given, and it is an important matter as all will admit, with the safeguards under the South Africa Union Act, which it was my privilege to introduce into this House. There you see, from paragraphs 141 to 146, the safeguards that are provided for the Civil servants, and I think between the two there can be no doubt that the provisions here in this Bill, that no injustice is to be done by the Irish Executive or their subordinates, are far more stringent and more favourable than are to be found in the South Africa Union Act, which the Member for St. George's, Hanover Square (Mr. Lyttelton), said was "a Constitution which we all applaud." On these four points I think I have made good my case, that, if this Bill is worked honourably, none of the dangers mentioned in this debate can possibly arise. Far from there being nothing in the Bill to make it easy, there is everything

The Right Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Seely

in the Bill to make injustice difficult. Now comes the interesting question, Are these people speaking the truth? That really is the only question left if the statement I have put before the House is accepted as true, and I think no one who reads the Bill—

VISCOUNT HELMSLEY: We have read it.

COL. SEELY: Every word and schedule?

VISCOUNT HELMSLEY: Yes.

COL. SEELY: Then I think the noble lord will admit that if the Bill were honourably carried out it would be almost impossible for any injustice to arise except by a process of administration. Administration is part of the work of the Executive, and the Executive, as may be seen from the clauses in the Bill which refer to it, are bound to take the oath of allegiance to the Irish Privy Council. I know that some people may not think that that is a serious oath, but it is. I have got a copy of it here. Surely some of those even who sit on that bench should think it is a serious oath, because this is what it says:—

“ You shall swear to be true and faithful to our Sovereign Lord the King, and his counsel to conceal and keep secret from time to time ; and for the better furtherance of His Majesty’s service to give your best advice and counsel, and in all things concerning His Majesty’s Honour and Profit to use such diligence and circumspection as to a true Councillor shall appertain.”

Home Rule

That is the oath which every Member of the Irish Executive must take, and if they follow it out, and follow out their promises upon this Bill, there can be neither oppression nor wrong. It remains to be inquired, Are the Members of the Irish Executive the kind of people who are likely to go and speak a lie? I say they are not for two reasons. If I may speak frankly about a thing which seems to me to be impossible, knowing and respecting the people concerned as I do, I may attempt to satisfy hon. Members by giving those reasons. As a matter of precedent I boldly quote the South African precedent, because the very same people who now doubt the sincerity of those who speak for Ireland were as much in doubt about the sincerity of those who spoke for South Africa. The very same people who, when General Botha and those who acted with him made open and candid avowals of their intentions to be loyal to the flag and the Empire, told us then when we proposed to entrust power to them that we were embarking on "a reckless experiment." Some may remember the phrase which occurred in a violent speech by the late Leader of the Opposition against that measure, in which he brought his party into the Lobby and prevented the grant of Home Rule to the Transvaal being what it ought to have been, a gift from a nation and not from a party. Both the right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand Division (Mr. Walter Long), and the right hon. and learned gentleman

The Right Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Seely

(Sir Robert Finlay) closed their speeches with an appeal—

MR. WALTER LONG: No.

COL. SEELY: I think the right hon. gentleman forgets parts of his speech. He certainly made an appeal.

MR. LONG: I made no appeal.

COL. SEELY: The right hon. gentleman who has just sat down made an appeal to us, and the right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand made an appeal to Ulster.

MR. LONG: No.

COL. SEELY: Yes. I think he will find he did make an appeal, both to his own supporters and to us, but whether that is so or not, I think it is true to say that the right hon. gentleman who has just spoken made an appeal to us and that the right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand has repeatedly made appeals to Ulster and to the Opposition to resist this Bill. Now, I make my appeal to those who are not blinded by prejudice to remember that they made precisely the same mistake before, and to warn them not to make the same mistake again as that which they made when they voted against Home Rule for the Transvaal. The circumstances are surprisingly similar. (*Hon. Members*: "No, no.") Let us see. There you had a people, a brave and determined people, who had been having friction with us for years, and had lost their Parliament by force, and who passionately asked that it should be given back. Here we also have a brave and

Home Rule

gallant people who have been in friction with us for centuries past, and who bitterly resent that their Parliament was taken from them, not by force so much as by fraud. There you had men who said, "Give us back our Parliament and we will not be your enemies but will be your friends; we will help you and we will be a safeguard to your Empire and not a danger to it." Here you have the leaders of the Irish nation using the same words. Then you said, "We cannot trust them, we will not have part or lot in this reckless experiment," and you were wrong. Now again you have a chance to make the gift a gift of a nation and not of a party only. Are you again going to be so rash as to repeat your error? I have been referring and refreshing my mind with some of the things that were said at that time. I am not going to quote the words in full which were used, not only in the House but in the country, by the Member for St. George's, Hanover Square, and others as to the danger of adopting the policy of trusting the responsible leaders of the Transvaal. They were many, and I have them here. These are some of the phrases: "Irrevocable blunder"; "surrendering the country to a party hand and glove with our enemies"; "betrayal of British interests"; "insane policy"; "throwing off the mask." What do the people say now who know more about it than we do here? Sir George Farrar, one of the leading Progressives, speaking of the future of South Africa on February 5th, said:—

The Right Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Seely

“Ever since the Act of Union was brought into force I have been, and always will be, most confident of what lies before South Africa.”

MR. A. LYTTELTON: May I suggest to the right hon. gentleman that he should not endeavour to confuse the House as between opposition in the case of Transvaal Home Rule and the South Africa Union? They are absolutely different things. He is endeavouring to confuse the arguments we used against one with the arguments we did not use against the other.

COL. SEELY: In reply to that I ask the right hon. gentleman this question: Would the Union of South Africa have been possible if Home Rule had not been given to the Transvaal? Will anybody venture to say it would? I appeal on that point to every responsible statesman in South Africa, including General Botha himself, and I may quote what he said. He said it was impossible to conceive of Union until the Transvaal had Home Rule. But I base my argument specifically upon the point of the grant of Home Rule to the Transvaal. It was against that that they voted, and in that I think they themselves now admit they were wrong. (*An hon. Member*: “No, no.”) They still think it was a reckless experiment. Then I hope we will make many more reckless experiments which shall end as happily as this has done.

Now there remains this last argument, and I do not think it is a bad one. I submit

Home Rule

it for what it is worth. At any rate in South Africa the Dutch have kept their word, and it is surely true that nations that breed brave soldiers generally breed honourable men. Are the Irish race as a whole people prone to be false to their oath? I have read the oath that has to be taken, but apart from the oath so taken we all know the definite promises they have given openly by every Member who has spoken from the Nationalist benches in this House. Is that word likely to be broken? Are the Irish prone to break their oath? If you look at their history you will find nothing more remarkable than the fact that during the period that England was most ruthlessly oppressing Ireland, when Ireland was used with the greatest brutality, as every one is now willing to admit, at that very time Irish soldiers, bred of the same bone, relatives of the very people who were being driven out, were fighting our battles with conspicuous valour. I do not suppose any one will deny the brutality with which the rising of 1798 was put down. It was put down with ruthless severity and sufferings to the people, but what followed after that? During the great war, I think it is true to say on high authority, more than half the soldiers who fought our battles were Irish Catholic soldiers. I say that on the authority of the Duke of Wellington. Although it has been quoted before it is so remarkable that I may quote it again, as it is only three lines.

The Right Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Seely

The Duke of Wellington said in the House of Lords :—

“My lords, it is mainly to Irish Catholic soldiers that we owe all our proud predominance in our military career.”

That he said speaking of the long war which succeeded the horrors of 1798. Then we come to 1846, when there was another period when Irishmen suffered most horribly. The evictions of that period, of which many Members of this House have read, form one of the most extraordinarily distressing stories in the whole history of our country and Ireland. I was reading, only the other day, a description of the evictions which took place in Galway at that time. On one occasion 270 people were turned out on the roadside ; the roofs were burnt off, and when the people took shelter in the dismantled walls, they were driven out and the walls battered down. These 270 people then took refuge in the ditches round the houses, and lit small fires to keep themselves warm, but the fires were damped out and the people driven out of the ditches. The story goes on to relate that then the 270 people scattered, many of them to America, but, alas ! more to the grave. This was happening in 1846 all over Ireland ; it is a thing which seems inconceivable to us now, although it is only sixty or seventy years ago.

During the period from 1851 to 1859 a million people left Ireland or were driven out. How many died I do not know, but the suffer-

Home Rule

ings of the people were intense and they attributed them, especially with regard to evictions—and with some justice, as I think all will now admit—to England, who controlled Ireland. The hatred was bitter. All that time what were the Irish soldiers doing? Just as at the time of Waterloo they had taken the oath of allegiance, and although they were the same people, bred of the same stock, and relatives of the people driven out, they took their part on countless fields—in the Sikh Wars, in the Indian Mutiny, and in the Crimea, Irish soldiers fought and won our battles. If we come down to the present day, there can be no question that Ireland has had some reason to complain of the treatment which she has had, not within recent years so much, but within comparatively recent times. In the last war in which we were engaged no one here will deny that we owed many of our victories, and perhaps our salvation, to the courage of Irish soldiers. I have yet to learn that any one will deny that. I submit to the House that the Irish people as a whole have shown that they are the last people who will break their pledged word. I should have thought, after the history of Ireland, that it would have been impossible for any one to accuse Ireland of being likely to break her word, least of all should it be England, who has treated her so badly and who has profited so greatly by her allegiance. For these reasons I believe that we are right in saying that the

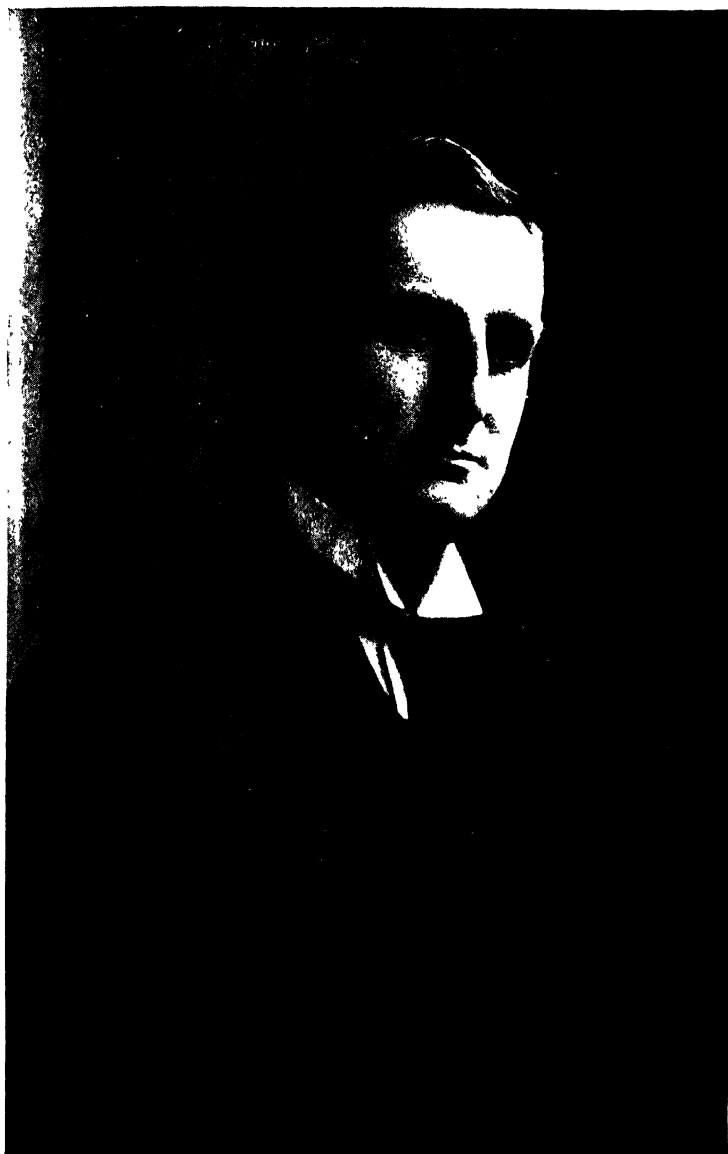
The Right Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Seely

policy of trusting the responsible leaders of the great majority of the Irish race is the wise policy here, as it has been in every other part of our Empire. I believe that they will honourably work this Bill, the provisions of which in some cases I have ventured to read to the House, and that in so doing they will make Ireland what she ought to be, the greatest friend and greatest bulwark of British and Irish liberties.

-

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RIGHT
HON. SIR EDWARD GREY, M.P., ON
THE SECOND READING, *May 2, 1912*

ONE of the things that struck me in listening to the speech of the right hon. gentleman who has just sat down (Mr. Balfour) was the great difference of the tone and, indeed, the difference of the base of his attack, as compared with the sort of speeches I remember from the other side of the House in 1886 and 1893. The main attack upon this Bill is that it is a Bill which will not do much for Ireland, that it will be unworkable in Ireland. Is that really the main ground of the opposition to this Bill upon the other side? And are they really fighting this Bill as a mere business proposition, and as to whether it will be workable in Ireland and as to what will give Ireland control over her own affairs and make it work smoothly? Of course, we know perfectly well that although that may be legitimate criticism of the Bill, it is not that criticism or motive which inspires the opposition to this Bill or the argument that is going to be used in the country to oppose the Bill. If the opposition to the Bill was merely that sort of business opposition, of



The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

how to define a good and simple working measure, giving to the Irish people control of their own affairs, we should be discussing this Bill in the spirit in which Irish land purchase was discussed and in which other non-controversial measures were discussed. That is not the real opposition to this Bill. It is not opposition because it is a bad Bill compared with others, or because the party opposite dislike this particular Bill, but because they dislike the thing and the principle of Home Rule altogether. Therefore, in the Second Reading Debate, it is with the principle I propose to deal mainly.

Of course, there are points with which the right hon. gentleman opposite dealt which he called points of detail, and one of which, at any rate, is so important that I would rather reserve it until the concluding parts of my speech, and that is the question of Ulster. It is important ; it is of very great importance. There were other points in this speech dealing with details which I think I am justified in saying should be reserved for Committee. I will take his criticism—a perfectly relevant and legitimate criticism which occupied some time in his speech—dealing with Clause 26. That is a very fair instance of the inconvenience of discussing a separate clause like that by itself on the Second Reading. What is it that that clause does? It does not apply to the present at all. The Bill could come into operation to-morrow without it. It deals with the future, possibly with the remote future, and

Home Rule

one possible contingency in that future. It deals with what is to happen if such a happy change took place in the respective financial positions of the two countries, such a happy growth of prosperity in Ireland took place that for three successive years Ireland should be able to contribute to Imperial expenditure. When that time has come the Irish Members will be summoned here in increased numbers, not for all purposes, but for the purpose of discussing the future financial relations. It is a contingency, possibly a remote contingency. I do not say it is not important that it should be discussed, but it is a thing that may be reserved for discussion in Committee. The Bill itself could come into operation to-morrow without that proposition being laid down. It is making provision for a contingency of the future, and if you wish to decide whether in this Bill provision is to be made for that future contingency, even then it is not a necessary or essential point for discussion on the Second Reading, but for a Committee.

MR. MITCHELL-THOMSON: Will you guarantee us time for its discussion?

I cannot deal with every point at once. I will deal with that point later. I will deal now with another point the right hon. gentleman raised, the question of the Transvaal. I did not intend to deal with that at all. The parallel, though it has been introduced into our debates, has not been introduced for the purpose of showing that the Transvaal is an exact parallel, although I

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

believe the Transvaal does to-day retain autonomy over its own local affairs. It has not been introduced for the purpose of pressing it as far as the right hon. gentleman thought it had been pressed. It has been introduced simply for the purpose of showing that a prophet of evil is not always right even when he is Leader of the Opposition. I do not say that carries us very far, or that because a man is once wrong he must be always wrong. It is quite enough for us to show that when a measure introduced from this side of the House has been denounced as a reckless experiment and one bound to fail, it does not necessarily follow that the denunciation is right.

MR. BALFOUR: That was not the point of the First Lord of the Admiralty.

No, but it has been used, and my point is it is good for that purpose; and with regard to the point of the First Lord of the Admiralty, although the parallel is not complete, I think the right hon. gentleman opposite is inaccurate in saying that the Transvaal Constitution is completely submerged. It still retains control over its own affairs.

The right hon. gentleman asked me five questions. He prefaced these questions by saying that he would not expect me to reply on anything on which I had not had sufficient preparation, and then he asked questions that would require historical research by a professor of history extending over some time. (*Hon.*

Home Rule

Members: "Why?") Because they were general questions such as "Can you find any parallel in history?" Well, Sir, frankly, I am going to meet the right hon. gentleman's questions by saying I am not in a position to give these answers. If he says there is no parallel such as he named, I say, very well, let it be so. I will ask him a question in return. Is there any parallel in history to the British Empire? Has there been any parallel to the monstrous over-centralisation of business which now takes place here in this House? All these other Federal Constitutions of which you can give instances, said the right hon. gentleman opposite, have been built up by the drawing together of units that were farther apart. Well, Sir, quite true. We have to deal with a very different problem, one which never has been faced before. The problem we have to deal with is how, under modern conditions, with a population far bigger than any population of one State in history before, with a civilisation so developed, with political problems more complex than ever existed before, with all the invention of modern science, concentration of everything, by telegraph and every conceivable means in the centre, to liberate and free ourselves from congestion caused by that unparalleled and unprecedented condition of affairs.

I frankly admit I cannot answer the right hon. gentleman's questions, but if I wished to answer them, and if the answer were as he would like it

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

to be in every case "No," I say, that does not dispose of the difficulty, and my question is, Has there been any precedent for the problems with which we are confronted in this House? If there is no precedent for that, then we must not be tied by other precedents in finding remedies. That is my answer upon the main point. With regard to the question I was asked as regards time, the right hon. gentleman who has just spoken made no complaint of want of time, but the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Long) who moved the rejection of the Bill complained that the Bill was being rushed. Sir, the right hon. gentleman is of course perfectly entitled, as any Member of this House is entitled, to claim that adequate time should be given for discussion. I do not think much of the right hon. gentleman's special point as to whether adequate time should be given between the First and Second Reading. The right hon. gentleman said: "This Bill is now introduced in its final form. It is true it may not be passed for two years, but its final form must be assumed in the first year, and you must give longer time between the First and Second Reading." Did any one ever hear of the final form of a Bill on Second Reading? The final form depends on the Committee and Report stages, and it is absolutely more important and relevant to the right hon. gentleman's argument that there should be ample time between the Second Reading and the Committee stage, and ample time in Committee and on Report; but the point

Home Rule

is not relevant for giving a large margin of time between the First and Second Reading when there can be no change, and upon that I will ask two questions.

I do not object in the least to the right hon. gentleman making the point about time, though I have shown why it must be discounted. I think on this side of the House we must discount it with a little more force. He wanted much more time after the Bill has been printed to consider it. He really did not want the Bill to be printed at all. (*Hon. Members:* "Oh!"). Yes, you cannot have it both ways. If you want time to consider the Bill and to make up your mind whether you will possibly support it or not, of course the demand comes with very great force, but if already the opposition to the Bill is so pronounced, determined, and irreconcilable that the Bill ought not even to be printed, what more time can you want? More time is asked for. They are perfectly entitled to ask for more time, and it is a perfectly legitimate party point to say more time is necessary because they want as much time as possible to develop attacks on the Bill. I think it is perfectly fair for them to point that out, and I admit that the argument is reasonable. I do not think I have dealt unfairly with the right hon. gentleman's point. I do not complain of the right hon. gentleman making that point, and I do not think hon. gentlemen opposite ought to complain if we on our side say that we cannot admit the full 100 per cent.

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

of the force which the right hon. gentleman attaches to that point. Of course, any Bill can be proved to be unworkable on paper if it is treated as this Bill has been treated, and naturally, with the ability of hon. Members on the other side, they would almost be capable of proving that the British Constitution is unworkable. On paper, of course, you could prove almost anything is unworkable. My complaint is that our present system, without the relief that this Bill and subsequent developments must give, is unworkable not only on paper but in practice, and is becoming increasingly unworkable. Really, the same House of Commons cannot be expected to deal with British and Irish special problems, because Irish problems are so very different. The British House of Commons represents a highly developed industrial nation, with highly congested cities, and one and the same assembly cannot really have sufficient time and knowledge to initiate the legislation which is necessary for a country which is mainly an agricultural country, and whose problem is not congestion in cities but congestion in country districts. Special legislation we must have, and we have had, for Ireland, and directly there is special legislation in this House for Ireland there must be special legislation for Scotland, for Wales, and for England. Even in England you have certain groups of Members saying, "When is our turn to come?" Take the Estimates. We have Irish

Home Rule

days, Labour Party days, English days, and Welsh days.

Every time there is a special Bill or a day given for estimates for a special part of the United Kingdom there follows an emulous demand from other parts of the United Kingdom that they should have a day, and that follows from the necessity which the Government opposite found when in power for cutting down the days in supply to a limited number. The demand has been increased, and the time has been limited, but that cannot go on. Even in Scotland the difference of the whole attitude of Scotland towards the union has been the demand for devolution. I have always contended that devolution was required not for Ireland alone. I admit that our plan is not complete. Here I would deal with the right hon. gentleman's point about the forty-two Members from Ireland who will vote on English and Scottish and Welsh questions, though we do not vote on Irish questions. Of course, that is an anomaly. I do not mind that anomaly, because I believe it will precipitate further arrangements, which it may not be so difficult to make, which will not be in the least dangerous to Imperial unity, but which will be an enormous relief to the different parts of the United Kingdom. If you criticise this Bill on the ground that it is not a complete system, very well, I admit the criticism, but when you go on to say that, when complete, it will be more impossible and objectionable still, then I

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

am entitled to say it holds the field for the moment as a beginning of devolution, and devolution is so urgent that I would rather have an incomplete scheme and a beginning than no beginning at all.

It is said that this Bill is incompatible with the federal system. That is one of the right hon. gentleman's points. I quite admit that it has not made Ireland a pattern for a federal system which is likely to be applied universally in the United Kingdom. I do not believe perfect similarity to be necessary, but it does two things. It preserves Imperial unity, and it preserves the representation of each part of the United Kingdom in the House of Commons. I was very much struck in reading—and I am sorry I did not hear it—the speech of the hon. Member for North-East Cork on the First Reading of this Bill, in which he gave a complete answer to what we hear from the other side that before the Union Home Rule was found impossible, and therefore the Union was passed. He showed that the six points which Mr. Pitt laid down as making the Union necessary are points which will not be disturbed under this Bill. It was because there was not Imperial unity that the Union was found necessary, and it is because this Bill preserves Imperial unity that we say, in our opinion, it will get rid of the disadvantages and drawbacks from which we have suffered ever since the Union, from which Ireland has suffered since the Union, and it will retain

Home Rule

those advantages and those special points for which the Union was called into existence in the days of Mr. Pitt. That was the point made by the hon. Member opposite, and I am bound to say the point he made by his quotation from Mr. Pitt is unanswerable. I hold that Parliament, after this Bill is passed, freed from Irish affairs, will be stronger as regards external affairs. One of the criticisms against this Bill is that under it Imperial supremacy is not effectively preserved, and that under this Bill it will be a farce. For Imperial affairs it is effectively preserved. For the Army, for the Navy, foreign affairs, colonial affairs, Indian affairs—for all these Imperial supremacy is absolutely untouched by this Bill, untouched not only on paper, but in practice.

There is but one difference with regard to supremacy under this Bill, and it is this: that whereas at present there are 103 Irish Members who share in that control, after this Bill is passed there will only be 42. That is the one change. That does not impair Imperial unity, but if from the other side Imperial unity means British supremacy, surely the effect of this Bill will not be to weaken but to strengthen Imperial supremacy. I really do not think that point is pressed on the other side. The point, I think, they do press is that we preserve in name and theory only Imperial supremacy over Irish affairs, but we part with it in practice. I think that is fairly stating their point. I admit that

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

while we preserve Imperial supremacy for purposes of this Parliament in theory over Irish affairs, in practice we shall have to go out of our way to exercise that supremacy. I do not wish to see us do that. I do not wish us to go out of our way to exercise effective supremacy over Irish affairs in regard to which this House ought to be supreme. I maintain it is desirable that we should free ourselves from intervention in Irish affairs, and I really think and believe hon. Members from Ireland may rely with perfect confidence on this, that once a Bill of this kind is passed, this House will be so occupied with the affairs which are proper and important to it that it will not go out of its way, unless there be some very extreme case, to interfere in Irish affairs. Now let me deal with the point of Irish representation. This Bill, at any rate, remedies one great grievance complained of from the Conservative side, the over-representation of Ireland. There is no answer to the statement that Ireland is over-represented in this House compared with other parts of the United Kingdom. I will deal with the point how alone I think it can be reduced, but there is no answer to that argument. How, except by a Bill of this kind, do you propose to get rid of that anomaly? Are you going to reduce the Irish Members without a Bill of this kind? If so, then you are going to commit a breach of the Act of Union.

SIR JOHN LONSDALE: You did that by the Disestablishment of the Irish Church.

Home Rule

Yes, we did that with the consent of both parties.

MR. BONAR LAW: And of the successors of Grattan's Parliament.

But Grattan's Parliament was not in existence in 1865.

MR. SWIFT MACNEILL: Irish historians!

With regard to the over-representation of Ireland I admit to the full the case that Ireland is over-represented under present circumstances, but when I am told that Irish representation ought to be reduced, then I say that it is monstrously unjust and unfair to say to hon. Members from Ireland and to the Irish people, "We are going to impose upon you an alteration of the Act of Union which is clearly to our advantage and as clearly to your disadvantage, but the great modification of the Act of Union which you want in the form of Home Rule we will deny to you." I am sure I may speak for every one on this side of the House when I say that by every feeling of what is just and right as between England and Ireland this question of the representation of Ireland is inseparably bound up with Home Rule. At the present time if we were to have any redistribution of seats, or if we were to make an alteration in the Act of Union clearly to the disadvantage of Ireland, while refusing to make the modification for which for a generation they have been pressing for their own advantage, we should be reverting to that old system of harsh, one-sided, overbearing abuse of legislation in this

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

House which has passed away in the last twenty years with regard to Ireland, and which was the cause of bitterness and great difficulties between the two countries. By Home Rule alone can you in fairness, without creating a new and rankling injustice, reduce the Irish representation, and this Bill does that. We are told that we have no business on this side to deal with Home Rule—the right hon. gentleman opposite used that argument to-day—because we are dependent upon the Irish vote. Of course, it is not true to say we can be turned out of office by the Irish vote alone. We can be turned out by right hon. gentlemen opposite voting with the Irish Members. It is not as it was in 1893. The real truth of the matter is that it is not we who are dependent upon the Irish vote to stay in office; it is they who are dependent upon the Irish vote for any chance of turning us out. It is one of the most frequent complaints that there is a large solid body of some eighty Irish Members whose attitude towards parties or Governments in this House is decided by the one great objective of Home Rule, on which they are all united. It is complained that that introduces instability into our political system. In other words, the Irish representation—I am speaking purely from the point of view of political stability—is, under present conditions, an undesirable element in the House of Commons. It is here as a perpetual element under the present system. How do you propose

Home Rule

to alter that state of things? If no Government on either side is to take the Irish Nationalist Members into account, if no Government is to say to them, "We think that the objective you have in view is a legitimate and reasonable one, which we are prepared to advocate and to propose," and to accept their support on those terms—if no Government is prepared to do that, you cannot, under present conditions, have any Government at all, unless you have something like a three-figure majority on one side or the other, between the two great parties in the House. That is the condition of things to-day. How do you suppose that is going to be changed except by Home Rule? It is Home Rule which has made that condition of things.

The right hon. gentleman asks if there is finality in this Bill. I think it would be foolish to say that experience in working may not show that there are matters, especially with regard to finance, in which this Bill may be varied, but there is finality in this sense: Whereas we have been continually told that the demand for Home Rule is a demand for separation, or something which we could never be able to satisfy, the Irish Members, who have been asking for Home Rule for so many years, say, with this Bill before them, "We will accept this as a fulfilment of what we have been asking for as Home Rule." If that is so, what is going to happen? First of all, the Irish repre-

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

sentation, if it is an element of instability in this House, is enormously reduced ; it is reduced by more than one-half. If that be a grievance—and it is continually quoted as a grievance—it is reduced by one-half. In the next place, to the forty-two Irish Members who will be here, the incentive which there has been to institute instability by all uniting and combining on the great objective of Home Rule will disappear. The result will be that you will have your forty-two Irish Members with a natural, healthy line of cleavage and with a normal perspective with regard to the affairs brought before this House, or at any rate something much more like it than has hitherto been the case. That is all enormously to the good from the point of view of the stability of parties in the House of Commons.

My right hon. friend the First Lord of the Admiralty, in a speech of great eloquence, said that he looked on this question with a modern eye or a fresh mind. Of course, I am not so fortunate as to be able to do that. I supported the Home Rule Bill of 1886 and the Home Rule Bill of 1893. I have to ask myself what change there has been in Ireland from the condition of affairs since 1893 which should make me now reverse votes which I have previously given. There have been changes, but, in my opinion, they are changes in favour of Home Rule and not against it. Irish land purchase, for which the party opposite have full credit,

Home Rule

introduced an element of stability in Ireland which we were continually told was not there before. The fact that finance is more difficult is only true, I think, in one sense. Looking back on things now in the light of facts that we have to-day, I think if we had passed a Home Rule Bill with Ireland still subject to the complaint of over-taxation and enforcing from her a considerable contribution to the Imperial Exchequer, we might have introduced, unwittingly, an injustice and unfairness, and it would have been the canker in our Bill. I admit the financial proposals in this Bill attract considerable attention, but they ought to attract attention, not because they are in the Bill, but because they disclose the facts. I take the figures of the Postmaster-General, that we are losing £1,500,000 a year in regard to Ireland. That is not the worst of it. This loss has been growing rapidly, and is growing. The loss, of course, is greatly due to Irish land purchase and old age pensions. If those things were bad for Ireland and Ireland did not wish to have them, we might get rid of that loss by wiping out those things. But those things are good for Ireland, so we cannot wipe out the loss. None the less, in the long run, it is good neither for us nor for Ireland that there should be an increasing loss from the British point of view upon the government of Ireland. We propose to put a definite limit to that loss, and, in putting a definite limit to it, we are told on the other

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

side of the House that we ought not to go on incurring that loss at all unless we also retain control of Irish affairs. If we were not putting a limit to the loss I should agree, but we are putting a limit to the loss. Then, I say, it is a distinct gain to us that we should not, besides putting a limit to the loss, burden ourselves with the control and management of Irish affairs. That is better for Ireland and better for us.

In the third place, since 1893 the need for devolution has become more necessary than ever. People point out—and, of course, point out with force—that there may be some development under this Bill which will be inconvenient; but without devolution we shall have destruction. Of course, if we assume the worst is going to be made of any Bill, and that every difficult or delicate or temporary provision is to be used to upset the working of the Bill, why, any Bill can be upset; but it is fair to assume that the people who will have to work this Bill—we here as well as hon. Members in Ireland—will, when they find difficulties in it, make those difficulties as little and not as great as possible in the interests of the good working of the Bill. If any people are to take objection to the working of the Bill, I think the Irish Members might. The Imperial supremacy of this House is maintained. They might point out how, if we made use of every power reserved under this Bill, we might make things impossible for them in Ireland. The power remains under

Home Rule

the Bill. But they do not do that. They have confidence that we shall not go out of our way to interfere in Irish affairs, and I think they have that confidence justly. And when I say they have confidence in that, it means they have confidence in something else. It means they have confidence that this riot of bigotry, intolerance, rapine, and disorder which it is supposed will break out in Ireland when this Bill is passed is not going to take place. They know perfectly well the strong sympathy which exists in this House with oppressed minorities, even foreign and distant oppressed minorities, and which is constantly expressed. Of course, they know, as well as anybody knows, that were there the intolerance and oppression which we are told will happen in Ireland there would at once grow up a strong and irresistible feeling in this House. We advocate this Bill because we believe nothing of that kind will happen. The Irish Members accept this Bill, I believe, because they know nothing of that kind will happen.

From what does the real opposition to this Bill proceed? It is not a question of the constabulary, or of the Customs and Excise, or whether there is to be a Senate, or whether the Senate is to be nominated or not. Those are not the real things which inspire the opposition. Two things, in my opinion, mainly inspire the opposition. One is the vehement opposition of Ulster to this Bill. It is exceedingly difficult, I admit, for us dealing with the question of Ulster. We know

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

in advance that no argument that we can address to them will be effective, coming from us. They tell us it is they who will suffer, and not we, and that they know and we do not know. And we have no means of mitigating their animosity. They, in turn, must let us take our point of view. We have here a great problem to solve, and it cannot be solved by any strong feeling or strong language. One thing we cannot do for Ulster, and that is to sacrifice the House of Commons and the Central Imperial Government to Ulster feeling. If Ulster defeats the solution which we propose or makes it impossible, we cannot afford to continue the present state of affairs. Some other solution will have to be found which will free this House and put the control of Irish affairs in Irish hands. That has to be done. It is necessary for the House of Commons; it is necessary for the Executive, for the Cabinet. You cannot in the long run have a Cabinet to manage all the important affairs, external and what I call Imperial affairs, which must fall to it, and at the same time undertake the task of being responsible for the Executive in Ireland, when that Executive may not have the goodwill of the people behind it. I trust and I believe—on this point I am sure—that the Nationalist Members from Ireland—and indeed they have said it themselves—are equally convinced of the importance of Ulster to the good working of Home Rule. I am going to come in a moment to the difference of national

Home Rule

feeling which exists as between British and Irish—I am going to admit there is some difference—but it is not a difference which means that political responsibility is not going to carry with it that moderation, prudence, circumspection, and sense of obligation which it does in every civilised white race. And when Ireland is responsible for the government of Irish affairs, I am quite certain the last thing an Irish Executive or an Irish Parliament will do will be to provoke a strong minority in Ulster to resistance based upon moral wrong and unreasonable treatment. Members from Ulster may not believe that. I believe that nothing can resist the working of those forces, and the animosity which may exist between different parts of Ireland to-day is no measure whatever and no guide to what the feeling will be when the different parts of Ireland have for the first time a sense of joint responsibility. Once put them in a condition in which they know that the welfare of both depends upon the goodwill of each, and that will work. It will be effective in Nationalist circles, and it will be effective in the Ulster minority. Nothing, I believe, can resist that. They have never had in Ireland that sense of responsibility. Neither party has had it. On the contrary, they have been free to let their animosities and differences of view reach whatever point they like between them, feeling that all the time it was the business of a British Government here to protect either of them or

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

both of them from the consequences. Therefore the feeling which exists under present conditions is no measure or guide whatever to what it may and, I believe, will be under other conditions.

The second reason which I believe animates the opposition to this Bill is the belief—I will call it an opinion, an apprehension, a feeling, a belief if you like—that the majority of the Irish are permanently, inevitably, irreconcilably, ill-disposed towards the British. (*Hon. Members*: “No, no.”) I must say that has been the impression borne in on me for the last twenty-five years. I put it as a concrete argument this way. If it is repudiated I certainly will not press it, but I must press the point I am going to make. I thought really one of the great arguments against Home Rule in the last twenty-six years might have been summed up in saying, “You must not give Home Rule to Ireland; it is not safe; they will use it against you.” I am perfectly ready to admit that you would find old speeches in support of that view; but the last twenty years have done very much to mitigate the bitterness of feeling which has existed in Ireland, and which we have all known. There has been, not only a cessation of the injustice which produced that bitterness in previous generations, but there have been ameliorating measures passed with the consent of the Nationalists, such as the Land Purchase Act. That has not been without effect on the

Home Rule

state of feeling as between the Irish and the British people in the last twenty years, but it has not diminished by one Member or one vote the demand for Home Rule. It has had this effect on the demand for Home Rule, that it has vastly weakened the force of the argument founded on the suggestion that it was not safe to give Home Rule, because of the feeling towards us in Ireland.

If there is no apprehension about the feeling in Ireland towards England, will you give up quoting from those old speeches? They are still quoted. We have all read, some of us may have heard, some speeches of this kind. I have heard other speeches from Ireland, not recently, but in early days when I was in this House, which used to move people, not only on one side of the House, speeches going back on past history and recalling the tale of wrong and injustice, to which there was no answer. I do not believe any of us could have listened to some of those speeches, or read history, without feeling that, if that had been our history, our feelings would have been the same. I have heard the answer given in the House to some of those speeches reciting the injustices and wrongs of Ireland. The answer given on the Unionist side was, "That is past and gone. Why do not you forget that, forget all that far-off unhappy state of things?" I have heard that answer given. When I heard it I used to ask, "What has Ireland in the present to make her forget the

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

past?" In those days she had poverty, distress, and no hope; in the present she has prosperity compared with what used to be the condition in Ireland. If we are to ask Ireland to forget past deeds, are we never to forget past words? If the pages of history are to be forgotten or never referred to, then I think we must also forget the bitterness and the bitter speeches and resentment to which that history gave rise. I do not believe we can do anything but harm by attempting to make out that there are no separate units in the United Kingdom and no differences of national opinion. There is an Irish national feeling and there is national feeling in other parts of the United Kingdom. You cannot help it. The thing is there, and if you deny its existence you will only intensify it.

I go back, as the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Balfour) went back in a previous speech, to the early days when Mr. Gladstone introduced Home Rule. It is natural for any one who was in Parliament and supported those Bills of 1886 and 1893 to look back and recall, as the right hon. gentleman recalled the other day, the scene in 1886 when the Home Rule Bill was introduced. It is natural for us to reflect, looking back upon events, that even if mistakes were made—and no doubt there were mistakes—perhaps at one moment too much was attempted too soon, or at another the impossible was attempted with the force at our command—Mr. Gladstone's effort was not a

Home Rule

failure. It was only the beginning of a chapter which will be completed, and, I think, looking back on the past twenty-five years, that though the Home Rule Bills that Mr. Gladstone introduced were not passed, they cannot be said to have failed because they did not pass. Comparatively, especially in recent years, the government of Ireland has been an easier task than it was regarded in earlier days. There has been less distress, less suffering, less resentment. Why? Because if those old Bills did not pass the hope which Mr. Gladstone kindled was alive. But for that I believe you would have been governing Ireland under Coercion Acts even in recent years. Two things remain to my mind very strongly. They stirred me at the time; they stir me still. One is Mr. Gladstone's intense grip of the fact that there was a national spirit in Ireland, and the splendour of the effort he made in his last years to acknowledge and reconcile that spirit. That is one thing. The other is the Irish response to Mr. Gladstone. It was not the assent of mere tacticians who had gained an advocate and a point. It was genuine, warm and living feeling, a response of gratitude and sympathy, the same in kind and as genuine as his own. No one who has sat in this House all these years can possibly have failed to realise that if the national feeling in Ireland was strong, if it has been at times bitter and resentful, the response to Mr. Gladstone, indeed, the feeling in which his name is still

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey

held in Ireland is genuine, warm, and real. That, no doubt, is a sentimental point of view.

I believe than sentiment nothing is more mischievous when it is hollow, unreal, and simulated. In this case I believe it is substantial and real. Irish goodwill, the goodwill of the Irish race, is worth having. It counts for something in every part of the world we care for most. How many people who have sat for years on this side of the House, or even on the other side of the House, with Nationalist Members for Ireland, can really from their hearts say they believe that goodwill to be impossible? On what does it depend? It depends on whether we can, within the Constitution of the United Kingdom, treat Ireland as a part, but also as a unit sufficiently to enable the whole atmosphere of the Irish Executive and Irish legislation in Ireland to be Irish. That is the problem we have to solve. To attempt to solve that problem, whether you approach it from the cold business view of devolution, or whether you do it from the more moving and stirring side of Irish feeling, is, I maintain, an essential duty for British statesmen; and to succeed in solving that problem will be the greatest and happiest boon that can be bestowed by any one act of legislation on Great Britain and on Ireland.

-

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RIGHT
HON. SIR RUFUS ISAACS, M.P., ON
THE SECOND READING, *May* 6, 1912

I WONDER whether the right hon. and learned gentleman who has just finished his speech (Mr. J. H. Campbell) was aware of the extraordinary indictment he was bringing against our rule of Ireland ever since the Union in the catalogue of crimes which he unfolded. I wonder whether it occurred to him that we must indeed have failed if, after more than one hundred years, all that he told us even in these last years was true. I wonder also if it occurred to him at the same time, allowing all the statements he made to be quite accurate—and, of course, I accept absolutely that he believed them—

MR. J. H. CAMPBELL: Do you dispute their accuracy?

I know nothing of most of the facts the right hon. gentleman referred to, but I accept them as statements made by the right hon. gentleman, and as a strong argument in favour of this Bill. We are told by the right hon. and learned gentleman that it is difficult indeed to get witnesses to give evidence in Ireland. The police apparently find their efforts fruitless. I was not able to



a *August D. Isaacs*
1912

The Right. Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

follow the right hon. gentleman's dates, but, so far as I have gathered from his observations, the catalogue of crimes he gave extended over a number of years.

MR. J. H. CAMPBELL: Might I just correct the right hon. gentleman? My point was that for the last five years the condition which has prevailed is entirely due to the fact that the Executive will not protect the people or encourage the police to do their duty.

I thought the right hon. and learned gentleman said it was impossible to get evidence on which to convict.

MR. J. H. CAMPBELL: No, I did not.

The right hon. gentleman himself supplies the answer. You cannot prosecute—nobody knows better than the right hon. gentleman—unless you can get witnesses to come forward.

MR. J. H. CAMPBELL: And you will not get the witnesses to come forward unless you look after them.

Difficulties of that kind arise sometimes in this country, though not, I agree, to the same extent as the right hon. gentleman tells us they do in Ireland. But what does all this amount to? It is giving us the best possible proof that we have utterly failed under our system of the last hundred years to govern Ireland. Do hon. Members think it is worse since my right hon. friend (Mr. Birrell) has been Chief Secretary?

MR. J. H. CAMPBELL: Certainly.

Home Rule

If that is so, what becomes of the statement which the right hon. and learned gentleman made earlier with regard to the "continued crime and lawlessness in Ireland"? Let us just follow the position. Hitherto the argument in this debate has proceeded upon the assumption, not only on this side but also on the side of the Opposition, that Ireland is now comparatively peaceful and comparatively prosperous, and that the argument which we used in 1886 and 1893, in favour of Home Rule, that it was necessary in order to put an end to the crime and lawlessness which then existed, has disappeared because crime is now comparatively non-existent. The right hon. and learned gentleman, however, comes down with an extended Newgate Calendar and a long string of criminal acts which he reads to us. Three-fourths of his speech against this Bill consisted of a recital of criminal prosecutions and their results or failures during the last five years of administration. I wonder whether it occurred to the House that exactly the same thing could be done, except in certain instances, if you took the calendars of crime in this country. I agree you would not have the same result in a number of them, because you do get evidence with more ease here than in Ireland, but, equally, you could recount a number of horrible crimes, with all their sordid details, nauseating to those who have to listen to them. I wonder if the right hon. and learned gentleman has considered this. If there is a greater difficulty in getting evidence

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

in Ireland, and if there is more crime, contrary to what we have heard hitherto in this debate, the Irish in the past, and certainly in the remoter past, have had no reason to hope for redress by constitutional means. They became accustomed to regard violence and outrage as the invariable preludes to concession. That is not a statement made on my authority—neither is it a statement made on the authority of any Liberal. It is the conclusion arrived at by Mr. Lecky, the historian and Unionist. I do not know whether the right hon. and learned gentleman means to contradict that statement. When we are considering the judgment which is to be passed upon Irishmen we ought at least to bear in mind the circumstances which have led to these crimes. I am not defending them for one moment, but I do say, when you are passing judgment, and when you are sentencing them, you should at least review all the circumstances, and bear in mind, if you can, and if you mean to be fair and just to them, the considerations which have led them to do acts from which otherwise they would recoil.

I propose to come back to the subject under discussion. I propose to revert to the Bill which is before the House. The right hon. and learned gentleman, throughout a speech which lasted a little over an hour, never in the slightest degree referred to the Bill. I would ask the House to remember that when Mr. Gladstone first introduced the Home Rule Bill it was said it would

Home Rule

lead to separation. The criticism then was that the Bill as introduced by him gave too much to Ireland and retained too little for the Imperial Parliament. The criticism in the debate upon this Bill is exactly the opposite. It is that by the Bill we are giving too little to Ireland and retaining too much for the Imperial Parliament. It was said by the right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand Division (Mr. Long) that it is only "a half-and-half measure." That was his expression. The hon. and learned Member for Kingston (Mr. Cave) said it was only "part self-government." Another right hon. gentleman said it was "not really Home Rule at all. You are professing to give Home Rule, but the measure which you are introducing is full of distrust of the Irish people." "It is unworkable." "It cannot last." They have poured scorn and ridicule upon it; they have treated it contemptuously, and they have referred to it as a poor, wretched, miserable thing. Yet, almost in the same breath, they have said it is a measure so important, so far-reaching, and so overwhelming in its effects, that the majority in Ulster will refuse to submit to it, and that the Bill will lead to civil war. Indeed, many have sought to justify the civil war which they say will ensue from it. Those two propositions are mutually destructive. They cannot both stand. I have read the arguments of hon. Members with care, and I have sought to ascertain what are their main grounds of criticism

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

of this Bill, and, apart from certain detailed criticisms, all I have been able to discover are these to which I have just given utterance. "It is a poor, wretched thing, dressed up in the shape of Home Rule," as they describe it one moment, and then "it is an awful thing, in the shape of Home Rule, which is going to plunge you into civil war," as they describe it the next moment. I leave hon. gentlemen to reconcile these two conflicting views.

Neither of the propositions is correct. In the first instance, ever since 1893—I think one may go a little farther and say for the last twenty years—the state of things in Ireland has been improving. I have not yet heard that denied. It has been the basis of the argument put forward by hon. Members on the other side. The first cause of it, no doubt, was the introduction by Mr. Gladstone of Home Rule. He began a chapter in the history of Ireland which can never be closed until the history is commenced of the first Irish Parliament after the grant of Home Rule. It is, no doubt, also due to successive Administrations, both Conservative and Liberal; but, in spite of that improvement during the last twenty years, we have not destroyed or even impaired in the slightest degree the natural and legitimate aspirations of Irishmen. No other question has been the subject of discussion, or at least has been the issue, at a General Election in Ireland. There has been one issue, and one issue only, at all their

Home Rule

elections. It is not as with us in England. We have had debates again and again in this House, in which it has been said on the one side that the issue was not Home Rule but Free Trade, and on the other it has been asserted that Home Rule was an issue. These questions do not arise in Ireland because there is one issue and one issue only there. Whatever matters we may discuss and whatever matters may be put before the country here, in Ireland you have the one question alone, and upon that the electorate votes. What, then, is the conclusion? It is that there is an overwhelming majority in favour of self-government for Ireland. Then it is said, when we take note of this demonstration of public opinion in Ireland, and when we give effect, as we believe, to representative government by considering the views of the majority of the Members sent to this Parliament, "You are making a corrupt bargain." The Liberal party has made many sacrifices for Home Rule. The Liberal party has suffered severely from its advocacy of Home Rule in the past. It lost some of its most influential leaders, and many of its influential supporters, and it is not, as a rule, against men who make sacrifices for principle that you direct charges of corrupt bargaining. But we are not afraid in the slightest degree of taking up this or any other challenge with regard to Ireland.

It was said by the right hon. and learned gentleman the Member for St. Andrew's University (Sir R. Finlay) that everything has

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

gone badly for Home Rule since 1886. Is that correct? I shall submit the contrary, and I think I shall be able to show that events have gone well for Ireland, certainly since 1893. What has happened? There has been first of all the grant of self-government to the Transvaal. That has been discussed at considerable length in the course of this debate, and I do not mean to take up time by rediscussing it; but I do want to point out that that is one factor which has brought Ireland perceptibly closer to the fruition of the efforts of its people, and it cannot be left out of account by those who study the history of the last ten years. The grant of self-government to the Transvaal, with its brilliant success, has shown that by trusting the people, even though they have been your bitterest foes, either in the domain of politics or on the field of battle, you convert your foes into your friends. There are other considerations to be borne in mind. What happened during recent Unionist administrations, and particularly during the last Unionist administration? What was the result of that administration upon those who were chiefly concerned with Irish government? What did Lord Dudley say? What was his view? Right hon. gentlemen opposite, of course, may laugh or sneer at the noble lord now, but he was their Lord-Lieutenant; he was selected by them as their representative in Ireland, and as long as it suited, as long as he chose to carry out the

Home Rule

views which they held, he was the man who had to be honoured and placed in the highest position in the administration of Irish affairs. But, apparently, as soon as he changed his views, as soon as he saw it was absolutely essential, in order to govern Ireland properly, to make a change, then he became a very different man—a man to be scoffed at and to be sneered at, a man not worth consideration. That shows the fair and impartial spirit which characterised the administration of Ireland in those days. I could refer to similar cases in the Conservative party with regard to Ministers who did not quite take the same view and did not choose to adopt exactly the ideas of those who now sit beside the right hon. and learned gentleman the Member for Trinity College, Dublin (Sir E. Carson). He at least has always been consistent. He has not changed his views, and he has taken very good care that those who sit on the same bench as himself should not be allowed to change their views either.

SIR E. CARSON : I have done my best.

The right hon. and learned gentleman has not only done his best, but he has succeeded up to a point. He succeeded when he was a Member of the Unionist Administration, but the question now arises whether he is going to succeed when a Liberal Administration is in power. That remains to be seen. I venture to prophesy he will meet with a great failure and not with success.

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

SIR E. CARSON : Will your Bill be before the country?

If it is before the country, and the country endorses our policy, is the right hon. and learned gentleman prepared then to submit to Home Rule in Ulster?

SIR E. CARSON : Before I answer that I want to know, Is the right hon. and learned gentleman making us an offer that this Bill shall go before the country?

I notice the right hon. and learned gentleman is very shy about answering it. I will answer it for him. I have here his oath, in which he says :—

“Never in any circumstances will we have Home Rule.”

What is the use of the right hon. and learned gentleman asking us whether we will submit our Bill to the country when he says that, even if the country is in favour of it, he will not submit to it. Is that the view which is endorsed by the right hon. gentleman the Leader of the Opposition? Is that to be the meaning of the historic handshake, the handshake with the people who passed before the right hon. gentleman at Belfast? Is he in the same position? Is he, and is the Conservative party also, bound by that oath? I do not wonder there is no readiness to answer that. To do the right hon. and learned gentleman justice, he has never hesitated to express his opinion with perfect frankness, and I shall have a little more to say

Home Rule

about that aspect of the question before I close. I should like now to proceed with my catalogue of events. I wonder whether some of those who sit on that side of the House remember when the sheep began to stray from the fold, and when the right hon. and learned gentleman — not exactly my notion of a gentle shepherd—showed them the error of their ways and drove them back, chastened in spirit a little, uninjured in body, except a few who were somewhat ruthlessly trampled upon in the hurried scamper back to the fold and who were eventually worried by the sheep-dog. I wonder really, whether hon. members have forgotten that. Let me remind them of something else. In November, 1910, there was a campaign going on in the Tory Press. I am dealing with what has appeared in public.

MR. LONG: What was the campaign?

The right hon. gentleman challenges me to tell the whole story. He knows the story very well. I can only deal with that which happened in public. The right hon. gentleman is perfectly well aware what I was referring to. My observations were directed to a campaign in the Tory Press during the month of November, 1910, and even a little later, in favour of Home Rule all round. I am not speaking of anything that took place at the conference. The right hon. gentleman himself and the right hon. and learned gentleman the Member for Trinity College were signatories to

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

the manifesto which was issued against it. They knew perfectly well what was happening, because they protested against it. There was a desire once again to stop sheep straying from the fold.

SIR E. CARSON: The right hon. gentleman says I knew very well what was happening. I did not know that anything was happening, nor do I believe that anything was happening.

So far as I understand it the interruption means this: the right hon. and learned gentleman signs a manifesto but does not mean anything by it. He does not know that anything is happening, and he does not believe that anything is happening, but, because he is of that opinion, he issues a manifesto in order to make it quite clear to those taking part in it, and those associated with it, that he will have none of it.

SIR E. CARSON: I repeat I did not know that anything was happening.

I think the right hon. and learned gentleman agrees with my point. I do not think he can dissent from any single statement that I make.

SIR E. CARSON: But I am dissenting to the statements of the right hon. and learned gentleman. I knew that something was going on, but I did not know what was going on except through what I saw in the Press and from correspondence.

I do not see that there is any difference between us. I purposely said, in answer to the interruption of the right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand Division (Mr.

Home Rule

Long), that I was not referring to what occurred at the Conference. I said I knew nothing of what took place there, and the right hon. gentleman answered that he also knew nothing. I then pointed out that both he and the right hon. and learned gentleman the Member for Trinity College had signed a manifesto in answer to a campaign which was being carried on in the Tory Press, and at least they thought it sufficiently important to issue a protest which they both signed. 'What was it they said :—

“ A suggestion has been made——”

But I must read the first paragraph. It is, after this contradiction, too good to be lost :—

“ An unauthorised scheme of Home Rule all round has lately been canvassed in certain newspapers.”

Of course, we know these are the Conservative newspapers.

SIR E. CARSON : The words are “ in certain newspapers.”

The document proceeds :—

“ and has been put forward for the consideration of the Constitutional Conference and approval of the Unionist party.”

The right hon. gentleman has appended his signature to this.

SIR E. CARSON : I know.

It was put forward for the consideration of the Constitutional Conference and approval of the Unionist party. At any rate, the right hon.

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

and learned gentleman knew that that was happening. Then the document goes on:—

“A suggestion has been made that the plan should form the subject of compromise between the Unionists and Liberals. The scheme is not a new one. It has previously come before the country, but, after being weighed with great consideration and at great length by the Unionist party, it has been deliberately rejected on its merits.”

SIR E. CARSON: What is the accusation against me?

I think that assumption of innocence on the part of the right hon. and learned gentleman is hardly in accordance with his usual candour. This document bears out exactly the statements that I made, and that is why I read it. It shows that the right hon. and learned gentleman, as soon as he became aware there was any scheme on foot for a discussion of Home Rule all round, again came forward as the shepherd to drive the sheep back again into the fold, and he issued this protest for the purpose of doing so. There is one other matter which is worthy of consideration, and that is the Imperial Conference of 1911. That is another event of, as we think, considerable importance which has happened since 1893. We had an Imperial Conference; we had the colonial Prime Ministers present; we had colonial opinion expressed on this very subject, we had the voice of the Empire, and that has

Home Rule

helped, according to our view, to make this a particularly opportune moment for Home Rule, and not an inopportune moment, as was suggested by the right hon. and learned gentleman who spoke immediately before me. It is said that although you may be able to put the principle of Home Rule plausibly—and so much was admitted by the right hon. gentleman the Member for Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities (Sir R. Finlay)—it is when you get to details that you break down. I agree there is considerable force in that argument, to this extent, that there are many matters of detail which are the proper matter for Committee, but there are, on the other hand, some which are of great importance, which may and should be discussed on Second Reading, and it is to those or some of them—because I shall not have time to deal with all—that I propose to call attention. Let me remind the House that into this Bill we have introduced safeguards, most carefully devised as we believe, for the purpose of protecting the interests of the minority. That has been the object of the Bill.

I will deal with the evidence next. We are agreed upon the object. I want to point out that, having introduced, as we have done, these safeguards into the Bill, what is said with regard to them is that they are not worth the paper they are written on; that they are worthless; that they are not intended for use, but are only

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

there for show, and that they are nothing but a sham. I think that summarises the arguments that have been put forward. May I say that I am referring to the safeguards which are introduced into the Bill dealing with the legislative powers granted to the Irish Parliament under the Bill? I shall not forget to deal with another aspect of the matter, upon which there has been what appears to me to be a more cogent criticism, that is, with regard to the administrative action of the Executive. I am first of all dealing with what takes place under the Bill. The first safeguard is the one that declares that the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament remains unaffected and undiminished. I am sorry the right hon. gentleman the Member for Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities is not present, because I should like to put a question to him upon that. But I ask any lawyer here, and there are several on the Opposition benches, whether he would assert that because a declaration of that kind is introduced into a Bill, and because it may never be necessary to use it, therefore it becomes worthless. I challenge any lawyer to make that assertion. It is the assertion that has been made by the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities. I cannot help thinking that when he made it he was carried away to some extent by his enthusiasm, and forgot that there were these safeguards, which are of vital moment in preserving the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament.

Home Rule

SIR E. CARSON: Do they add anything to the Bill?

Of course they do. Let me ask the right hon. gentleman a question. The right hon. gentleman is himself a lawyer.

SIR E. CARSON: I was.

I will not assume that because the right hon. gentleman has devoted his time to politics he has forgotten his law. I am asking him a question of law, to which there can be but one answer. If he desires me to answer it, I will say that the safeguard to the supremacy of Parliament is this: You have a declaration by this Parliament, which puts it on record in this Bill that the Imperial Parliament remains supreme, and that the Irish Parliament is therefore a subordinate Parliament. That is placed in the Bill. If any questions ever arise as to whether or not this Parliament is supreme, is it not of value to have had that declaration, not only in the Bill, but willingly and loyally assented to by hon. Members who represent the Nationalist party in this House. It becomes unnecessary to discuss the question when you have the declaration in such terms in the Bill. I would ask those Members of the Opposition who choose or profess to think that it is of no value, would they like it out of the Bill? Would they desire to see it removed from the Bill? (*An hon. Member*: "It makes no difference.") They say it makes no difference. I have already pointed out how it must make a difference.

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

With that declaration no one can say it makes no difference. If you say, the proposition will remain the same, namely, that this Parliament will be supreme, even if you did not insert it in the Bill, I agree, but I assert that the assent of the Irish Members in this House, and of this whole Parliament, to the declaration that there is that supremacy, is of the greatest value as putting this question beyond all doubt and beyond all possible discussion.

Let me come to the next safeguards. A series of safeguards by way of limitation on the legislative powers of the Irish Parliament is contained in Clause 2 of the Bill. I am not going through them now, for, except in regard to the reserved matters, they have escaped criticism, or, at any rate, they have escaped anything in the nature of severe criticism. They are all matters which it is necessary to exclude in order to give effect to this Bill, and in order to carry out the intentions as declared with reference to this Bill. Again, I will ask the House to bear in mind that these safeguards, which are said to be worthless, are made absolutely safe and secure by means of the provisions of the Bill. It is not a question of exercising the veto on legislation. Supposing, for example, a Bill is passed by the Irish Parliament which deals with any one of the excluded matters referred to in Clause 2, it is not necessary for the veto to be exercised, because it follows from law and from the provisions of the clause itself, that that law is *ultra*

Home Rule

vires—in other words, that it is beyond the power of that Parliament, and it becomes void even as it is passed. It is useless as a Bill ; it is of no effect. This is the most absolute safeguard that you possibly could devise. Again I challenge lawyers to contradict that that is a plain statement of the effect of this Bill. No one can affect to despise safeguards of that character. When you come to Clause 3 you have another limitation—a prohibition this time—of laws interfering with religious equality. It is of the widest possible character, stating in the most emphatic terms, and clearly, deliberately, expressing the view of Parliament, and placing these restrictions upon the Irish Parliament with the free assent of the Irish Members. Yet it is said those are wholly illusory safeguards and that they are not worth the paper they are written upon. I point out again that the same clause operates here, that it is a law which becomes void from the moment it is passed. It can never really become the law of Ireland at all, because it is said in this Bill—which gives the powers—that any Bill which infringes these provisions is to be void.

MR. DUKE: Will the Attorney-General tell the House what becomes of these void statutes?

If the hon. and learned gentleman had waited a minute, he would have heard. Moreover, if he had read the Bill, he would have known. If he will kindly wait a moment, I will explain

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

what really happens with regard to them. There is no difficulty whatever in ascertaining it; it is written in the plainest possible terms in the Bill. If the hon. and learned gentleman will turn to Clauses 28, 29, and 30, he will see for himself quite plainly what happens. If these Bills are introduced, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council is the tribunal which is to decide whether or not the law proposed transcends the powers which are given under this Bill. That is the same tribunal which decides questions between the Dominion Government and the provincial Legislatures of Canada. The right hon. and learned gentleman himself (Sir E. Carson) is aware of that. He has argued cases before them, and certainly the right hon. and learned gentleman the Member for Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities is very familiar with that tribunal. It is a matter of constant occurrence in this country to have disputes between the central Government and the State or provincial Government which arise in their own country brought home here to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council for decision by that tribunal, and they put an end to all disputes existing between the provincial Government and the central Government. Is that a wholly worthless safeguard? Is that not worth the paper it is written upon? We go farther than that in this Bill, because there is a provision introduced here which supplies the best answer to the hon. and learned gentleman's ques-

Home Rule

tion. The provision enables the question to be decided before the Bill introduced ever passes the House. There is no question of a Bill of this character being introduced and passed, whether by the Irish House of Commons or by the Irish Senate, and then being discussed as to whether or not it is *ultra vires*. That need not happen at all. There is power taken either for the Lord Lieutenant or a Secretary of State to make representations to the Executive for taking the matter at once—that is, as soon as it is introduced as a Bill—to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, who are asked to pronounce there and then whether or not that Bill comes within the limitations and prohibitions of the Government of Ireland Bill. Is that said to be a useless power?

MR. DUKE: Absolutely.

The hon. and learned gentleman seems to think it is useless. I will not read through the clauses because they are before the House. Hon. Members can read them for themselves, and they will see what powers are given, and how impossible it is to say that these are absolutely useless provisions. The very first words of Clause 29 are:—

“ If it appears to the Lord Lieutenant or a Secretary of State expedient in the public interest that steps shall be taken for the speedy determination of the question whether any Irish Act or any provision thereof, or any Irish Bill or any provision

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

thereof, is beyond the powers of the Irish Parliament, he may represent the same to his Majesty in Council, and thereupon the said question shall be forthwith referred to and heard and determined by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council."

I fail utterly to understand what the hon. and learned gentleman means by saying that it has no meaning, unless there is some underlying suggestion that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council is not the proper tribunal to decide questions of that character.

MR. DUKE: Before the right hon. gentleman leaves that matter, will he tell the House whether he supposes that it will be competent for the Privy Council to restrain by injunction the proceedings of the Irish Parliament?

What does the hon. gentleman mean? Let us follow that up. A Bill is introduced into the Irish House of Commons which is thought by the Lord Lieutenant to go beyond the provisions of this clause, and therefore comes within the prohibited area. He makes that representation to the Executive. The Executive takes a different view. How are you going to decide it? By the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, the same as in cases from Canada and Australia in which there are important differences. You need not even wait until they have actually debated it and passed it into a statute, but at once the Privy Council can pronounce upon it, and they can pronounce, not only upon

Home Rule

the Bill, but upon any single provision in the Bill which may be thought to go beyond the limits imposed by the Government of Ireland Bill. I say that is the most absolute security you could possibly provide.

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN : Who will advise the Lord Lieutenant?

It may be, I daresay it would be in some cases, the Imperial Parliament. The difference is this. The Lord Lieutenant, who would represent for this purpose the Irish Executive, has the right to bring the matter before the Judicial Committee; and the Secretary of State, who represents the Imperial Government, also has the right to bring it before the Committee.

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN : The Lord Lieutenant acts on the advice of the Irish Law Officers?

I think he would. That is the position of matters, and I ask the House to bear in mind that never yet, so far as I know, in any legislation has such care been taken to safeguard the powers and rights of the Imperial Parliament so as to give the least possible friction between the Irish Executive and the Imperial Parliament. Reference has been made to the administrative side. The hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Cave) said with some force that that provision does not in terms deal with the administrative action of the Executive. But if some wrongful act is done by the Executive here, if some act is done which is contrary to

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

law, it is open to the Courts to restrain the Act, and, of course, as the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Balfour) illustrated, that was done in the Swansea school case, where it was thought, and the Courts decided, that a Minister had taken upon advice a wrong view of the statute. So that you have that check. You have the further check of discussion in Parliament, exactly the same check as we have here. I should have thought it was really beyond discussion that it is the highest interests of the Irish Government to avoid all possible suggestion of oppressive action against the minority. Is it to be supposed that men of the shrewdness of the Irish Members, if they once obtain the machine for which they have been striving so long, will at once take steps to smash it, to bring it absolutely down with a clatter by resorting to the very course which they have declared again and again they will not take, by being either oppressive or intolerant on religious grounds? If hon. Members opposite are not satisfied with the safeguards, why do they not propose others? If they put forward the suggestions which they think are necessary in the interests of the minority, we can promise at least that they will be carefully considered.

MR. BARRIE: The only thing of use would be that the Bill should be read this day six months.

That illustrates exactly what I am saying. What is the good of talking about the value of

Home Rule

the safeguards? That is not what hon. Members want to consider.

MR. BARRIE: I agree.

I am glad to get that frank recognition. It shows so plainly what is the true position we have to meet here. The nineteen Ulster Unionists are the persons who are dictating, as is apparent from the history I gave a little while ago, the policy of the Unionist party. Whenever any ray of light is allowed to creep in then come the right hon. and learned gentleman (Sir E. Carson) and his associates to darken it.

SIR J. LONSDALE: Is the right hon. gentleman aware that the hon. Member (Mr. Dillon) said publicly that paper safeguards in the Home Rule Bill are absolutely worthless?

I do not think that is what he said. I know the quotation. What he said, and I quite agree with him, is that the best safeguard you can have is trust in the good sense of the people. I have drawn the distinction between legislative and administrative safeguards, and I have given the very argument which the hon. Member used and with which I agree. The striking feature of this debate is that this Bill is not being considered at all. Hon. Members opposite are not concerned with examining the Bill. Probably that is the reason why the right hon. and learned gentleman has given so little consideration to it. All they care about is getting rid of the Bill. They do not want to examine details. They do not want to discuss whether the plan

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

is feasible. They do not desire in any way to examine finance.

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN: Wait and see.

I have waited and seen and heard. We have been told what it is. Moreover, hon. Members do not want to examine the safeguards. I understand that view. It is a perfectly honest one. But it is much better stated openly, frankly, and candidly. I do not say that is the view of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Austen Chamberlain). I expected he would take a different view from the speeches he has made. I leave him to settle with the right hon. and learned gentleman (Sir E. Carson). The Ulster Unionists oppose the Bill root and branch.

LORD C. BERESFORD: So do the loyalists all over Ireland.

The noble lord surprises me. With all his courage, which is so well known to the House, that he should dare to claim for them the title of loyalists!

LORD CHARLES BERESFORD: Loyal to the Union.

As the hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Cave) said, they came to Belfast to show how loyal they were. They marched in procession in order to demonstrate their loyalty to this Parliament and to the King on condition that they remained subject to the laws of this country.

MR. CAVE: That is not what I said.

I have the quotation:—

Home Rule

“ They came to protest their loyalty to both (that is, to this House and to the King). They came to say they were satisfied with the protection given to them by the laws of this country. They were anxious to continue in partnership with us subject only to the condition which is now freely conceded to the whole of Ireland, the condition of being governed under equal laws with Great Britain.”

That, in a more extended form, is exactly what I said. I assert that that means conditional loyalty, and I will make the point good. I will translate what the hon. and learned gentleman said. It is that they will remain loyal, and they came to assert their loyalty to this Parliament and to the King, so long as one-fifth of the representatives from Ireland are allowed to coerce the majority. That is the effect of their announcement. The hon. and learned gentleman says their loyalty is on the condition that they remain subject to equal laws with Great Britain. It means that so long as they are allowed to remain as they are they are loyal, but if this House of Commons passes this Bill and the Royal assent is given to it, according to the law of this country, then, as I understand what he said, they are no longer loyal either to this country or to Ireland. In the face of that, the noble lord has the audacity to arrogate for those Ulstermen the title of loyalists. We know the words which I quoted earlier, the

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

formula which I suppose was settled and devised by the right hon. and learned gentleman (Sir E. Carson), and to which he adheres now. It is quite immaterial what laws you may pass, it is quite immaterial what the country may say, it is quite immaterial what the predominant partner may say, it is quite immaterial whether the Government majority is independent of the Irish or not, says the right hon. gentleman—never under any circumstances will we have Home Rule.

SIR E. CARSON made an observation which was inaudible in the Press Gallery.

It is of very little use uttering threats across the floor of the House. It is the poorest of poor arguments, and it is a very easy thing to sit on that bench and make threats. The right hon. and learned gentleman knows perfectly well that that is a threat which cannot be dealt with in this House. I suppose it is a prophecy of what is to happen.

SIR E. CARSON: No, it is a fact.

It is a fact, apparently, which was asserted before even the Bill was introduced. I am not at all so sure that the right hon. and learned gentleman and those associated with him have substantiated their claim in this country to be accepted as true prophets. I have some recollection of prophecies in which they have indulged and which have been wrong. There are three important instances which are just worth recalling in order that we may know the value of

Home Rule

their prophecies. The 1894 Budget was one of them. When, in that year, Sir William Harcourt introduced the Death Duties, what evils were prophesied and what mischief was going to happen! We know the result. The right hon. gentleman the Member for East Worcestershire (Mr. Austen Chamberlain) was very glad of these Death Duties when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. We know what happened with regard to the Transvaal—that “most reckless experiment” as it was dubbed by the Opposition. We had a third and more recent prophecy. That was with regard to the Finance Bill of 1909. Everybody will remember the evil things prophesied at that time—the ruin that was to happen, the unemployment that was to ensue, the decrease in trade, and the poverty into which the people were to be thrown. What has been the result of it? The Chancellor of the Exchequer told us quite recently when expounding his Budget that out of the taxes imposed by that Act alone £23,000,000 was received for the revenue of the country.

If you look back on the credentials of the Opposition, I hardly think they are entitled to pose before the country as prophets on whose words reliance can be placed. Let me ask what is to be the result if the prophecy of the right hon. gentleman and those associated with him were true? When is this state of things to come to an end? Is it ever to be ended? Is a time ever to come when we shall be able to give

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

some measure of self-government to Ireland. (An *hon. Member*: "No.") One hon. Member says "No." Not in any circumstances? Suppose that out of the seventeen Unionist Members for the Province of Ulster they lost only one seat, they would then be in the minority. Let me ask would they then be ready to submit? Of course, the answer is "No," as I understand their position, and if they lose more seats, how many more will they have to lose before they assent to submit? Suppose that the whole of Ireland were Nationalist, even then, I understand, the statement is made that Ulster would not submit and that they would not recognise a Parliament in Dublin. That is, of course, reducing the whole matter to a farcical proposition. All I desire to say in regard to it is that, if that is their view, there is not much to fear in the way of argument on the merits of the Bill.

Take another aspect of the question, which is really worth considering. Are we never in any circumstances to get rid of the congestion of business in this House? Is every attempt which we make for the devolution of some of our business to be frustrated by nineteen Irish Unionists? Just look at what happens in the history of our proceedings. I remember when I was first in this House coming in and finding a discussion proceeding upon a Bill which had something to do with Rathmines and Rathgar. I admit I did not know where they were. I remember that I learned they were close to

Home Rule

Dublin, and I gathered from the speech of the right hon. and learned gentleman, who spoke on that occasion, that the whole question was whether Rathmines township should drain a thousand houses in some particular district.

SIR E. CARSON: No.

My memory is better than the right hon. gentleman's, because I looked it up this morning. We had this matter discussed in the House again, and nights were taken up with it.

SIR E. CARSON: Why not?

"Why not?" says the right hon. gentleman. I will tell him why. Because that is a measure which the Irish people ought to be able to settle themselves, and because we have other things to do here which are more important, even although, as the right hon. gentleman told us in his speech, he is a ratepayer in Rathgar. Then we had several nights taken up with the discussion of the finance of the borough of Sligo. (*An hon. Member*: "Why not?") I agree that so long as Ireland has not a Government of its own for these affairs, the consequence is that you must have these discussions here. We had similar discussions in regard to two or three clerks engaged on one of the Irish railways. That took some time in this House, and this year we have had time taken up in discussing a small question about a dredger in connection with the Agricultural Department in Ireland. On two successive evenings we discussed it, and all that time was wasted. What

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

we desire is that these matters should be dealt with in Ireland. They are familiar with them, and can deal with them far better than we can. Let me remind the House that we have great and important matters to deal with here. We have matters of foreign policy and colonial administration. We have naval and military matters, and we have also important questions appertaining to expenditure—expenditure which is growing every year, and which probably, I am afraid, will continue to grow. All these matters are much more worthy of the close attention of Parliament. We are not able to give the time to them which they require at the present moment. The House has only to contrast the statement I have made as to some instances of what has happened in regard to Ireland with the statement that year after year, in consequence of the congestion of business in this House, we vote without discussion £50,000,000, £60,000,000, or, as happened in 1911, £67,000,000, and all because we cannot get time to discuss these matters.

SIR J. LONSDALE: Is the right hon. and learned gentleman aware that the discussion of Irish affairs in this House in 1911 only occupied forty hours and a half?

If that is the case, it shows how unfair it is to Ireland. Does the hon. baronet think forty hours enough?

SIR J. LONSDALE: We did not get the opportunity for more discussion.

Home Rule

I am much obliged to the hon. baronet, who has quite frankly, fairly, and clearly made out the case I was arguing. It is quite right that an opportunity ought to be given, and would be given, but you cannot get time in view of the number of other things which have to be discussed. It is not so long ago that the right hon. gentleman the Member for East Worcestershire made a speech in which he himself referred to jaded Ministers, worn-out Ministers, and Members of Parliament wearied by their incessant labours, and yet they say there is not time to discuss matters relating to Ireland. What was the right hon. gentleman's only remedy? The remedy he proposed is very like the remedy we are proposing. Devolution of some local self-government is the only way out of it.

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN: Where was that speech delivered?

I think it was Sparkhill. It was this year. What the right hon. gentleman said was, of course, not only perfectly true, but it was a perfectly correct argument for devolution. He said there are facts which nobody can dispute. There is not a Member who can dispute the facts which I have been stating in regard to our own domestic affairs in this Parliament. We all know that there is not time for the discussion of all these matters. The guillotine is applied to some of them, and no Member votes for the closure with a light heart. Every year you are bound to increase the number of officials

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

appointed. The sphere of social activities which require the special vigilance and supervision of Parliament is yearly increasing, and will continue to increase. All these are matters which necessitate the further close attention of Parliament besides the affairs of the Empire. You can only get that attention given to them if you have resort to some sort of devolution such as I have mentioned. The hon. and learned Member for Kingston (Mr. Cave), in a speech he made last week, appears to be also of that opinion. He said that local Government for Ireland is capable of great expansion, but he favoured something wholly different from the policy of this Bill. Let me ask, What have we really come to in this debate? We are told by hon. gentlemen opposite that we must not allow the Nationalists to coerce the minority. These were the words used by the right hon. and learned Member for Dublin University. I would ask, Are they content that the minority in Ireland shall be allowed to coerce the majority? It is said by the right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand Division (Mr. Long) that his party must not desert their friends. That is one of the grounds on which he supports the Opposition, and upon which he moved the rejection of this Bill. I do not quarrel with the principle of not deserting your friends, but I would ask, How far does he propose to carry that? How far is he prepared to stand by his friends, which means the

Home Rule

Unionists of Ulster, in refusing to give effect to the view of the majority so constantly sent to us? May I ask also of those who speak for Ulster, Does the Ulster minority claim the right to prevent Home Rule for the rest of Ireland? Does the Ulster minority claim the right to say, "Even apart from ourselves here in Ulster, for the whole of the rest of Ireland, we will not allow you to give Home Rule"? I should have thought that that question would have been considered, and that some answer would have been ready. It is one that lies very closely on the surface of the discussion, and it is one to which an answer is necessary.

SIR E. CARSON: It is not in the Bill.

No one suggests that it is in the Bill. But we are meeting the opposition to the Bill. We are striving to understand the position of our opponents. We are endeavouring in the best way we can command to see what is the obstacle to the settlement of this Irish question, and we ask, and are entitled to ask and ask again, whether the Ulster minority claim that right to prevent Home Rule for the rest of Ireland. I notice that no answer is given. I notice, further, that it is said by both the right hon. gentlemen the Member for East Worcestershire, in the speech to which I have referred, and the hon. and learned Member for Kingston, during this discussion, that we are to have some extended self-government for Ireland. That is the policy, a wide or great expansion of local

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

self-government for Ireland. If that is true, is the difference between us as to the expansion of local self-government for Ireland so wide? Is the difference so great between that and the Home Rule Bill which we have introduced, and which is now in its Second Reading, that you are justified in talking of civil war or in encouraging civil war? Is it that difference which justifies ex-Ministers of the Crown and eminent lawyers who are destined to hold the highest offices in the State in making statements in the country which suggest civil war, which are intended to suggest it, which encourage it, and in which they even attempt to justify it?

I ask the right hon. gentleman, who is going to speak in the course of the Debate, to answer these questions, and I put them also to the right hon. gentleman the Leader of the Opposition. Does he take the same attitude? Does he mean to encourage civil war? Let me add that it is no use riding off and not dealing with the question. You cannot do that in a matter of this character; you are either for the Crown or against it. The right hon. gentleman the Member for Trinity College seems to think that this is a laughing matter, but I am quite sure that the right hon. gentleman the Member for East Worcestershire does not, and I am perfectly certain, from what we know of him in this House, that when he speaks he will express his opinions fully and frankly upon this subject. If he does not approve of this encouragement of

Home Rule

civil war and does not attempt to justify it, then I am sure he will say so, and he will forgive me for saying, and I am sure he will not think me impertinent for saying, that it is his duty to say so. The right hon. gentleman the Member for Wimbledon (Mr. Chaplin) thinks that this is an amusing matter. May I ask him whether he approves of it? Is it his view? The right hon. gentleman says he will tell me when he speaks. Then I shall await with some interest what he is going to say on this question, and of course I shall listen to him with every attention, as I always do. I want the House to understand that it is impossible for right hon. gentlemen opposite to take the attitude of not expressing their opinion on this subject. They cannot get away from it. They must either say they disapprove of it, or if they take the same attitude on the rest of this question as those who are advocating civil war they are making themselves party to it. What is to be the attitude of the Unionist party? The sooner we know it, the sooner it is made known to Parliament or to the country, the better it will be. I cannot help coming back to this. I have had no desire to say anything which might be offensive to any Member, however much I may disagree with him. I have attempted to put forward for their consideration the views which I hold, if they are minded to consider them. I ask them whether it is impossible that a settlement upon the Irish question can be obtained by this Bill? It can be

The Right Hon. Sir Rufus Isaacs

obtained ; it can undoubtedly be obtained if only you are a little more generous, a little less suspicious, and a little more trustful. Then the Irish people can live with the Irish in an Ireland governed according to Irish ideas. I say, in an Ireland governed according to Irish ideas, by Irishmen devoting all their brilliant qualities, which everybody admits they possess, to developing and administering their own country, instead of devoting them to other countries. We shall not be long in arriving at a settlement if only all will bear in mind a saying of Mr. Gladstone, given with all his unmatched and unrivalled experience : " Suspicion is the besetting sin of politicians, and trust is often the truest wisdom."

-

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RIGHT
HON. HERBERT SAMUEL, M.P., ON
THE SECOND READING, *May 7, 1912*

THIS is now the eighth day of the discussion on the Home Rule Bill. We have had many speeches, and I am afraid many of them have been from the Treasury Bench. It was my own duty to detain the House for some time on the First Reading, and therefore to-day I shall not deal with any general examination of the reasons why this Bill was introduced, or the case upon which it rests, but I shall limit myself to a specific answer to the various arguments and questions which have been addressed to the House by the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Austen Chamberlain). I shall endeavour to follow him with as much terseness as may be point by point through his speech, and if I omit to reply to any of his contentions, I trust the right hon. gentleman will remind me of the omission. The first complaint against the Government for introducing this Bill which was made by the right hon. gentleman is one to which we have listened again and again in these discussions, namely, that the Government is insincere, that we care nothing for Home Rule

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

for its own sake, that we are not convinced of its value, that we do not believe in our hearts it will settle the Irish question, that we introduced it merely because we were bound by an obligation of a party character to the hon. and learned Member for Waterford (Mr. J. Redmond) and his friends, and that it is in obedience to his dictates we lay this Bill before the House. Hitherto we have been accustomed to treat this accusation with the indifference which it merits, and a formal reply has rarely been given to it. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Austen Chamberlain) was himself trained in his early days in the Liberal school. It is true that he retains little trace of his training now, but he must be aware that Liberalism is a real and living thing, that Liberalism is a creed of government which has existed for many a long day past in all civilised countries, and which has helped to transform the face of the world. Here in this country it is alive, and I can assure the right hon. gentleman and his friends that they have very little knowledge of the temper of the Liberal party in this country if they think that that party would long support a Government which declared its readiness to rule Ireland upon any system except upon one consistent with Liberal principles.

It is surely absurd to accuse a Liberal Ministry of insincerity because it desires to establish what have always been regarded as the essential articles of the Liberal faith in the government

Home Rule

of a country for which we are ourselves responsible. It is true, as the right hon. gentleman said, that we have not got the eloquence or the fervour of Mr. Gladstone. Who can be expected to attain that matchless precedent? But I do claim for the members of this Government, for their supporters in this House, and for the Liberal party in the country, that we are as resolute as he was in the belief that the Irish question cannot be solved except upon the basis of self-government, and that through a measure such as this we shall be able to solve it. Then the right hon. gentleman said that this Bill was such a poor and meagre thing that it would give in reality no relief worth considering to the House of Commons, and that the congestion of business would continue the same as before. He said, "You reserve certain powers of veto. What hope can you have that your Irish business will be less than hitherto when these powers are reserved?" All the world knows that powers of veto are reserved to deal with exceptional cases, which we believe will never occur, of legislation of a grossly intolerant and unjust character; and as to assuming that, because we have powers of veto in the Bill, Irish questions will come up day by day in this House, that I say is an absurdity. At all events, we shall certainly get rid of all the local Irish business which now takes up an amount of time, inadequate indeed for the needs of Ireland, but too much for this House to give. We shall get rid of Rathmines

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

and Rathgar and the drainage of the Barrow and the Bann. Is it not patently absurd that all public business which is too big to be dealt with by a County Council must be dealt with in the Imperial Parliament of the United Kingdom? There is nothing in between.

This Parliament has to keep up five codes of law—a code for the United Kingdom, one for England, sometimes one for Wales, one for Scotland, and one for Ireland—like a juggler jumping about the stage, keeping five balls in the air at the same time with an immense expenditure of effort and a great amount of fatigue. That is the position in which the House of Commons finds itself now. After a century it becomes tiring. Unquestionably we will be able by this Bill to relieve the House immensely of the burden which now falls upon us.

The right hon. gentleman next turned his attention to finance. He made a series of carefully considered criticisms on the finance of the Bill to which it behoves me on behalf of the Government to offer a reply. First he attacked our treatment of the existing Irish deficit. He said, "Why should we be called upon to give to the Irish Parliament from the British Exchequer a sum of about £2,000,000 a year which the Irish Parliament will be able to control as they will?" There are various possible ways in which this question of the deficit might be dealt with. One way is that favoured by the right hon. gentleman and his friends. That is,

Home Rule

to have no Home Rule at all, and to make no change in the present financial relations of this country and Ireland. What prospect will there be, then, of getting rid of the existing deficit on the Irish account?

The experience of the last twenty years has shown us that a surplus of £2,000,000 a year from Ireland has been changed into a deficit of £1,500,000 with commitments for the future; and as to any prospect of ridding ourselves of this charge the right hon. gentleman and his friends leave us in no doubt whatever. We need not base our forecasts on the experience of the past. They have made it abundantly clear that if their Irish policy is adopted by the country and by Parliament it will involve an increase literally of millions a year in the expenditure for Irish purposes from the taxes contributed by British taxpayers. If their promises are meant to be realised—if they are more real than their promises of old age pensions—they will undoubtedly involve this country in an enormous expense, and the denial of Home Rule will indeed be found to be a costly business. But the right hon. gentleman says: "We need not inquire too closely into these things so long as Ireland remains under British rule as now. There is no need that the expenditure on Ireland should have any relation at all to the revenue from Ireland. There is no need at all that we should make any attempt to balance the accounts. Let the revenue from Ireland be what it may, we

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

must expend freely on Ireland whatever she needs." That sounds very well, but to the British taxpayer a penny on the Income Tax is a penny on the Income Tax, and a penny on tea is a penny on tea, and if in future you are going to spend further millions a year, as will be the case if all these proposals are carried into effect for Irish purposes, the British taxpayer who has to pay his extra penny or twopence on the Income Tax or on the pound of tea will be by no means consoled by being told, "If this is a policy of halfpence, it is also a policy of kicks, and if you are called upon to give largely increased doles to the Irish people you still have the privilege and you retain the right of governing them against their will." The burden on the British taxpayer remains a burden. Indeed, the right hon. gentleman and his friends here again take up two very contradictory positions. They say to the Englishman, "Reject the Home Rule scheme of the Government because it will cost you too much," and they say to the Irishman, "Reject this policy of Home Rule, because it will stop the flow of British money into Ireland, which we, the Unionists, desire to continue and desire to increase." We are accustomed to hear from the Opposition one man saying one thing and another man saying another, but here one man says both.

Surely it is an impossible attitude to take up, to condemn this scheme because it makes a grant of £2,000,000 a year to set up Home Rule, and to ask the Irish also to condemn it because, if

Home Rule

there is no Home Rule, there will be largely increased grants from the Unionist party in the future.

That is one possible way of dealing with the deficit—to have no Home Rule, and to increase the deficit. Another policy that might be suggested is that we should establish self-government in Ireland, and require straightway that the Irish Parliament should pay their own way with their own resources, and make an immediate contribution to the common purposes of the Empire. That is not possible. The right hon. gentleman has emphasised, I think to-day, at all events in his writings, that Mr. Gladstone did, in 1893, provide that there should be an immediate contribution from Ireland to common purposes, but Mr. Gladstone, in 1893, adopted at bottom the same principle as that on which this Bill is founded. He took the financial situation as he found it, and he set the Irish Parliament going with the funds which were then needed for Irish expenditure, allowing them a small surplus over and above their immediate need and continuing their contribution to Imperial revenues which at that time was being made. And that, indeed, is the only possible course. It cannot seriously be contended, except by those who really wish to use the argument of a *reductio ad absurdum*, that if we mean to set up Home Rule at all we should establish it on such a footing that Ireland should be immediately called upon to increase her taxation all

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

round by 20 per cent. in order to pay her way—that the British taxpayer should be relieved of 1 per cent. of his taxation, while the Irish taxpayer should be burdened by an addition of 20 per cent. to his in order to make up the difference.

Another possible way of dealing with this deficit is the establishment of Home Rule now and the fixing of a definite contribution from Ireland in the future. That cannot be done, for we cannot foresee ten or fifteen years hence, whatever the period may be when the deficit will be over and when the accounts will balance, what the financial circumstances will be. We cannot tell what loans will have been contracted; we cannot tell what changes in taxation may have been effected. To adopt this policy would be an attempt to legislate at a distance of ten or fifteen or twenty years.

Therefore we are brought back to the proposal of the Government Bill as the only possible means. If hon. Members opposite will view this matter with candour, they will see that it is the only possible means, if we are to have Home Rule at all, the only possible just means of dealing with the existing situation. We take the accounts as they are, and provide for the deficit being met by the increase of Irish revenue. When the deficit has been met the case will be reopened and a larger measure of financial control will be given to Ireland, and an Imperial contribution will be required,

The right hon. gentleman mentioned a specific

Home Rule

provision in the Bill to which he took exception. The right hon. gentleman the Member for the City of London (Mr. Balfour) has also on more than one occasion asked the Government to give some reason why the Post Office Department, with which I am specially concerned, should be handed over to the Irish Government. We have had much praise from the Opposition of the Finance Committee which was appointed by the Government. The hon. and learned Member for Kingston (Mr. Cave) spoke of them in terms of appreciation, and rebuked the Government for putting aside their recommendations. I am inclined to think that both he and the right hon. gentleman who has just spoken praised that Committee because the Government has not accepted their recommendations. I wonder what they would have said if we had accepted their recommendations, which would have involved a complete control of all taxes by the Irish Parliament, a complete control of all Customs duties without restriction, except that the Irish Parliament would not have been allowed to protect Irish industries against imports from Great Britain or to differentiate between goods coming from various foreign countries.

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN: I might have said that it was a very mad proposal, but that it was not quite as mad, financially, as the scheme which is proposed.

I am quite sure that whatever proposals were made the right hon. gentleman would have said

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

that they were the worst possible, and that nobody could conceive a more unreasonable and a more unworkable plan. But when we do accept the specific recommendations of this Committee then we are denounced up hill and down dale. The reason why this provision with regard to the Post Office is inserted can best be explained in the words of the Report of the Committee itself. They say that—

“ the Post Office is different. With a falling population in Ireland, and with no very marked enhancement in the general activities of the country, an increase of nearly 74 per cent. in fifteen years in the cost of running the business of the Post Office certainly requires explanation; and from the evidence of the Accountant-General of the Post Office, we gather that it must be attributed in great measure to the fact that enlarged postal facilities entailing extra expense and augmentations of pay, both of which were considered to be required in Great Britain, had, under the unified system of administration, to be extended to Ireland, notwithstanding that the circumstances of Ireland, taken by themselves, would not under either head have justified such large additions to the cost of the establishment there. In conclusion,”

they say :—

“ on these facts we hold that the experience of the last few years amply confirms the

Home Rule

theory that a financial partnership with Great Britain does involve in Ireland a scale of expense that is beyond her requirements and beyond the natural resources of the country itself. The matter seems to us of great and increasing importance."

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN: Will the right hon. gentleman allow me to ask him whether he supposes that, following upon that recommendation, the first act of the Irish Parliament will be to reduce the salaries and the services of the Post Office?

The right hon. gentleman surely is aware that the interests of all existing Post Office servants are fully safeguarded by the Bill.

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN: Where is the economy?

The first act of the Irish Parliament is not the only act, and the Irish people and the Irish Parliament will have to consider this matter for themselves. I do not prophesy anything as to the future. All I say is that the Finance Committee drew special attention to the fact that expenditure on the Post Office in Ireland not merely had increased, but was continually increasing year by year, and that so long as control rests with this country it is impossible in any degree to stop that increase. It has been suggested that in no federation that the world has ever seen has such a proposal been made as that one of the constituent States should manage its own Post Office. That is not so. In the German

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

Empire two of the States, Bavaria and Würtemberg, have their own Post Offices.

SIR GILBERT PARKER: Sovereign States.

They are parts of the German Federation. The fact remains that you have a federation, and you have constituent States administering the Post Offices of those countries. But even if the right hon. gentleman is right, and if the Post Office ought not to be transferred, the conclusion to be drawn is, not that our Bill is utterly unworkable, but that this is one power that should be reserved to this Parliament; the conclusion he seeks to draw is certainly not justified by his premises.

Next the right hon. gentleman said that our provisions, with the interworking that they provide between the finance of the United Kingdom and the finance of Ireland, make it impossible both for the Imperial Chancellor of the Exchequer and for the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer to frame their Budgets, because neither of them would know what the other was about to do. That I dispute entirely. The action of the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer will not in any way affect the action of the Imperial Chancellor of the Exchequer, and vice versa. The right hon. gentleman put two or three specific points. He said, in the first place: What is to prevent the Irish Parliament, if it sees that a tax is continually increasing in yield, from repealing that tax, and thereby depriving the Imperial Exchequer of the growth of the

Home Rule

revenue—repealing the tax and imposing a different tax with a different name on the same people, thereby gaining to the Irish Exchequer any future increase which might accrue in the yield? That has been foreseen in the Bill. The chief taxes are Income Tax, Death Duties, Customs, and Excise. The Irish Parliament are precluded by clauses in the Bill from imposing any new tax which is substantially of the same character as an Imperial tax. Therefore they cannot impose any new tax in the nature of Income Tax, Death Duties, Customs, or Excise, or any other Imperial tax which may exist. That being so, the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer will have to show an extraordinary ingenuity in devising any tax, which would bring in an appreciable revenue, that would be a substitute for the tax that he would repeal—an ingenuity so remarkable as to be quite impossible in the circumstances. No tax could be devised which could be a substitute for these, and it would not be enough for the right hon. gentleman to say: “Well, but you might impose a small tax of a novel character—a tax on bicycles, for instance—and use the money to reduce the Imperial tax.” That would not effect the evasion which the right hon. gentleman contemplates, because the reduction of a tax does not deprive the Imperial Chancellor of the natural growth in its yield.

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN: The thing I had in mind was that the Irish Parliament could not increase the income tax, but could reduce it.

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

Supposing Ireland had mines, as we have, and that at the same time she reduced the Income Tax she imposed a large Mineral Rights Duty on the model of the Exchequer's Mineral Rights Duty, is the Postmaster-General prepared to say that the Mineral Rights Duty is merely Income Tax under another name?

That is a question which should be dealt with on its merits; the particular instance is not a question of great importance, because there are no mines in Ireland. Each specific case must be dealt with on its merits as to whether or not it is a colourable substitution for an Imperial tax, but in so far as they may reduce the Income Tax they would have to reduce it very considerably indeed in order to make an appreciable difference in the future growth of the revenue of the Imperial Parliament. But even that would not make any difference to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget for the year. It would be a small difference, and whatever it might be it would merely affect the future growth of the Irish revenue, and does not support the right hon. gentleman's point that the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget for the year could be upset by any action on the part of the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer. Then the right hon. gentleman gave another specific instance, in regard to the Whisky Duty. He said, suppose the Irish Parliament were to impose an increase of 33 per cent. upon the duty on whisky, and if the consequence of that

Home Rule

was an increase in the yield, not of 33 per cent. but a smaller increase, say, of 10 per cent., then, he said, the Irish Exchequer would receive from the Imperial Exchequer one-fourth of the proceeds—that is to say, that as the 33 per cent. is to 133 so is one to four, and therefore they ought to receive one-fourth of the whole of the proceeds. The Imperial Chancellor of the Exchequer, while he only gets 10 per cent. addition to the yield, would have to hand over to the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer one-fourth of the yield, which would entirely upset his financial calculations. That is not in the Bill, which entirely precludes such a result. If hon. Members will look at Clause 14, Sub-section (2) paragraph (c), they will find that what is to be handed over to the Irish Exchequer in such cases is the proceeds of the increase in the tax, not the proportion of the whole yield based upon the proportional rates, but the actual proceeds; and, of course, if it were found that the tax had only gone up 10 per cent. any one could see that the effect of the Irish Parliament putting on the tax had not been to give proceeds amounting to 33 per cent.

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN: Does the right hon. gentleman say that the proceeds of the Imperial part of the tax would remain nearly the same, and that the 33½ per cent. would be the only part levied on the lower consumption?

No, sir; that is not the point. The Joint Exchequer Board would have to face the circum-

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

stances. They would have to deal with the fact that the tax in one year had yielded, say, a million, and in the next year yielded one million one hundred thousand pounds, and they would see in that year that the Irish Parliament had imposed additional taxation to the extent of 33 per cent. ; and they would, of course, see that the proceeds of the additional tax was the amount by which the yield of the whole tax had been increased. That certainly is the intention of the Bill, and if there is any doubt as to the drafting, it certainly is a matter which could be considered in Committee. But it is the intention of the Bill that the Irish Parliament should receive whatever sum is the actual consequence of the imposition of a tax by them upon the Irish taxpayers. Then the right hon. gentleman raised another specific point. He said : " Suppose they took over the old age pensions and did not use the money for old age pensions, but chose to use it for some other purpose—is that a reasonable proposal? " May I point out, in the first place, that the interests of all the pensioners receiving pensions at the time of the transfer of the service are safeguarded. (*An hon. Member*: " Existing pensioners? ") Yes, pensioners who exist at the time. The Irish Parliament takes over the service ; the existing pensioners are safeguarded, and the pensions must be continued. That is clearly provided for in the Bill. If the Irish Parliament decided later on, in regard to future pensioners, taking into account the whole of the

Home Rule

circumstances of their country, following the desires of their constituents—that it would be better to give smaller pensions and to devote the saving to educational purposes or other national purposes, why in Heaven's name should they not be allowed to do so? It makes no difference to us. The sum which is charged to us will remain absolutely the same, and we consider that it is within the province of the nation, it is within the province of the people, to decide for themselves through their own representatives whether they wish to have the money spent upon old age pensions or on some other social purpose. In our view that is a reasonable thing and it makes no difference to us. The charge upon us would remain precisely the same if this option were used by Ireland.

Then the right hon. gentleman came to a point which has been very much in discussion upon the clauses of this Bill, and with which it is necessary to deal, and that is the allowance under the provisions of our Bill of a limited measure of Customs differentiation. This is represented as being the setting up of Customs barriers between Great Britain and Ireland, and we are told that in no portion of the world has a proposal been made allowing the constituent members of a federation to have separate scales of Customs Duty. Let me point out in the first place that the Zollvereins which have been established, the Customs Unions which have been established in our own colonies, have been estab-

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

lished in order to prevent the various members of the federation from imposing Customs Duties against one another. Experience has shown that with neighbouring States, having long contiguous frontiers, and containing people of the same nationality, it would not be possible to maintain and continue permanently all the jealousies and all the friction which are involved in the States taxing one another's products—to which the right hon. gentleman and his friends would expose us with such a light heart in our relations with our foreign customers.

But there is no proposal here to allow any portion of the United Kingdom to raise a Customs barrier against any other portion. The Bill absolutely prevents that; it prevents any Customs Duty being imposed upon any British produce, and, indeed, the term "Customs Duty," if hon. Members will look it up, is only applicable to articles which come from abroad. This question has been carefully considered, and, merely as a matter of drafting, it is clear in the Bill that the Irish Parliament cannot impose any protective duty whatever upon British products. Nor does the Bill in any degree allow a preferential duty for the benefit of Irish industry, or allow a similar duty upon Irish products here. There is a second point. All those federations differ from the case of the United Kingdom in that, as the Finance Committee pointed out, they are territories within a ring-fence. Great Britain and Ireland are the only case of two islands separated

Home Rule

by the sea forming members of one federation.

MR. AMERY: There is the case of New Zealand and Tasmania.

New Zealand is not part of a federation, and while Tasmania is, its case is, with all respect to Tasmania, not on a par with Great Britain and Ireland. But my hon. friends may ask, Why do you allow any variation at all? Why not exclude Customs altogether from the purview of the Irish Parliament, and not allow them to reduce at all, nor allow them to increase, even by 10 per cent., the duty on any of the commodities which come into their ports? The reasons are these. If you excluded those duties altogether from the control and purview of the Irish Parliament, you would give to the Irish Parliament very limited powers on finance. It is a grievance of Ireland that her people are taxed beyond their capacity, and they ask for opportunities to economise on their Government in order that they may have, at all events, the chance of reducing taxation. It is a contingency that ought to be avoided if possible that this Parliament should deliberately say to the Irish Parliament, "Govern your country as economically as you may, make whatever sacrifices you choose in order to spend less money, you shall never be allowed to reduce the taxation upon the working classes of your country, you shall never be allowed to reduce the taxes which press most heavily on the people"—that is to say, indirect

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

taxes upon articles of general consumption. If you allowed no reduction in the Customs Duty upon tea and upon sugar, you would be saying to the Irish Parliament, "You can only reduce the Income Tax, you can only reduce Death Duties, but you cannot reduce the taxes which press most heavily on the people."

Then, secondly, with regard to the powers of increased taxation to secure more revenue, suppose that were necessary, you could not give them powers of increasing the Excise because it is obviously impossible to increase the Excise if you are not to be allowed to increase the corresponding Customs Duty. They could not be given the opportunity of putting a tax on Irish beer or whisky if they could not increase the duties on English beer or Scottish whisky coming into Ireland. The effect of putting on an Excise Duty would merely be to penalise and hamper Irish products in the Irish markets when the British products would be free. The power to increase the Income Tax is one which in all probability cannot be used so far as the great bulk of the Income Tax is concerned—that is to say, so much of it as is collected at the source, because the difficulties of collection are so great that it is very unlikely that the Irish Parliament would endeavour to increase the main body of the Income Tax. They might alter the abatements or the Super-tax, but they are unlikely to increase the main body of the tax. Therefore, if you exclude Customs, if you exclude Excise, if

Home Rule

you exclude almost all the Income Tax, what is there left? You have only the Death Duties and one or two minor taxes. Although it might be necessary to give to a Parliament power so limited as that, and although it might be impossible to avoid such limitations, as one can conceive, in particular cases, still if you can, without very grave inconvenience, give some latitude in Customs and Excise, it is obvious that the Irish Parliament, in matters of finance, will be put in a much more responsible position and in one which will enable it to do more good for the people. (*An hon. Member*: "Will there be separate Customs Houses?") There may be Customs charges if they alter the rates of duty, but, of course, if they do not alter the rates of duty on any particular product there would not be, as regards that product, any differential Customs Duty, and the Customs House would only be cognisant of the goods that passed through it for statistical purposes. That is a matter which my right hon. friend (Mr. Lough) considers of very considerable and just importance. We should, at all events, have accurate facts and know precisely what the true Irish revenue really is.

I am dealing with the arguments of the right hon. gentleman in their order, and his next criticism was on the Exchequer Board. He told us that we cast upon the Joint Exchequer Board duties which it would be unable to perform, but those duties are being performed year by year

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

by the Treasury. When the right hon. gentleman was Chancellor of the Exchequer and was preparing his Budget, his advisers at the Treasury gave him precisely the same kind of information which the Exchequer Board will be called upon to obtain. The decision of the questions at issue certainly will not in all cases be easy. If they were easy we should not need to establish a Joint Exchequer Board at all. But certainly they will not be beyond the powers of a body of capable men, such as that which we contemplate. The Treasury, of course, have to estimate how much of the yield of a tax is due to any increase in the rate of the tax, or what is the result of an abatement which has been made of the tax in the preceding year, and other questions of the same kind, questions of calculation.

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN: They did not advise me as to the distribution of the revenue in accordance with the calculation. Let me say every calculation of the kind made in regard to Ireland was disputed by the Irish people.

Yes, but the Irish people had no representatives amongst those who made the calculation. Here they will have two representatives of the Irish Treasury, who will assist in these deliberations, and the distribution of the revenue is merely a consequence of the calculations that have been made. I should like to refer to one other matter to which I think the right hon. gentleman very briefly alluded. In the detailed criticism to which the Bill has been exposed great

Home Rule

prominence has been given to that portion that relates to the control of the police. It has been said that our Bill is unworkable and impossible, because, while you have retained in the hands of the Imperial Parliament the duty of collecting revenue, you propose at the end of six years to hand over to the Irish Parliament the control of the police. Nothing could be more ludicrous, it has been said, than to have under the control of one authority the tax-collector and under the control of another authority the policeman ; and that if there is one thing more than another which shows the unpractical nature and complete unworkability of our Bill, it is this proposal of placing in one hand the police and in another the duty of collecting taxes. We have heard very much about other federations. In all other federations, it is true, the collection of Customs and Excise is controlled by the central body. It is equally true that in all the federations with which I am acquainted—and I do not think I am wrong this time as to Tasmania—the control of the police is in the hands of the provincial Government, except in South Africa, and there the financial arrangements are provisional. But in Canada and Australia, while the central Government retains the collection of Customs and Excise and many other taxes, as we propose the central Government should do in this case, the local Government has control of the police, and I do not know that there has ever been any inconvenience which has been caused by that division of responsibility.

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

SIR GILBERT PARKER: Does the right hon. gentleman suggest the ordinary police of the colonies are similar to the constabulary in Ireland?

The question is, Who is to protect the tax-collector if he is trying to collect the Excise Duty or the Customs Duties? My answer is, just as the police in every British community are employed by the Government to assist those officers of the law, whether they be officers of the central Government or any other, so they will be in this case. I could imagine the hon. Member for Kingston (Mr. Cave), who criticised this Bill very severely the other night, suppose he were opposed to the Canadian Constitution or the Australian Constitution, proving, in precisely the same manner, how utterly impossible it would be that either of those Constitutions could conceivably work. Archbishop Whately about a hundred years ago, as a satire upon the atheistic literature of his time, wrote a book to prove that Napoleon never had existed, and upon the premises which he took he proved it most conclusively, and I am perfectly certain that the hon. gentleman opposite could prove conclusively that not only the Australian and the Canadian, but that the German Federal Government and the Swiss Government, and our own Government here in this country, could not conceivably work, and that nothing could be more ludicrous than the provisions which they contained. The answer is that Napoleon did exist. The answer is that those Constitutions do work. There is

Home Rule

nothing in our Bill which has not been found to be quite practical in analogous cases.

I must hurry on to the concluding words of the right hon. gentleman. In his last words the right hon. gentleman said, "Why any safeguards at all? Why do you insert in this Bill these limitations on the Irish Parliament? It shows your own distrust of the character you anticipate that your Irish Legislature will have." I think that is a very unworthy argument to use. The right hon. gentleman knows quite well that we have inserted those safeguards, not because we ourselves anticipate intolerance or outrageous legislation on the part of the Irish Parliament. We insert them because we have observed the fears, which we have no doubt are the sincere fears, of people in Ireland who dread the establishment of an Irish Government, and it is not on account of any opinions of our own, but it is in order, so far as we can, that we should allay the alarms of those persons in Ireland, that those safeguards have been inserted. I repeat that it is an unworthy argument to address to the House of Commons to say that because we have inserted those safeguards in order to meet the alarms, which we think unfounded, of other people, that therefore proves that we ourselves regard the Irish Legislature as untrustworthy, and likely to engage in improper legislation.

Next, the right hon. gentleman said, if the Privy Council does declare a Bill *ultra vires*, what

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

will happen if the Irish Ministry resigns? There is no need, as a matter of fact, for any action to be taken if the Privy Council declares a Bill to be *ultra vires*. A Bill which is *ultra vires*, and is declared by the highest Court to be *ultra vires*, is in itself void, and need not be obeyed, and cannot be enforced, and any person who chooses to disobey a law which has been declared *ultra vires* is exposed to no penalties, and no Court would damnify him. That is the real and short answer to the objection that has been raised to the Privy Council procedure. I do not think I need enter on the question of the Transvaal, as that has been already dealt with. But I should like to say one word with regard to the attitude of hon. Members from Ireland during the South African war, a point which has been raised again and again in these debates, and which has been invariably received with enthusiastic cheers from the benches opposite. For every violent speech made by an Irish Member, I could quote half a dozen violent speeches made by Canadians before the establishment of the Canadian Legislature. I could quote you attacks of Papineau and Mackenzie and other Canadian leaders on British administration in the days when Canada was demanding Home Rule. I could quote dozens of extracts from the speeches of Australian statesmen and from the writings of Australian newspapers as to the certainty that Australia would "cut the painter" if England did not do this or that. This attitude of hon.

Home Rule

Members from Ireland in earlier years is the invariable attitude of the representatives of a people who are steadily denied the rights of self-government. This is the position which you and your policy seek to perpetuate. It has been said again and again that the only road to loyalty is through liberty. Surely hon. Members opposite should give us credit for a desire to bring a real preventive for occurrences which we, as well as they, fully admit are most deplorable, which we desire to see stopped, and which we think will be stopped as the result of our policy. But hon. Members opposite are always blind to this. They always think that repression is the only means of meeting discontent.

Never does history record any graver blunder than that which was made when the American Colonies revolted, and when in the House of Commons Townsend, Grenville, and the others refused them the right of liberty. The Townsends and the Grenvilles of this world never die. They reappear in every generation. Never are they able to learn the lessons of the past.

In this case they say that they are supported by the irresistible attitude of Ulster, that Ulster takes up a position which cannot be stormed and cannot be turned, and that the effect must be to block the progress of our policy. Here, again, one can turn to a colonial precedent, so exact that I must trouble the House with one quotation. It is again Canada, in the days when it was proposed to grant her Home Rule. The Unionists

The Right Hon. Herbert Samuel

of Canada sent home memorial after memorial, protesting against the grant of fuller powers. They said that it would destroy the unity of the Empire; that the local divisions between the parties in Canada, the English and the French, were too strong; that the British Government must remain as the umpire between them:—

“Loyalists as they are, they will not have independence forced upon them. They will take the matter into their own hands.”

They went even farther than the Orangemen of Ulster:—

“They will, if necessary, call in the United States to replace British influence wantonly overthrown.”

In the House of Lords, Lord Stanley said:—

“The concession would remove the only check to the tyrannical power of the dominant majority—a majority in numbers only, while in wealth, education, and enterprise they are greatly inferior to the minority. The minority of the settlers are of British descent, and one thing is certain: if these settlers find themselves deprived of British protection, they will protect themselves, and measures to that effect will be taken within six months after the concession is made.”

The concession was made; all these things ended in vapour; the settlers did not take steps to protect themselves; and the justification of the policy then adopted is seen in the success

Home Rule

of Canadian self-government, while the continued unity of the Empire is evidenced by the presence in this very House of Commons of hon. Members who themselves are of Canadian origin. The right hon. gentleman said that he, at all events, did not advocate civil war in Ulster, and that he and his friends have been exercising restraint rather than encouraging disloyalty. . If their speeches are restraint, I wonder what encouragement is? At all events, I welcome the speech of the right hon. gentleman, for he at least made it very clear that he repudiated any tendency to advocate violence in Ulster, and that, so far as he is concerned, occupying as he does a most responsible position in this House, he does not join in the frenzied appeals to the Ulster minority to resort to measures of violence if this Bill should pass into law.

Sir, I believe that the debate, now that we have had seven days of it, shows that all the larger arguments of policy are in favour of this Bill, and that only the petty ones can be advanced against it. So far as finance is concerned, I claim that, viewed in detail, the Bill offers a just and stable foundation for the future financial relations between the two countries, equitable both to the one party and to the other.

-

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RIGHT
HON. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL, M.P.,
ON THE SECOND READING, *May 8*,
1912

THE right hon. gentleman (Mr. Wyndham) has, within most becoming limits of time, made an exceedingly able and interesting speech, and has presented some points of view which have not hitherto been put forward in the debate. It was, indeed, impossible for him to make otherwise than a profoundly interesting speech on the affairs of a country with which he was at one time most closely connected, and where his memory will long be cherished, and where he will have the good fortune to have his name associated, perhaps for the next hundred years, with a great and most beneficent remedial measure. I know there are some people who speak of the right hon. gentleman's connection with Ireland as if there were something a little unfortunate in it. I confess I have never been able to see that. I regard him as an exceedingly lucky man. He came along at a very happy moment of time, when land purchase on a large scale had been bitterly opposed by all former members of his party. I am old enough to

Home Rule

remember the chorus of condemnation which faced Mr. Gladstone's Land Purchase Bill—

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN: As part of Home Rule.

I do not want to go into that, except to say that that Land Purchase Bill pledged British credit to the extent of £150,000,000 in order to buy out Irish landlords, and I am a little bit chagrined, although perhaps I ought not to be, at the calm confidence and assurance with which hon. gentlemen opposite take to themselves credit for the whole policy of land purchase on a great scale, as if it had been entirely their invention. They put entirely on one side Mr. Gladstone's proposal. I have here one quotation—it is the only quotation I shall give to the House during my speech, which I hope will be as short, though I am afraid not so interesting or so eloquent as the speech to which we have just listened. The speech to which I refer was the famous manifesto to the great Tory party given by its former leader, Lord Salisbury, one of the clearest thinkers and plainest speakers who ever lived. He had his alternative policy to Mr. Parnell's policy for the government of Ireland. His policy was twenty years of resolute government. He went on to say:—

“ If I am asked for a further alternative policy, I will only say that if the Prime Minister is right in thinking that the electors of this country have screwed themselves up to that heroic pitch that they are prepared

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

to spend £150,000,000 of money upon the pacification of Ireland, I think I can point out to them a better way of spending the money than in buying the landlords out. I do not say I recommend it, because I am not at all convinced that the electors of England ought to bear such a tremendous burden, but assuming that the Government is right in thinking that they are willing to bear it, I would point out to them that if they could only emigrate another million of the Irish people, they might do it for a great deal less than that sum. They could set them up in a distant colony, under conditions under which they would be certain to prosper. They could give them, in place of the present misery and agitation, a bright future of industry and prosperity, and they could be certain of recovering from them in due time the money that had been advanced——”

Even in the distant colony they were not going to get it for nothing—

“with far more certainty than if they recovered it from the tenants when they had made them proprietors.”

A few days later he said to the Primrose League :—

“Buy out landlords for the purpose of evading the duty of protecting them ! That, indeed, would be a cowardly shirking of our responsibility.”

Home Rule

Stick to the landlords and let the people go ! That was the further alternative policy put forward by the late Lord Salisbury, instead of the far nobler and better policy of the right hon. gentleman the Member for Dover when he said, " Stick to the people and let the landlords go ! " That is why I call the right hon. gentleman the Member for Dover a lucky man. He was fortunate enough to be able by arts and crafts personal to himself—upon which I congratulate him—to hypnotise a Chancellor of the Exchequer. " He wove a circle round him thrice." He cast upon him a holy spell such as reduced that unfortunate man to absolute silence all through the discussion of the Land Bill. The only remark he made—I do not say internally to himself, nor do I know, of course, what he said in private to the right hon. gentleman—but the only observation he made all through all those debates was an interlocutory observation, but it was a very valuable one, because he said :—

“ If money could not be raised at $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. the Bill would not work.”

Never mind that. I congratulate the right hon. gentleman. I am not speaking with any innuendo or reservation when I congratulate him upon having been able to secure the passage through Parliament of that Bill. He was a lucky man. I am the unlucky person because—oh, cursed spite!—the finance under it came to utter grief and to a complete end at the time I

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

first assumed office, for a purpose I have already explained, and for a purpose which I am happy to say has been fulfilled. Then you say I arrested land purchase, but the truer thing would be to say, if you like, that I was not able wholly to revive it, that I was not able to find an equally corresponding good cash basis or stock basis, nor was I able to obtain the full renewal of that bonus which undoubtedly had a great deal to do with the success of the measure. But I do not want to go into that. I have far too much to say. The right hon. gentleman was very kind. He did not pursue the subject against me very far. It is a long story, and it is the only accusation against me in the matter of my government of Ireland, which I feel very acutely. Therefore the right hon. gentleman will pardon me if on this occasion I must bid him for the moment an affectionate farewell. I am bound to deal with some rather heavy arrears in this matter.

The right hon. gentleman himself, in common with all other speakers on his side, has greatly complained—and I am sure their tones were so sincere that I do not doubt they really felt it—of the character and nature of the speeches made from this Front Bench by Ministers. You have said, and in ordinary circumstances I could not but feel the force of your criticism, that it was the duty of Ministers to stand at this table, with the printed measure before them, and to expound it exegetically, homiletically, clause by clause,

Home Rule

to an attentive, and I am sure a patient, a willing, and an anxious-to-listen House of Commons. That, of course, is true enough in a way, but will you not admit that after a Bill has been introduced by the Prime Minister, and after it has been put into print, the nature and character of the speeches that we have to deliver in defence of it are largely, and must be, fashioned, determined, and shaped by the character of the Opposition and by the character of the speeches that are made. Looking at it fairly from first to last, what have been the general nature and character of the speeches that have been made by hon. gentlemen and right hon. gentlemen of the Opposition. The right hon. gentleman made some suggestion about the novelty of this measure. He has known, we have all known, through long years of wearisome political life, that whenever the Liberal party introduced a Home Rule Bill it would be found to carry on its very forefront a provision for an Irish Parliament, and what in my judgment is at all events of equal importance, a provision for an Irish Executive, composed of Irish Ministers of the Crown, of Irish Privy Councillors, and of Irish heads of Irish Departments, who would exercise just as much executive authority as corresponds to the legislative authority imposed upon that Parliament, and who would be responsible as a Ministry to the Parliament of the day. That is my conception of Home Rule. Unless you create this Irish Executive, I say for myself that

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

my interest in Home Rule disappears for ever. It is the pulse of the machine. If Home Rule has any curative effect, there is the medicine. It lies in that, and in that alone.

Hon. gentlemen opposite, with the instinct of true warriors, saw that, and have flung themselves helter-skelter, pell-mell, man and boy, with all the force they possess—and it is great, not argumentative force merely, but moral force, sometimes almost physical force—they have flung themselves upon that which they object to most, which they conceive to be the worst possible thing in this Bill. They have said, or others might be supposed to say, “Provincial assemblies if you like; Private Bill legislation if you choose; but never a Parliament, and never an Irish Executive,” and on that point they have conducted their attack. They have wound up their speeches for the most part, almost all of them—I do not blame them, I do not wonder at it—by very eloquent, grave, and solemn references as to what is the feeling in Ulster, and what Ulster will do—

“Ancestral voices prophesying war.”

And having by these means—perfectly fair and honest means—raised the feelings of their own supporters to the highest pitch of excitement, they sit down amidst salvos of applause, and then expect the Minister to get up and in dulcet tones—I am afraid mine are not very dulcet; I am using the expression of the right hon. gentle-

Home Rule

man—invite the House to consider quite quietly, *centimes additionelles*, and the provisions made for the Civil servants and other persons under this Bill. I really do not think that that is quite a fair way of expecting us to deal with the House, when you have confined yourselves all through, and I do not blame you, on the Second Reading of the Bill, to the great fact that in our view and conception Home Rule means a Home Rule Parliament—means a Parliament, and means an Irish Executive. 'Of course, I quite agree with the right hon. gentleman that wary warriors like himself, ancient Parliamentary hands like himself, and like the right hon. gentleman the Member for the City of London (Mr. Balfour), the former Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Austen Chamberlain), and other persons have, perhaps more skilfully than some of their supporters, introduced between the parentheses of their philippics, a certain amount of perfectly legitimate criticism. The right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand Division (Mr. Long) asked what was most becoming in one who formerly occupied the office I hold. He was legitimately anxious about the provisions for the retirement of the Royal Irish Constabulary. He spoke as all Chief Secretaries must do, from the bottom of his heart, and I am sure I join with him, in admiration of that force. I do not think anybody can accuse me of having done anything but stand by them to the utmost of my ability, and so I shall always continue to do

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

so long as I hold my office. The right hon. gentleman says that the provisions of the Bill are not quite satisfactory with regard to their retirement.

MR. WALTER LONG: That was one of my points.

Yes, I know. I have noted others. There are no provisions in this Bill to which I have devoted more personal attention than the clauses relating to the Civil Service, the Royal Irish Constabulary, and the Dublin Metropolitan Police, because, if this Bill becomes law, there will be nothing more disagreeable to me than that there should be any incidents such as those already referred to in the course of the debate connected with the painful subject of retrenchment. If I have not fully succeeded—I have had conferences with the persons concerned, or, at any rate, with their leaders—I think, on the whole, my clauses are very good. But I have no doubt they are capable of amendment. The right hon. gentleman's next question was, What Minister in this House was going to reply for the reserved services, and for the general outside relations of Ireland with this country? He was fortunate enough to discover some flippancy in my reply. It is very creditable to him to find it. I said that some Minister would undoubtedly have to be appointed to reply. He thought that was flippant because it might be a very humble sort of Minister—if there is such an individual. That was not my intention at all. I quite agree that

Home Rule

the Minister who responds for Ireland for the reserved services, and for anything else connected with the new Constitution, must be an important Minister. I do not say a self-important Minister, but an important Minister, and his salary, I am sure, will be commensurate with his duties. He ought to be, and I am quite sure he will be, so far as I can see, a Cabinet Minister. But I do not think the right hon. gentleman will expect to find in the Bill the provisions arranging for these matters.

Then he referred to the dual control of the police. He thought that was a subject-matter of grave difficulty. He said: "Here are the police, this fine force, well drilled and disciplined. How can they take their orders sometimes from the Irish Executive and sometimes from the Lord-Lieutenant as representing the Imperial Government?" Other people took it up or I would not refer to it, but a great deal of criticism has been directed to the great difficulties there will be in handling and dealing with the police. He has forgotten, and the other gentlemen did not know, that already the Irish Constabulary serve a great many masters. Under the Local Government Act of 1898, all the county authorities are able by a resolution which most, I think all, have passed, to call upon the police to discharge most important duties. For example, they can enforce the by-laws which the Dublin County Council has passed, and for the enforcement of which the police are responsible. That

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

is to say, the police may themselves prosecute in all such cases, or the County Council may appoint persons to prosecute. Placing lights on vehicles, violent or indecent behaviour, throwing missiles, interference with public notices, carrying dangerous substances, interference with public lamps, unnecessary obstruction of vehicles—all these things already this great and useful, though highly disciplined, force discharges. They are lowly duties if you like, but we cannot always be living in the throes of bloody revolution. These are useful duties, and the ordinary duties of the police, as we ordinarily in England understand the term, and they are discharged by the Irish Constabulary at the bidding and by the authority of these local bodies. Then, of course, there is the Sheriff. If he has need of a force greater than his own, he can command men to carry out the orders of the law. He deals at once with the police; he calls upon them, and they come and obey his call. The suggestion has been made in debate that we were making the position impossible, intolerable, and novel, and something which had never been heard of before, because we were creating an Executive who would have, after a certain lapse of time, the right to call upon the Royal Irish Constabulary.

MR. WALTER LONG: If you want to know exactly what I said, it was this. It was not that different people have a call upon the police, for they have the same thing in London as in

Home Rule

Ireland. My argument was, and the right hon. gentleman has not disposed of it, that so far as I understand the Bill the Irish Executive have a right to order the police to do certain things, not to call upon them, and the Imperial Government also have the right to order them. Who would be the adviser to whom the police are to look for the advice given to the Lord-Lieutenant as to the discharge of his duties?

It is an addition to their masters, an addition to their authorities. The Executive would be perfectly entitled to call upon the police to come to their assistance or to obey their orders and send them wheresoever they choose to send them. The Lord-Lieutenant, as representing his Majesty and the Imperial side of Ireland, would also have the right to call upon them, and would be entitled to order them. The case put by the right hon. gentleman is that the Irish Executive would use the police to go to a particular place in order to put down some disturbance or trouble, and the Lord-Lieutenant would think the disturbance or trouble ought not to be put down.

MR. WALTER LONG: No, no.

Well, then, put it the other way round. I say the police exist for the purpose of putting down disturbance and enforcing the authority of the law. The Lord-Lieutenant commands them so to do and they will do so, and he will receive in the future, as in the past, their obedience, and unless you mean to say there is a likelihood

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

of the Irish Executive wishing the police not to be employed when the Imperial representative thinks it necessary, I really cannot imagine what difficulty you can suppose there is. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Balfour) mentioned the administration of the Post Office. I will not repeat what was said by the Postmaster-General in regard to that matter. If it is supposed by this House that handing over the Post Office to the Irish Government is a shocking violation of the true principles of federalism, I dare say that point, like many others, is quite open to consideration. Then the right hon. gentleman found a great novelty in Clause 26. He had forgotten, and small blame to him, a Clause in the Bill of 1886 which was very similar in its character—Clause 39—which provided for the appearance—the mysterious appearance if you like—the sudden appearance upon the floor of the House of representatives from Ireland in certain proportions. The only thing is that they were to be there for much more general purposes than are contemplated in Clause 26, where their presence is entirely limited to the one object of revising finance. I do not want to labour points of this kind when what you really object to in the measure, on the threshold of it, is the fact that it sets up this Parliament. It is not because the Senate is nominated that the right hon. gentleman was inspired to deliver the admirable speech he has just made. If that had been the only issue, whether that was democratic or not,

Home Rule

I do not think he would have worried himself very much about that nor about the 164 representatives in the Irish Parliament. It is because we propose to set up an Irish Parliament and an Irish Executive that there is all this trouble. The right hon. and learned gentleman (Sir R. Finlay) almost groaned with alarm over this Executive, and he said aloud to those near him, "Had Grattan's Parliament an Executive?" It was just because Grattan's Parliament had not an Executive that we have all this trouble upon us. The fifth chapter of Lecky's "History of Ireland during the Eighteenth Century" describes the whole Constitution of 1782, and Mr. Lecky says, in so many words, that in Grattan's Parliament there was no Ministry responsible to Parliament, and he goes on to say that was the main blot in the Constitution of 1782.

We have been accused of lack of fervour by the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Austen Chamberlain), and he says we do not throw accents of conviction in our speeches. I cannot conceive that any human being could be more absolutely convinced than I am that the real source of the weakness, the whole of your troubles in Ireland before and after the Union, was that you never have had in that country a strong Executive. You never had it, and I will tell you why. You never had a strong Executive because such Executive as there has been has been divorced, as it always has been, from the people, and has never been popular; and, being hampered at

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

the same time by a sham system of representation, to which no attention is paid when it makes Irish demands, it has been condemned from the beginning to feebleness. I am rather susceptible to the charge of not caring about a thing of this sort, because I do care most intensely. I dare say I have discharged my duties very badly, but, nevertheless, I have had now for five years the responsibility of what is called the government of Ireland upon my hands, and, if you like, upon my conscience, and I therefore say I am entitled at all events to make the observation that in my judgment the pulse of the whole machine, the only chance of curing these Irish grievances and that unhappiness to which the right hon. gentleman made a very honest reference, is by the setting up, if it can be done, of a strong Executive in Ireland.

Now let me come to another point. I heard the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Balfour) with amazement compare disparagingly the powers for usefulness which Irish Members enjoy now in this House with the powers of usefulness which they will enjoy in their new Parliament when they get it. No one can pay compliments one-half so well as the right hon. gentleman. He conveys them so pleasantly that you are convinced of their sincerity, and are immensely gratified by being their recipient. He turned to the Irish Members and gave them to under-

Home Rule

stand that now and here they had such full scope for their brilliant wit, their moving eloquence, their great parliamentary gifts, that he was amazed that they should be willing to exchange this noble arena, this splendid theatre for their wit and their eloquence, for a miserable Parliament in Dublin to which nobody but men of the slenderest intellectual calibre, quite unlike existing Irish Members, would ever dream of going. That was a most extraordinary statement. Were I to go out of my way to pay compliments to the Irish Members, I should not select for special commendation either their wit or their eloquence ; I should prefer to dwell, if I felt myself at liberty to do so, upon their unbroken good faith, upon their strict adherence on all occasions, great and small, to their word, to their splendid self-abnegation of place and profit, and their whole-hearted devotion—sometimes, I think, carried too far—to what they conceive to be the interests of their poorer fellow-countrymen. I believe in Ireland there are tens of thousands of persons every whit as good as they are, and just as capable of rising to the heavy responsibility, which Clauses 1 and 4 of this Bill impose upon them. I therefore express my belief upon that point as fervently as I can.

The right hon. gentleman went on to give us an instance of what these noble beings can do in this House. He mentioned education. He must have forgotten, and I do not wonder—he has been a Prime Minister since—how education

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

is managed in Ireland. To hear him speak you would have thought that the Chief Secretary for Ireland was the Minister of Education. He is nothing of the kind. So far as primary and secondary education are concerned, he is a mere gramophone. He is asked questions about a Board of which he is not a member and to which he cannot even go. The National Board of Education absolutely controls the primary education of that country, and every question that is put to me I answer—the House must be sick to death of hearing it—“ I am informed by the Commissioners of National Education.” As, for intermediate education, that is even worse. (*An hon. Member*: “ Will you abolish the Board? ”) Certainly, I hope so. It lives like a gentleman on its private fortunes, and the only way we can get a discussion on it is by putting down by consent a token vote. This Board of National Education is composed of certain members, and is equally divided as between Catholics and Protestants. The members occasionally retire or die, and the Irish Government appoints their successors. There is, as regards the appointments, an obligation of honour which if departed from would create great trouble. It is about the only thing a Chief Secretary can create in Ireland ; and unless he is anxious to create trouble he must look about when a Catholic retires to get a Catholic successor, and when a Protestant retires he must go to the ignominy of ascertaining what kind of Dissenter he is. If a Presbyterian,

Home Rule

he must have a Presbyterian successor ; and if a Wesleyan, he must have a Wesleyan successor. There are both Presbyterians and Wesleyans on the Board. By common agreement Catholics and Protestants have to be equally divided on the Board, and the only authority the Irish Government has over the Board is as regards the appointment of members.

You say these matters can be discussed in Committee of Supply. You have, so far as primary education is concerned, a vote, I agree. It does come into a vote by this House. There is nothing more distasteful to me than to speak disrespectfully in any way of this great House of Commons, to which I hope we are all proud to belong, but to talk about discussions in Supply as a means of successfully governing the country or getting at the bottom of the matters discussed is ludicrous. I remember well being in the House when the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Balfour) cut down supply to twenty days. Although twenty days are not enough for the discussion of votes, at the same time it is quite enough, considering how it is done. Ireland gets two and a half days, and the subjects are chosen by hon. gentlemen below the Gangway, and by Conservative Members from another part of Ireland. They decide between them through what are called the "accustomed channels" what they will talk about. One day they will talk about old age pensions, and another day they will talk about

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

education. But it is a perfunctory discussion. How it is really done both of the right hon. gentlemen opposite must remember. Take the National Board of Education. Every year it presents through the Treasury demands for more money, and it is perfectly justified in making the demands. It puts them under eighteen or nineteen ancient heads—very ancient, some of them almost hoary. The only person to whom they are a novelty is the Chief Secretary, who as a rule does not hold office for more than two years and therefore comes fresh to them every time. He selects as best he can those that appeal most to his own idiosyncrasy or appeal to the idiosyncrasy of the guardian of the public purse, his right hon. friend and colleague the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He decides where he will be most likely to win. It does not necessarily follow that he selects what Ireland most wants or what the Education Board think will best meet the national demands. He selects what he thinks has the best chance of getting through. That is the way it is done. It is not done by discussion and by pressure brought to bear on the Government. It is done by the work and the sense of activity and conscience of the Chief Secretary operating upon a more or less willing or reluctant Treasury, sometimes the one and sometimes the other, because the Chancellor of the Exchequer has colleagues paying visits to the Treasury and stating cases of equal urgency, and it all depends on that.

Home Rule

I have not been so very unsuccessful in obtaining from the Chancellor of the Exchequer the moneys required. I obtained the £114,000 Grant for teachers—the Grant which bears my name. I had in addition been very much moved by seeing the condition of a very large number of schools in the country. I put great pressure on the Treasury, and after a long time I obtained the Grant for what is called the heating and lighting of schools. But that is not the way in which the education of the country, where education is of so much importance, and where the people are so deeply attached to it as they are in Ireland, should be managed. That is not a satisfactory mode of conducting the affairs of a nation. Nobody ought to be satisfied with it, and nobody is satisfied with it. Hon. Members from Ulster are, at the bottom of their hearts, as dissatisfied with the present mode as hon. Members from other parts of Ireland. It is a little better, perhaps, when the Conservatives are in office, though I do not know that they got quite so much out of them for education as they have got out of me. I agree that I have been a little longer in office than the right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand (Mr. Long). But they are all agreed upon the badness of the system, and if it were not for the fact of what is called the religious difficulty, or the political difficulty, everybody on the benches opposite knows very well that if Ireland were homogeneous, and if there were not two camps, two

The Right. Hon. Augustine Birrell

religions, and two nationalities, as they are sometimes called, Home Rule, on lines very like this, would have been passed probably long ago, and certainly it would be passed now without very much discussion.

I must say a word about the safeguards. Nothing is easier than to ridicule safeguards. The only way in which you can honestly say whether a safeguard is worth having or not is to assume that you want the Bill to go through, or feel that it must go through, and that therefore you must accept the measure either reluctantly or with enthusiasm. You have to consider what safeguards may fairly and properly be put in. If you think the Bill is a mischievous and ridiculous affair, if you think that I am here advocating Bedlam, I agree it is not much use talking. It is quite easy for any hon. Member opposite who has any elocutionary power to get up and read one of the safeguards with a particular intonation, and secure an expression of the righteous indignation of the people who are sitting behind him. Suppose for a moment that in considering this Bill on what I call its merits you were convinced that the Bill were going to become law in the ordinary way this Session, why, then, what safeguards would you, supposing you were an Imperial Minister representing all parts of England, Ireland, and Scotland, consider necessary? We are asked: "Why put in the supremacy of Parliament? Does not every lawyer know that

Home Rule

whether you put it in or not it does not make the Bill any better?" But does not the right hon. gentleman who suggests that question know it is a good thing, when effecting a treaty between two different bodies of people, or when you are setting up a Constitution, that you should place it on record in black and white, out of what lawyers call "abundant caution"? Why, legal documents would be a tenth of the length they are now if only the things were put in that are absolutely needed.

SIR E. CARSON: Does that apply to the Preamble of the Parliament Act?

You put in every kind of provision, not because you think it is likely to happen, but because you think it desirable to put it in. A man in making a will may put in clauses and provisions to provide for children who may go to the bad, but it does not follow that he expects them to do so. Hon. Members opposite refer to the safeguards as if they were absurd. Take what was said by the hon. and learned Member for the Universities of Edinburgh and St. Andrews (Sir R. Finlay). He said that all the safeguards are bad except those which were in the last Home Rule Bill, and which we have left out of this Bill. I must say that cut me to the very quick. It was my fate to go through the whole of the debates which took place on the two previous Home Rule Bills and to make a précis of the safeguards they contained. I have preserved in this Bill the safeguards against which least was said by

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

Members of the Opposition, and I excluded the safeguards which on these occasions were most riddled by the Opposition. Nobody took a more active part than the hon. and learned Member for these Universities in the discussion of the former Bills. The hon. Member for Chertsey (Mr. Macmaster) said that the safeguards we had left out were the only safeguards worth having, and that those we had put in are not worth the paper they are written on. All I can say is, that if hon. Members opposite move the insertion of the safeguards we have left out I shall make no objection. The only objection I shall make to them will be to read to hon. Members their own speeches. There is another argument I want to refer to, because it is a serious matter in relation to the safeguards. It has been said that they will be got rid of by circumvention, in the same way as it was alleged Cardinal Logue, and the Roman Catholic Church, had circumvented the undenominational clauses which were inserted in the Irish University Act. The hon. and learned Member for Trinity College (Mr. J. H. Campbell) said:—

“ That the genius of the Church of Rome had circumvented . . . ”

MR. J. H. CAMPBELL: Quite wrong. I said the genius of the Irish people. You got that from the hon. Member for North Tyrone (Mr. T. W. Russell).

I am quoting the hon. and learned Member's own words. At all events, the allegation was

Home Rule

based upon some observation of Cardinal Logue that the genius of the Irish race, in which the hon. and learned Member participates, had circumvented certain things. Now, that can only mean that by some method of chicane or fraud the Catholics have deliberately set themselves to get round and by some legal hocus-pocus to destroy the undenominational clauses which are in the Act. The hon. Member for Galway (Mr. Stephen Gwynn) got up and asked if the right hon. gentleman could give a single instance in which there had been any attempt, either successful or unsuccessful, to interfere with the undenominational clauses. Assuming the Official Report to be correct, the hon. and learned gentleman used these words :—

“ Three months ago the Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh was able to declare that the genius of the Roman Catholic race ”— that leaves the right honourable and learned gentleman no genius at all—“ had circumvented the machinations of the English Nonconformists, and to-day he was glad to see and to know that this University was practically exclusively Catholic.”

Cardinal Logue said no more than I myself said in effect over and over again during the passage of the Bill both through this House and in Committee upstairs, and no Nonconformist was under any delusion on the subject. I said we were establishing a University which, by its charter and by its forms and

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

laws, would be as undenominational as, and even more undenominational than, Trinity College, Dublin, is at present, and that it was being established for the express purpose of providing the Roman Catholics of Ireland with that higher education from which, in their opinion, they had hitherto been excluded; and I went on to say that probably none but Roman Catholics, or a very large number of Roman Catholics, will go there, and that the consequence is that the graduates will be overwhelmingly Catholic, with the further consequence that the governing body of the University will be Roman Catholic. I remember saying that if you came back fifty years hence you might find this undenominational University just as much, but no more, a Catholic institution than Trinity College, Dublin, is at this moment a Protestant institution; and I do not think it was quite fair for the right hon. gentleman to say what he did. The hon. and learned gentleman the Member for the Kingston Division (Mr. Cave) also seemed to think that Cardinal Logue had set himself by circumvention to make my Nonconformist friends who supported me in carrying that Bill look foolish. I assure you he did nothing of the sort. All he said was that it would be a Roman Catholic University in the same sense as a boys' school is a school of boys. If everybody in a University is of one way of thinking, can you prevent the atmosphere and feeling of that University corresponding to their religious faith?

Home Rule

But no alteration can be made by the genius of the Roman Catholic race in any one of the provisions of the Act. The University will remain undenominational, and open to everybody irrespective of religion or creed.

I bring that in because in all your references to safeguards what you assume really is, that the people who are going to exercise legislative power in Ireland, and have the control of the Executive really, will be a set of rogues and vagabonds. We say that if they purport to pass a law which is *ultra vires*, it is no law, and this Bill says that it will be void *ab initio*. If anybody passes such a law, nobody can put it in force. Any officer who seeks to put it in force will have no protection. He will be liable to an action, and will be called to account. What is your answer? "Who is going to appoint the judges? What sort of judges will they be? Perhaps they will not even be barristers of seven years' standing. They will be ignorant, illiterate, dishonest men, who will pay no attention to our Constitution, and no attention to points of law, who will not listen to the arguments of counsel—perhaps people will not be able to have any counsel. The United Irish League will exercise an intimidatory effect, and no counsel will be able to take a brief on the unpopular side." All these things are based on the deep-rooted distrust and disbelief of the right hon. gentleman in the capacity of the Irish representatives. The right hon. gentleman, in speaking as an Irish-

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

man to his brother Irishmen, is quite complimentary. He reserves all his little acidulities for me. He described the hon. and learned Member for Waterford as the most tolerant man he thought he ever knew, and he paid the hon. and learned Member for North-East Cork (Mr. T. M. Healy) a well-deserved compliment which I certainly am quite ready to second. But then it is said that these gentlemen may die or may disappear, and who will take their place? Quite a different race of men. Ignorant, dishonest ruffians will take their places, and will bring the whole machinery down about our ears. Well, if that is so, then, of course, it is a very serious state of affairs, and the only thing we can do will be what poor Frankenstein was not able to do—slay the monster we ourselves have created. But I do not believe that anything of the sort can possibly happen.

I have exceeded my time, but we have had criticisms about the reserved services, old age pensions, and the Land Purchase Acts. We are told sometimes that it is a slur on the Irish people to reserve these services. Does any hon. gentleman opposite suggest for a single moment that we should not have reserved the provisions of the Land Purchase Acts, including the Act of 1903 and the Act of 1909? Were we not bound to reserve them? We were bound to do so as guardians of the public purse and of British credit. Then why seek to gain support from the Irish below the Gangway, which you will not

Home Rule

do, by trying to stir up their indignation because this matter has been reserved which was bound to be reserved? I am very sorry that these great, expensive services exist. If they did not the fiscal situation would be enormously easier. But they do exist. These great obligations, which put too great a tax upon the financial capacity of the Irish race at the present moment, have necessitated the reservation of those services. All roads lead to Rome—not the Holy See, but the city. Therefore I do not know whether the right hon. and learned Member is going to repeat—we have not had it yet—as one of the catchwords against Home Rule that it means Rome Rule. I thought that that had been completely and absolutely given up, or else I would not have made the innocent observation which I have made. The laughter which it excited makes me feel a little uneasy. Perhaps, after all, your fear is that under this new Constitution the religion of the great majority of the people may have a better chance and a fairer chance than it has had before. I do not know how that would be, but almost all the speeches on the opposite side have ended up by eloquent references to Ulster.

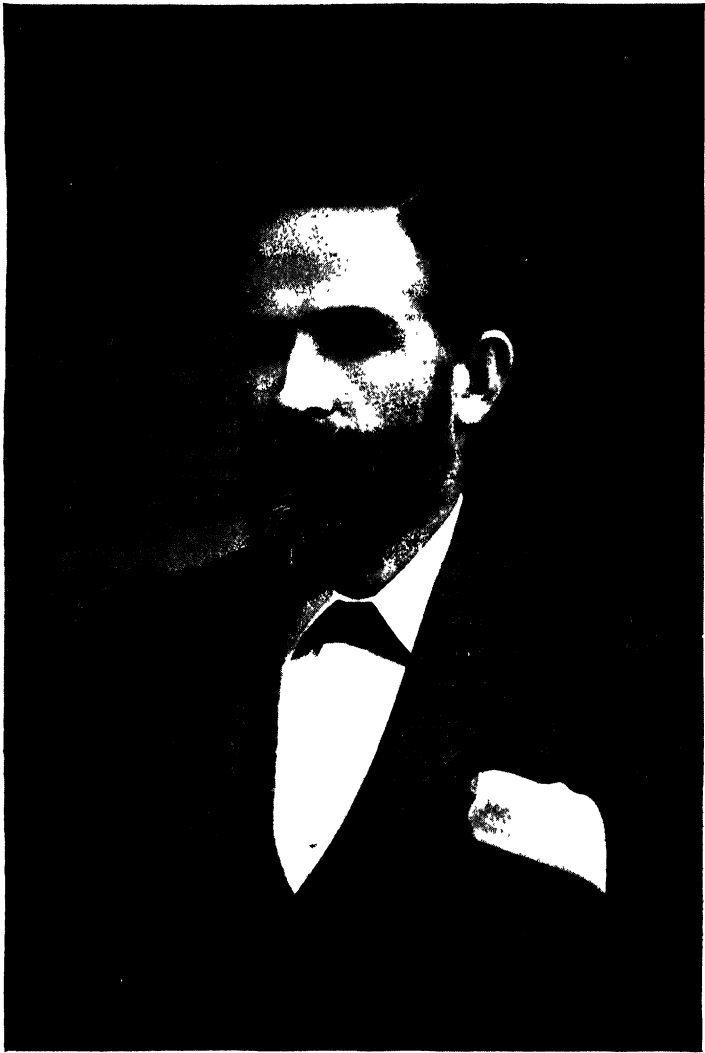
Now, about Ulster, I have never doubted for a single moment that the feeling in Ulster is very strong. I have often been asked about it by my friends behind me, who do not know Ireland even as well as I do. They have reminded me of the language employed by the men of Ulster about

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell

the disestablishment of the Church, and they have said: "Is not it true that men who were of as much light and leading, of as high character, and of as great culture as any of the present leaders of the Protestant party in Ulster, used language about the pending disestablishment of the Church almost as violent—indeed, just as violent—as anything that has ever been employed with reference to the possible passing of this Bill?" And they have said to me, "Were they talking insincerely?" I answered, "No." I am perfectly sure that Lord Rathmore, or my lamented friend the late Recorder of Dublin, in the speeches which they made, were only saying what they absolutely believed. But the fact is that they were very angry, and they worked themselves up to the belief that that very slender, mysterious thing called the connection between Church and State really was a barrier and a dyke between them and the Church of Rome, and that they would be submerged by the Church of Rome if this mysterious and slender tie were sundered. They really thought that this disestablishment of this Church would be the removal of this great dyke. They discovered when the time came that it was nothing of the sort. They were honest when they said that they were going to do such dreadful things, but there was no occasion for their misgivings. That is what I suggest now to the people of Ulster. Just as their predecessors of a generation or two ago thought

Home Rule

that the connection between Church and State was a barrier and protection for their religious liberties, so perhaps, though they may say now that this present government of Ireland by this Parliament is the sole protection for their civil liberties, yet if this Bill passes they will find that they are mistaken now, even as they were mistaken before. At all events, I can never bring myself to believe, and I never will, because I know it to be untrue, that it is impossible for Roman Catholics and Protestants to work together for the common good of their common country.



J. W. Runge

-

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RIGHT
HON. T. W. RUSSELL, M.P., ON THE
SECOND READING, *May 9, 1912*

WHOEVER can bring to the consideration of this question what has been called the "modern eye," whoever can boast that he is uninfluenced by contact with past conflicts, I certainly am not that man. I have been in the thick of this fight for twenty-seven years. I opposed the Bill of 1886, I resisted the Bill of 1893, and I am supporting this Bill, and I desire to say to the House at the outset what I propose to do. I propose to lay before the House some facts regarding Ulster which have not yet been stated. I next propose to demonstrate the extraordinary change that has taken place in the condition of Ireland since 1886, and I will add some observations on the question of Land Purchase and Land Tenure as it is provided for in the Bill. In my belief the question of Ulster is the dominant issue in this controversy. You may settle finance, in my opinion, easily enough. It is not a very difficult operation for a rich country to deal with a poor one in that respect. You may settle the question of Irish representation in this House. You may settle every clause

Home Rule

in the Bill, but when it is all done the question of Ulster will stand out as the dominant factor. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. J. H. Campbell) gave a very harrowing account the other day of some portions of the South of Ireland. In the old days, when this question was a living issue in Irish politics, a good deal was said about the South and West. We heard a good deal then about the scattered and isolated Protestants who lived in those regions, the danger to which they would be exposed when a Home Rule Bill was passed, and the wickedness it would be on the part of the Ulster Protestants if we deserted them. But now we hear absolutely nothing. Until the right hon. gentleman rose the other night, not a word had been said in this debate regarding these isolated Protestants. The reason is not far to seek. These gentlemen in the South and West of Ireland are largely engaged in the business of the country; they have no quarrel with their Catholic friends; they know nothing about the bickerings concerning religion in other parts of Ireland, and they want to know nothing. The real truth is that they object to be thrown upon the screen in this way, they have practically passed out of sight, and every one who knows Ireland knows that so far as Dublin and the South are concerned, the issue is settled. These men may not be enthusiastic about Home Rule, but they are almost without exception prepared to acquiesce in any fair and reasonable system.

The Right Hon. T. W. Russell

The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Chaplin) confined his observations practically to two counties in Ireland. But it was not fair to charge even these counties with being in the state that he described them as being. If you take County Clare, which he dwelt upon—I am not palliating the crimes, I think they are perfectly horrible, and anything almost ought to be done to put an end to them—but, after all, it is only a portion of East Clare, a portion round about Ennis in particular, that is in this state of unrest. West Clare is as quiet as any English county. If you take Galway, the same thing is true; it is only a portion of South Galway, and a very small portion, where these outrages take place. The Department over which I preside has a large farm in that portion, and we have been exposed to very great trouble in the past. But the Board of Agriculture has decided within the last two months that the improvement is so great that they are going on with the buildings, which they have suspended for the last five years. I want the House to understand that thirty out of the thirty-two counties in Ireland are as peaceable, as free from crime and as law abiding at the present moment as any county in Great Britain. Let me take Ulster. It is not the geographical Ulster that we have to deal with. The counties of Donegal, Cavan, Monaghan, Tyrone, and Fermanagh are as Nationalist as any county in the South of Ireland. Out of the fourteen representatives in this House from these five

Home Rule

counties two are Unionists, and these two secured their seats by the smallest majorities. Therefore it is not the geographical Ulster that we have to deal with at all. If I might coin a phrase, it is the Ulster of the pale. What are the facts in regard to these four counties? The leader of the Opposition said in his speech on the First Reading of the Bill that the Government ought to remember that in these four counties they have to deal with a million resolute and determined people. That is quite true, but they are not all Unionists. Out of the 1,020,000, which is the exact census figure of the population, you have to get rid of 315,000 Roman Catholics. That is not all. I now propose to state the position as regards Ulster in a way which will no doubt be disputed, but I hope to prove it by facts. I ought to know Ulster, if I know anything. I sat for an Ulster constituency for twenty-four years, and I sit for one still. I have lived in Ulster myself. It is almost impossible for any one to find out what is behind an Ulster farmer's mind. It is not very easy, but I have tried to do it. You have something like 700,000 people in these four counties on the one side. If you come to analyse these counties and split them up into electoral divisions, what do you find? I will take the electoral constituency of North Antrim. That is a central point in this controversy. There are 10,000 Roman Catholics and 32,000 Protestants there. At the election in December, 1910, a Protestant Home

The Right Hon. T. W. Russell

Rule candidate in North Antrim polled close upon 3,000 votes.

MR. MOORE: He was a Unionist.

No, sir, he was a Protestant Home Ruler before he went there, he is a Protestant Home Ruler now, and in his speeches, which I have in my possession, he did not conceal it. Mr. Macafee polled 2,974 votes.

MR. MOORE: The candidate was Sir William Baxter.

The hon. gentleman is entirely wrong. Sir William Baxter stood at the previous election, and the hon. Member ought to know that gentleman. He should also know that there was an election since Sir William Baxter stood. This is a misunderstanding on the part of the hon. gentleman. Whether it was in December or January does not matter; it was the second election. It was not Sir William Baxter who stood then, it was Mr. Macafee. You have a Roman Catholic population of 10,000, and I ask where did Mr. Macafee get his 2,974 votes? Certainly they were partly from the 10,000 Catholics. But he polled 2,000 Protestant votes at that election. That can be demonstrated, and yet we are told that there are no Protestant Home Rulers in these four counties! If you take every one of the ten elections fought during the last thirty years in these counties—and I have been mixed up in them all—you will find minorities of 2,000, 2,500, and even 3,000, which it would be impossible for the Catholics to give. I would

Home Rule

appeal to the House in considering this question to remember that this minority should not be obliterated, and that some attention should be given to it. The hon. and learned Member for the Universities of Edinburgh and St. Andrews (Sir R. Finlay) referred to the Churches in Ulster. He told us that the Presbyterian Church had had a great Convention in Belfast. It is quite true—it was a very great one. But the hon. and learned gentleman did not tell us that while there were only eleven votes for Home Rule in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1886, there were 110 Presbyterian Ministers who flatly declined to attend this convention.

I am not saying that these men were all violent Home Rulers. I know my facts, and I know that some of them declined to attend because they would not have the Church mixed up with the aims of the gentlemen who were convening the meeting. I know that of my own knowledge. But they are not very enthusiastic against us or they would have been there. That is a very different state of affairs from what prevailed in 1886. If you take the Methodist Church in Ireland, another great denomination, you find that they had a Convention which was a good deal more remarkable in respect of those who were absent than those who were present. I do not claim a majority of Home Rulers in those four counties. I could not do so, and I am not going to be so

The Right Hon. T. W. Russell

mad as to attempt to lead the House to believe that there is a majority of Home Rulers in them. But I say there is a large, growing, and intelligent minority in favour of Home Rule who must be counted in these matters. Of course we get an answer to all this, and what is it? The answer is simply this: "We will not have Home Rule." These Ulster gentlemen do not argue, they simply say: "If you pass your Home Rule Bill we shall establish a provisional Government of our own."

MR. MOORE: Hear, hear.

"We shall appoint our own magistrates."

MR. MOORE: Hear, hear.

"We shall set up our own courts."

MR. MOORE: Hear, hear.

"And we shall hold these four counties against the Crown." We have had new style oratory. We now have new style loyalty. I heard the Prime Minister say the other day, "We are getting on." I think the new style is progressing. This would bring the people of Ulster to anarchy and confusion. I say perfectly frankly that the people will be capable in Belfast, Portadown, Lurgan, and other centres of getting up riots—sanguinary riots, I have no doubt about this. But then, ever since I knew these places, more than fifty years ago, there have always been riots, and the hon. gentleman opposite knows that is quite true. (*An hon. Member*: "Not riots.") You had riots in Belfast quite recently. They tell us that, after they set up their provisional Government, they will not

Home Rule

pay taxes to the Irish Government. I have always asked my Ulster friends how they are going to carry that out? (*An hon. Member*: "Wait and see.") Do hon. gentlemen opposite know that 73 per cent. of the taxation of Ireland is indirect? Let me ask: Are the people in those four counties going to stop drinking whisky? If so, I think that will be one of the best things for the people of Ulster that has ever happened. Do the people mean to stop using tea, coffee, tobacco, or any of those excisable commodities which they use? There is not the slightest chance of anything of the kind taking place. If you come to taxation, which is direct, what then? Do you think that a solicitor in County Down or County Antrim is going to set aside the Stamp Duty and do no business until these gentlemen in the provisional Government have obtained command over the province? Do you think that an Ulster merchant is going to abstain from collecting debts in the county courts because the legal documents will have to be stamped? It is mid-summer madness. I say that the people may be worked into a state of riot in certain circumstances, and the responsibility of those engaged in the work will be tremendous. Supposing this Bill to be defeated, supposing the Orange veto prevails, what will be the position of the twenty-eight counties who will then have been defeated? I know what the right hon. gentleman opposite will say—he is going to finish land

The Right Hon. T. W. Russell

purchase. It is very easy saying that from the Opposition bench, but when the right hon. gentleman goes into the city to get the money to do that, he will find it a matter of very great difficulty. He also tells us that he will let in Canadian cattle. (*Hon. Members:* "No.") Well, he said that he will keep them out. Will the Irish farmer thank him for that? They are kept out now for good or bad reasons. I heard two noble lords opposite propound remedies for the present state of affairs—the noble lord the Member for Kensington (Lord Claud Hamilton), and the noble lord the Member for Portsmouth (Lord C. Beresford). In addition to the two things I have mentioned, they would abolish the Lord Lieutenant. And there is the Unionist programme when this debate is almost closed. These are not serious proposals for such an emergency as this.

MR. MOORE: They were in your programme twenty years ago.

We all grow and alter in twenty years, or there is something wrong with us. I listened with interest the other day to the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Kingston (Mr. Cave). I think he is one of the fairest debaters in this House. He talked about maintaining the Union, of enforcing the law, of finishing land purchase, and of redressing grievances, but these things have all been tried long ago. Why, that was my old programme twenty years ago, as the noble lord has said. How often in this

Home Rule

House and on countless platforms in Great Britain have I told the people that if you maintained the law and maintained the Union and crushed landlordism and redressed grievances, you would end the Irish question. I went round the constituencies of this country declaring that for years. What is the consequence? We are just pretty much to-day as we were then.

What you are up against now, and in the face of, is that after all these things have been tried you see that Irish Nationalism is as strong and as energetic as ever. When you have done that—this is the question I am going to ask the right hon. gentleman—when you have allowed the veto of these four counties to prevail, then what about the other counties? Does anybody imagine that in face of proceedings like that, in face of this great Parliament and this great nation conceding the right of four counties to govern the whole of Ireland, these twenty-eight counties will take that quietly?

What would be the case which the majority would then have to present, not only to this country but to the world? At all events, the British Empire is looking on at this matter. Can the House imagine what these gentlemen below the Gangway can point to on this question when they are defeated? They can say, and say with perfect truth, that England despoiled them of their own Parliament 112 years ago. With the exception of eight men, Mr. Lecky makes it quite clear that every man in the Parliament was bribed.

The Right Hon. T. W. Russell

You robbed them of their Parliament. For thirty-five or forty years you deliberately neglected the country. It might as well have never existed during that time. Famine and pestilence destroyed the people, and there were more people who left Ireland as a result of that than there are living in it to-day. How are you going to face that? Suppose these gentlemen turn round and say what you are saying now. Suppose they say that they will not have this rejection of Home Rule. Suppose they say, "We will not stand that, we will set up a provisional Government, we will take the law into our own hands, we will not pay taxes, we will repudiate our land annuities, we will bring the whole thing into confusion," what answer is there? What answer would you have on the other side? You would have no answer. Then you would have to come to terms with them, and that is what you would do.

Hon. Members opposite say they are robbed of their inheritance. What inheritance? They say that their allegiance would be transferred. Nobody seeks to transfer their allegiance from the Sovereign. The Act of Union is not repealed by this Bill, and their allegiance is not transferred. There is no argument left to them. They simply say this: "We will not have Home Rule, and we shall resist it at all costs and at all hazards."

I may say a few words as to the change, perhaps, that has taken place in the conditions of Ireland, which will at all events be some

Home Rule

ground for a change in opinion by many people in Ireland on this question.

It has been said, and said rightly, that the prosperity of Ireland has increased greatly of late years. That has been said on my own authority, I know. There is just a chance of it being overstated, however. You must not imagine, because there is great prosperity in Ireland compared with what used to be the case, that there is not misery still in many parts of Ireland. The Bill of 1886 was introduced when Ireland was in a state of depression long before the Land Purchase Acts and before the Congested Districts Board was formed. Ireland is not the same country now that it was then. Then, when you proposed to pass the first Home Rule Bill, the law was grappling with a nation of agrarian insurgents. To-day it is face to face with a nation of agrarian freeholders, the most Conservative force you can have in any country. Look at local self-government and the change which it has brought about in Ireland. I remember when Lord Salisbury declared that thirty-two County Councils throughout Ireland would be worse than a Parliament in College Green. Yet it was Lord Salisbury's own Government which passed the Local Government Act and established the County Councils. Nothing very dreadful has happened. They worked extremely well, and people who are afraid of the taxes being increased under Home Rule ought to take courage, because the rates in Ireland on

The Right Hon. T. W. Russell

the whole have been reduced under the County Councils. Then we have got land purchase, and a new University, and I say that the country is now equipped for its duties, under a Bill like this, as it was not equipped in 1886 or 1893.

About the question of resistance, I confess that the speech of the noble lord the Member for South Kensington (Lord Claud Hamilton) the other night did not impress me. He says that we must not imagine that things will be left to the Irish loyalists in these four counties. He and his three brothers are prepared to go over—they all came over and polled against me—and he said that he had only to go to Liverpool and he could command volunteers in almost any number. I do not believe any of these threats. I think lightly of them, because I am one of the few men in this House who remember the Irish Church Disestablishment. The first vote I gave as a citizen was for the Disestablishment of that Church in 1868. I do not believe in it. All this was said then, every word of it. I have two extracts here from speeches that were made then. I remember attending a great meeting in Dublin, at which Mr. David Plunket, as he then was, now Lord Rathmore, spoke. On the 21st March, 1869, he appealed to England not to drive the Irish Tories to material and physical resistance, and he called the gods to witness that he and his friends were ready to seal their beliefs with their blood in martyrdom and battle. He crossed over to England and became

Home Rule

a much respected Member of this House. He got the position of First Commissioner of Works in a Conservative Government, and in due time retired, to everybody's regret, to the House of Lords. Then Mr. Falkiner, who afterwards became Sir Frederick Falkiner, a Privy Councillor and Recorder of Dublin, declared on 15th April, 1869, that they must tell Mr. Gladstone that if they could not valiantly succeed, they could nobly die. Sir Fredk. Falkiner passed away a few years ago, full of years and honour, and with the admiration and affection of multitudes of people, especially of poor people, in the metropolis of Ireland; and instead of nobly dying, they set themselves with great earnestness and great vigour to draw up a Constitution for the Protestant Episcopal Church in Ireland, which has made it one of the freest Churches in the world to-day.

I will touch now on the question of land. I am sorry that the right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand Division (Mr. Walter Long) is not here. In moving the rejection of the Bill he made a speech which amounted to this. I am paraphrasing his language, but I am sure that I am not misrepresenting it. He said there are two bodies dealing with land in Ireland at the present time. One deals with rent, and the other deals with purchase. You are retaining the rent system under the charge of the Irish Government. You are keeping land purchase as a reserved service under the Imperial

The Right Hon. T. W. Russell

authority, and, of course, the reason is quite obvious. You cannot afford, in such a great transaction as that, to have your security imperilled, and you do right in retaining control of the land purchase, but he said: "What is the use of retaining the control of land purchase when your rent-fixers will be going through the country reducing rents and destroying land purchase? Because if rents are reduced sufficiently the farmers will not care to purchase, and you will be destroying the landlords of Ireland as well." That, in my opinion, is a fair paraphrase of what the hon. gentleman said. Of course, it all rests on the assumption that the Irish Government and the Irish Parliament are incurably bad. You are asked to believe, although the Land Commission is now fully manned and the first and second term rents are all fixed, that the Irish Government, with its great responsibility and with the eyes of the country and of this country upon it, are going to appoint a parcel of rogues and vagabonds to go through the country reducing rents in order to destroy land purchase.

MR. MOORE: You say they will not?

I do. That question shows the utter hopelessness of dealing with gentlemen of that kind. If the right hon. gentleman had been here instead of the hon. and learned gentleman I should have asked him this: There was an occasion once on which Members of the Irish party were approached upon the subject by the Government

Home Rule

in 1902. The Conservative Government called together what may be called for all practical purposes a consultative committee, consisting of four representatives of the tenants and four representatives of the landlords in Ireland. To do what? Mark you, it was their own Government who called these eight gentlemen together in conference upon the whole land question—to go into it, and to report with a view to a settlement. The report was made, and to whom was it sent? To Lord Dudley, the then Lord Lieutenant, and to the right hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Wyndham), who was then Chief Secretary. The representatives of the tenants were three Nationalists and myself, and of the landlords Lord Dunraven and three other landowners. They were representatives of the very classes who will be in the Government of the new Parliament of Ireland. One of them was the hon. and learned Member for Waterford, and surely he will be a member of the new Government in Ireland. Eight gentlemen sat together to deal with the most difficult and most tragic question in Ireland. We sat in the Dublin Mansion House, believing that we would not be able to agree for five hours, and as a matter of fact we very nearly disagreed the first hour, but we sat for six or seven days and we drew up a report. Has any man ever attempted to say that was not a fair report? I know I was challenged by my hon. friend the Member for East Mayo, but will any gentleman on that side rise and say,

The Right Hon. T. W. Russell

or has any Irish landlord ever said, that it was an unfair report? The landlords' convention at first refused to have anything to do with the report, but eventually they adopted it. (*An hon. Member*: "What has that got to do with it?") There are more things in this than are dreamed of by hon. gentlemen.

MR. JOHN GORDON (South Londonderry) : We know.

I was dealing with the question raised by the right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand Division (Mr. Walter Long), that if rent-fixing were allowed to go on it would ruin land purchase and imperil the credit of this country. (*An hon. Member*: "That has nothing to do with it.") It has everything to do with it. (*An hon. Member*: "Nothing whatever.") Both those are English Members, and if the security were affected they would see that it had something to do with it. As I said, the report was adopted by the landlords who had at first refused it, and what has happened? The landlords have not been robbed under it; they have done extremely well, and their only trouble is that they have not been able to get along farther with it. What is the use of saying that a Parliament composed of Members responsible to Ireland would do these absurd things? I have shown what a section of Irishmen did when they were brought together by the action of the then Government to deal with this question. The landlords must consent to have third term rents fixed when the Irish Parlia-

Home Rule

ment meets. The process has begun already, and I do not think anything very serious to the landlords has happened under it. It is not a question of what the Irish Parliament will do, because the process has already begun and is going forward. It is inconceivable that the first thing the Irish Parliament would do would be to appoint as Commissioners men who would fix rents for the express purpose of ruining Irish land purchase. I wish hon. Members would think what the Irish Parliament would have to do. Do not imagine that they are going to do every foolish thing that is suggested; do not think that they are a parcel of madmen to be elected as the House of Commons and the Senate in Ireland. They will be saddled with serious responsibilities. And what have they to do?

They have to do that which has been left undone here by force of circumstances. They have got to link up and co-ordinate our education system; they have to deal with Poor Law reform; they have to deal with licensing reform, and for the first time in the history of Ireland they will be able to deal with that question without the weight of the English brewers being thrown in against us. (*Hon. Members:* "Oh, oh!") Yes. When hon. Members go to Ulster and stand before Presbyterian audiences they will say the very same thing that I am saying now. Will the hon. and learned gentleman the Member for South Londonderry go to his Presbyterian constituency and find fault with what I am saying now? The

The Right Hon. T. W. Russell

new Parliament will have to deal with the difficult question of land tenure, with the question of railway rates, with the fishery laws, and the hundred other things that lie waiting for us, which are thundering at our gates, and which we cannot get done here. That is the case I make for the Bill. I say, first of all, that there is a large section of Home Rule opinion in Ulster among Protestants, and it is largely a quiescent feeling, apart from religious and other controversies. I believe these things can be done, and I believe that within two years after the Irish Parliament have mastered the complicated system of administration we are setting up they will get over all the difficulties, because they will not be animated with the idea of oppressing other classes. Hon. Members who are so valiant here might say who they are going to fight; are they going to fight before they are oppressed? I beg the House not to be deluded by these threats. Having sat for an Ulster constituency during twenty-five years, I say that these threats are simply the last stand, and that the reason they are so violent now is because the power on which in the old days they relied at the other end of the corridor has been made ineffective. They now know that that barrier has been thrown down, and their only hope is to delude the people of this country that the dreadful things which they have prophesied will come to pass, but which they well know in their hearts will never be translated into acts.

-

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RIGHT
HON. H. H. ASQUITH, M.P., ON
THE SECOND READING, *May 9, 1912*

THE right hon. gentleman (Mr. Bonar Law) was mistaken in supposing that I had any desire that he should curtail the length of his observations. Indeed, I should have been glad if he had gone on a little longer in the same vein in which he finished. The time which still remains is enough and more than enough for me to, I hope, summarise adequately, though not, of course, exhaustively, the main arguments which have emerged on one side and the other in the course now of a nine days' debate. Let me, in the first place, point out that no serious attempt has been made in the whole of this discussion to meet the argument with which I opened it—an argument founded upon the nature, character, and persistence of the Irish demand—a demand in this sense unexampled in history. That it has been preferred by the representatives under a democratic system of government of four-fifths of the Irish people, that it has been preferred election after election without variation during the lifetime almost of a whole generation—(*An*

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

hon. Member: "Of whom?")—I am speaking of the people of Ireland—during the lifetime of a whole generation, and, what is not unimportant, not in the least degree slackened or abated by the transformation which has gone on during the latter part of that time—the transformation of the Irish tenant farmer into the proprietor and freeholder of his land—I venture to say to the House that, if such a demand had been made under similar conditions by any community of our race throughout the length of the British Empire, there is not a man on either side of this House who would not have said that *primâ facie*, at any rate, it is entitled to consideration. Safeguards, of course, I agree ought to be provided if they are needed for the protection of minorities; guarantees, if guarantees are necessary, ought to be stipulated for the maintenance of Imperial supremacy, but subject to these conditions a demand so authenticated and so persisted in is one which a democratic Parliament in these days is bound to assent to.

Let me note another feature of this debate. Nor is the demand any longer met, as it used to be in the earlier days of Home Rule, by the suggestion that the Irish people, either through congenital defects or through the accidents of their history, are unfit or incapacitated for civil and political government. That was a proposition which it was always difficult to maintain in face of the services which Irishmen everywhere have rendered to the Empire. In the course of

Home Rule

this debate we have had compliments lavished upon the Irish Members from that side of the House, from that bench in particular, with a profusion and an exuberance which must have been as delightful as it must also have been surprising to them. Indeed, one of the main allegations made by gentlemen opposite is that the system which they are so anxious to maintain, that system under which we live, is a system which continually gives a decisive and even a predominant voice to the representatives of Ireland, both over our domestic and our Imperial concerns.

Let me here, only by way of parenthesis, interrupt my argument for a moment to refer to a statement of my own which has been more than once quoted in the course of these debates, and was quoted, I think, by the Leader of the Opposition in his first speech. It is a statement made, I think, about ten years ago, when I said that in my opinion it would not be desirable for the Liberal party to undertake the handling of this problem of Irish Home Rule in dependence on the Irish vote. That is a statement that has been a great deal cheered in the course of these proceedings. It was made, as anybody who studies the context will see, in reference to the condition of things which existed in the year 1893, when there was a majority in Great Britain against Home Rule. What is the state of things to-day? Omitting the Irish representation altogether from the Division we are going to take, you will find a

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

majority—I venture to predict a solid, substantial majority—of British representatives in favour of the Second Reading of this Bill. That is an unpalatable consideration for hon. gentlemen opposite. In order to meet it they have devised that new method of calculation, of which the right hon. gentleman the Member for the Strand gave us some illustrations the other night. It is a very simple, a very easy one. It consists in subtracting the Irish vote from the Division List when Irish Members vote with the Government, but in keeping the Irish vote in the Division List when they vote with the Opposition. That is the latest device of Unionist arithmetic. I can only say that I cannot express my admiration for it in more sincere and unaffected terms than when I say it is worthy of the palmiest days of Tariff Reform. I now come back to the main argument.

The demand to which I have referred, of four-fifths of the representatives of Ireland, which is not, and cannot be, denied, was met in this way—it was so met just now by the right hon. gentleman in the concluding passage of his speech—that we are told that this realisation is to be vetoed by the irreconcilable and implacable hostility of the Ulster minority. I have already pointed out that Great Britain is in favour of it. (*Hon Members*: “Oh, oh!”) I have never spoken, and I never will speak, with any disrespect or contempt for the conscientious and deeply entertained opinion of the minority of

Home Rule

Ulster. I confess I think that they have not been happy in the presentation of their case. The right hon. and learned junior Member for Dublin University (Mr. J. H. Campbell), in a very able speech the other night—one to which I listened with very great interest—said that he had been about this country a great deal, and that wherever he had come up—“come up,” I think, were his words—against the manhood of the country, he had found that they responded to this appeal on behalf of the Ulster minority. The right hon. and learned gentleman will allow me to say, without offence, that I have lived in this country a longer time than he has—I say that entirely without offence—and perhaps know the British people a little better, and I will tell him that—which I believe to be true—the British people are a just people and also a generous people, and they detest intolerance, persecution, and oppression in any form. But the British people are not people to be frightened out of doing that which they believe to be just by the language of intimidation. I have said that I recognise the genuineness and reality of the sentiment of Ulster. We have sought to allay whatever legitimate fears and apprehensions they may entertain by the safeguards we have introduced into the Bill. We have asked them repeatedly, over and over again, in these debates to say what further safeguards they desire. (*Hon. Members:* “Oh!”) That, of course, is the spirit in which it has been received. We

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

are told that we are to expect nothing from Ulster but absolute unyielding and uncompromising resistance—in other words, that is the position which was taken up by the Leader of the Opposition just now. There is to be no Home Rule for Ireland so long as Ulster, or a portion of Ulster, is opposed to it. I wonder if hon. gentlemen who have been cheering that statement have ever reflected what it really means, and what are the consequences of its meaning. What is called the *liberum veto* of the Polish Constitution was nothing, absolutely nothing, to it. I will put again the question which was put with great force by my right hon. and learned friend the Attorney-General two or three nights ago. As he pointed out, there are two positions taken up with regard to this matter of Ulster by the critics and opponents of this Bill, which are very difficult to reconcile one with the other. The first is this, and it is a very favourite argument with English critics of Home Rule—that the issue of Home Rule was not submitted to the electors at the last election. The right hon. gentleman has just repeated it. I am not going to go into it in any detail. Sufficient for me that there is not a single man, I believe, sitting now on that Front Bench opposite who at the General Election of December, 1910, did not declare Home Rule was an issue. I am not going to go through the quotations—one is quite enough for me. I quote what was said by the right hon. gentleman the Leader of the Opposition at Penge on Novem-

Home Rule

ber 17, 1910. It is very short and very much to the point:—

“If the precious Veto Bill were law now, Home Rule would be passed to-morrow.”

Perhaps I may refresh the recollection of the House of Commons upon that point. We had another very significant, and it was a very ingenuous testimony to the same effect in the course of this debate from one of the Ulster Members—I think it was from the hon. Member for South Antrim. He told us his majority, the majority in one of those well-entrenched Protestant counties in Ulster, had been multiplied—I do not know how many-fold, two, three, or four times—“Because I had made it clear that Home Rule would be the first thing introduced.” But let me pursue the argument. The argument is this: that a measure of this kind, or at any rate the principles involved in it, ought to be submitted to the electors before it is passed into law, or sought to be passed into law. (*Hon. Members*: “Hear, hear!”) Now, be careful. Those cheers are a little premature. What is the inference from that argument? The inference from the argument is this, that if and when it is submitted to the electors and approved of by them it ought to be passed into law, or at any rate that it is within the constitutional competence of the House of Commons so to pass it—in other words, when the Bill so submitted to the electors and so approved by them becomes an

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

Act of Parliament, it is the duty of all loyal subjects to submit to it. Let us take the other position—the position, I will not say, of the representatives, but of the spokesmen of the Ulster minority. Are they going to submit to Home Rule when it has been approved by the electorate of Great Britain—are they? (*Hon. Members*: “Wait and see.”) Do not tell me “wait and see.” That shows an extraordinary lowering of temperature. What has become of the flag that was raised at Belfast in the month of April (*Hon. Members*: “Wait and see”) in the presence of the Leader of the Opposition? Let me refresh the memories of hon. gentlemen who are now prepared to wait and see. What was the attitude of Ulster at that time? I read from the *Times* report: “The right hon. gentleman elicited great enthusiasm.” How did he elicit great enthusiasm? He elicited great enthusiasm by declaring that even if both parties in Great Britain were committed to Home Rule Ulster would still resist. Then see what followed. The right hon. gentleman was not content with a mere rhetorical expression like that. There was an initiatory rite gone through, to which the vast gathering who had shown this great enthusiasm proceeded to submit themselves:—

“The vast gathering——”

—this is from the *Times* report, and the Leader of the Opposition was present—

“repeated after him——”

Home Rule

What?

“the formula of their faith.”

What is it?

“We will never in any circumstances submit to Home Rule.”

(Opposition cheers.) Yes, but that is not “waiting and seeing.” What we want to know, and what we have never been told yet, although we have had a very large number of very long speeches from right hon. and hon. gentlemen opposite. (*An hon. Member*: “Your own side as well.”) I am not complaining. On both sides there have been long speeches, much too long, and I wish to set an example of brevity if I can. There have been a number of at any rate very elaborate speeches from right hon. and hon. gentlemen opposite, and what we want to know from them is this—it is a question which has never yet been answered, although put more than once: Do they or do they not agree that if Home Rule is or becomes within the constitutional competence of this Parliament, with the approval of the electorate of the United Kingdom, Ulster is entitled to resist?

Let me pass from that. (Opposition cheers.) I am not surprised that hon. gentlemen opposite are glad that I should pass from that. Let me pass on, as time is limited, to say a few words on another point dealt with by the Leader of the Opposition—namely, what are called the safeguards in the Bill. There has been a great deal of debate, necessarily and naturally, upon the

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

expediency or inexpediency, the need or want of need, of what are called safeguards. The safeguards have been defended by those who think them unnecessary, and they have been attacked by people who think that however much you might add on paper to their number and their strength they would still be of no value. There appears to be, in some quarters at any rate, a little confusion of thought. In a measure of this kind you must distinguish between matters which are and matters which are not put within the competence of the new Irish Legislature. In regard to those matters put within its power, I am in entire agreement with those who say that if you have sufficient confidence in the Irish people and their representatives to trust them with self-government, it is both useless and irritating to draw up a catalogue of prohibitions, of the sorts and categories of legislation which they are not to attempt, and which for the most part is legislation which only an assembly of rogues or rebels would endeavour to touch. In that respect, I think, the present Bill is a great improvement upon the Bill of 1893. Subject to the special protection for religious equality in the third clause, we are content, so far as these matters which are within the competence of the Irish Parliament are concerned, with a clear affirmation of the supremacy and overriding power of the Imperial Parliament, and with the veto which will reside in the last resort with the Imperial Executive.

Home Rule

There is another set of questions which are outside, and ought to be outside, the competence of any subordinate Legislature. The limitations that we have put upon them there are not in the strict sense of the word safeguards. They are limitations which, whether you proceed by enumeration or exclusion, are always necessary when you delegate or distribute legislative powers. The right hon. gentleman the Member for the City of London told us that the position of the Irish Member in the new Irish House of Commons would be too humiliating a one for any man of patriotism or ordinary ambition to accept. He said he would be so manacled and fettered that he would not know how to move. He contrasted his position as the Member of the Irish House of Commons with the happy fortune which he has now, when he wanders at large and browses at will over the whole field of our Imperial and domestic concerns. But that is not very much to the point. There is no case that has ever yet occurred—take, for instance, the case which the right hon. gentleman alluded to a few moments ago—in which you have sought to distribute legislative powers between the central authority and the subordinate local authorities in which in the same way you have not had to go through precisely this process of confining the action of the local authority to matters which were of purely local concern. If the Irish Legislature transcends the line of demarcation between that which is local and that

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

which is Imperial, its acts are void, its laws are of no effect, no one is bound to obey them, and no one can be punished for disobedience. That is the reservation we put on the powers of the Irish Parliament. These are the safeguards that exist in every written federal Constitution from that of the United States downwards. Surely our critics in this matter are very hard to please. In one breath they declare against the enormity of the grant of Home Rule to Ireland at all; in the next breath they are full of compassion for the truncated, mutilated powers of this poor, poverty-stricken Irish Parliament. I observe that none of the representatives of Nationalist Ireland have raised any difficulty upon this point. It is left to the representatives of Ulster, who will have nothing whatever to do with the Irish Parliament, and English Conservatives, who are opposed to Home Rule, to show that sensitiveness and sympathy for the relative impotence of the Irish Parliament. I venture to say that the attitude of the Irish Members is a perfectly natural one. Why? With the exception of the reserved services (apart from land purchase), that are only temporarily and provisionally reserved, the Irish Parliament obtains legislative and administrative power over every matter of every kind which is of purely Irish concern. Why should Ireland ask for more? Why should she be content with less? I must hurry to a conclusion. I am extremely sorry not to have time to deal

Home Rule

with some of the criticism which the right hon. gentleman opposite has made. I certainly should not have shrunk from dealing with our financial proposals. But I must say, because I think it is of greater importance, two or three words on the question of finality. It is perfectly true, as the hon. and learned Member for Waterford said this afternoon, that it is only in one sense, though the most important of all senses, that a measure of this kind can claim the attribute of finality. It is final, as we believe, offered by us and accepted by them as a settlement of a long-standing and secular international problem. That it is final in the sense that there will be no necessity hereafter, or may be no necessity, to modify some of its mechanical provisions, or that it is final in the sense that we are going to stop with this measure of Home Rule for Ireland, and not proceed farther in the path of devolution, no one has ever claimed or ever will.

The right hon. gentleman the Member for the City (Mr. Balfour) put a series of questions again in his speech the other night, I think, if I may say so, of a very pertinent kind. I may summarise them by saying they amount to this. He asked whether there is any case we can cite in which the federal system has been created on the same lines and under the same conditions which we are prescribing and following in this Bill. That question can be answered and may be answered in the negative without in any way invalidating the case for the Bill as it

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

stands. What are the instances, and perhaps the only instances, at any rate in modern history, of successful federation? They are cases where you have a group of separately organised communities, sometimes, as in the case of the United States of America, actual Sovereign States living side by side and combining together in a union for purposes which are common to them all, and as a condition of which each of them surrenders some and retains others of its pre-existing powers. I agree that that is the normal type of federation. Here we are pursuing precisely the same object, but the historical and actual conditions are reversed. We start, as I said when I introduced this Bill, from a congested centre. We start from a Union which actually exists, both formally and substantially. (*Hon. Members*: "Hear, hear.") Yes, but a Union which has this peculiarity: that while for common purposes all its constituent members can deliberate and act together, none of them is at liberty to deal with those matters which are specially appropriate and necessary for itself without the common consent of all. My proposition is this, and it is my answer to the right hon. gentleman's questions, that union of that nature is just as fatal to what we all have in view as the end of democratic polity, namely, that combination of central union with local autonomy—a union of that nature is just as fatal to that object as is the separate existence of States side by side which have never entered into a union

Home Rule

at all. Until they federate and become a union, they cannot enjoy the advantage of common action for common purposes.

We are content to delegate local matters to the different constituent units. However well we may transact—we cannot ever do that—our common and Imperial affairs, we must perpetually bungle and mismanage the affairs of each unit. That, Sir, is what Home Rule, as we understand it, and federation as we are going to pursue it, means for the people of this country. It is no good telling me if you take down from your shelves a dictionary of constitutional terms and turn to the big F's and find "Federation" defined in a particular way and then turn to the big U's and find "Union" defined in a particular way, and neither one definition nor the other fits the circumstances of our own case—to tell me that is an objection to our Bill is to mistake pedantry for statesmanship. This is my answer to those of our critics who ask us whether we are going to apply the provisions of this Bill in subsequent legislation to Scotland, Wales, and the different units of the United Kingdom. My answer is this: I know of no cast-iron pattern and no cut-and-dried formula which is or which can be equally appropriate to the special purposes, the local conditions, and the historic traditions of all the different parts of the Empire.

Let us get away from phrases and formulæ and look at facts. What we desire is real union, legislative and executive, which for common and

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith

central purposes we may have the time, ability, and the capacity to deal with in the interests of all, and on the other hand local freedom, local elasticity, local flexibility, and local power of adaptation, which will enable each of the separate communities to mould each its domestic fortunes in accordance with its own ideals. That is what Home Rule means and federation means as we understand those terms. But, and this shall be my last word, the claim of Ireland comes first. The claim of Ireland is paramount in urgency—(*an hon. Member*: “Why?”)—paramount because there is no part of this United Kingdom to which we here in the Imperial Parliament owe so long and so deep a debt—for opportunities that have been allowed to slip by—for the persistent neglect, of generation after generation, of crying social and economic evils—aye! for wrongs allowed to be done under the sanction and with the direct authority of the law. Ireland is entitled to the first place in our legislation. I came across a day or two ago a remarkable passage in the writings of one of the greatest of Englishmen, Lord Bacon, who, at the beginning, or nearly at the beginning of the reign of King James I., presented a memorial which he called “A Discourse Touching the Plantation in Ireland.” I daresay it contained a great deal of what we should now think very heretical doctrines, but it contained some very pressing truths. I will venture to read two sentences from it to the House. He says to the King:—

Home Rule

“ I assure myself England, Scotland, and Ireland, well united, would be such a trefoil as no prince except yourself weareth in his crown.”

Observe Lord Bacon’s phrase, “ well united.” He goes on, speaking of Ireland, to say :—

“ This desolate and neglected country is blessed with almost all the dowers of Nature—a race and generation of men, valiant, hard, and active, as it is not easy to find. Such confluence of commodities ! The hand of man joined with the hand of Nature ! But they are severed.”

We desire that severance to cease. We wish the hand of man to join with the hand of Nature to bring about for the first time in deed as well as in name a united Kingdom.

A List of Works on Ireland

Published by **T. FISHER UNWIN,**

I, Adelphi Terrace, London, W.C.

ASQUITH

HOME RULE FROM THE TREASURY BENCH

Speeches during the First and Second Reading Debates, by the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Birrell, Mr. Samuel, Mr. T. W. Russell, Sir Edward Grey, Sir Rufus Isaacs, and Colonel Seely. With an Introduction by the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith, M.P., and eight full-page signed portraits of the speakers. Demy 8vo, cloth. net 7/6

BARLOW

BY BEACH AND BOGLAND

By JANE BARLOW, Author of "Irish Idylls," &c. With Frontispiece. Crown 8vo, cloth. (Unwin's Green Cloth Library.) 6/-

BODKIN

GRATTAN'S PARLIAMENT: Before and After

By M. McDONNELL BODKIN, K.C. With 33 Illustrations. Demy 8vo, cloth. net 10/6

BOUVERIE-PUSEY

THE PAST HISTORY OF IRELAND

By S. E. B. BOUVERIE-PUSEY. New Edition, small crown 8vo. Cloth, 1/6 net; paper, net 1/-

CLERIGH

HISTORY OF IRELAND TO THE COMING OF HENRY II.

By ARTHUR W. CLERIGH, M.A., K.C. Demy 8vo, cloth. net 10/6

DUFFY (C. G.)

MY LIFE IN TWO HEMISPHERES

By Sir CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY, K.C.M.G. 2 vols. Demy 8vo, cloth. 32/-

Cheap Edition. 2 vols. (Reformer's Bookshelf.) Large crown 8vo, cloth. 7/-

FERGUSON

LAYS OF THE RED BRANCH

By Sir SAMUEL FERGUSON. (New Irish Library.) Small crown 8vo. Paper covers, 1/-; cloth, 2/-

GRAVES

THE IRISH POEMS OF ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES

In 2 volumes. Cloth, each, net 2/- ; leather, each, net 3/-

THE IRISH SONG BOOK, With Original Irish Airs

Edited by A. P. GRAVES. Eighth Impression. (New Irish Library.) Paper covers, 1/- ; cloth, 2/-

THE IRISH FAIRY BOOK

By ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES. With a Coloured Frontispiece and 100 Illustrations in red and black. By George P. Denham. Small demy 8vo, cloth. 6/-

HOME RULE FROM THE TREASURY BENCH

Speeches during the First and Second Reading Debates. With an Introduction by the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith, M.P., and 8 full-page signed portraits of the speakers. Demy 8vo, cloth. net 7/6

HOME RULE

Speeches by John Redmond, M.P., 1886-1910. Edited with an Introduction by R. BARRY O'BRIEN. Portrait. Demy 8vo, cloth. net 7/6

HYDE

A LITERARY HISTORY OF IRELAND

By DOUGLAS HYDE, LL.D. With Photogravure Frontispiece. (Library of Literary History.) Demy 8vo, cloth. net 12/6

THE STORY OF EARLY GAELIC LITERATURE

By DOUGLAS HYDE, LL.D. (New Irish Library, vol. 6.) Small crown 8vo. Paper covers, 1/- ; cloth, 2/-

THE RELIGIOUS SONGS OF CONNACHT

By DOUGLAS HYDE, LL.D., M.R.I.A. 2 vols., cloth. net 10/-

LOVE SONGS OF CONNACHT

Collected, Edited, and Translated by DOUGLAS HYDE, LL.D., M.R.I.A. Third Edition. Crown 8vo, cloth. net 3/6

LAWLESS

IRELAND

By the Hon. EMILY LAWLESS. (Story of the Nations Series, No. 10.) New Edition, with two new chapters. Large crown 8vo, cloth. 5/-

LOUGH

IRISH FINANCE

By the Right Hon. THOMAS LOUGH, M.P. A Paper read before the Royal Society of Economics on January 12th, 1912. Paper. net 6d.

MAHAFFY

AN EPOCH IN IRISH HISTORY: Trinity College, Dublin

Its History and Fortunes (1591-1660). By J. P. MAHAFFY, D.D., Mus. Doc., and Hon. D.C.L. Demy 8vo, cloth, 16/-
Cheap Edition. Demy 8vo, cloth. net 7/6

THE PARTICULAR BOOK OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN

A facsimile in collotype of the original copy. Edited by J. P. MAHAFFY, D.D. A companion volume to "An Epoch in Irish History." Demy 4to. net 63/-

MOORE

THE UNTILLED FIELD

By GEORGE MOORE. (Unwin's Red Cloth Library.) Crown 8vo, cloth. 6/-

O'BRIEN

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THEOBALD WOLFE TONE (1763-1798)

Edited with an Introduction by R. BARRY O'BRIEN. New Edition. net 7/6

IRISH MEMORIES

By R. BARRY O'BRIEN. With plans. Crown 8vo, cloth. net 3/6

IRELAND

Edited by BARRY O'BRIEN. (The Children's Study.) Long 8vo, cloth, gilt top, with photogravure frontispiece. 2/6
Cheaper Edition. net 1/6

SAMHAIN: An Occasional Review

Edited by W. B. YEATS. Contributors: J. M. Synge, Lady Gregory, Douglas Hyde, George Moore, Edward Martyn, and others. First Number (October, 1901). Second Number (October, 1902). Third Number (September, 1903.) Paper covers. net 6d.

Fourth Number (December, 1904). Fifth Number (December, 1905). Seventh Number (1908). 1/-

SHEEHAN

A SPOILED PRIEST, and Other Stories

By the Very Rev. P. A. SHEEHAN, D.D. Illustrated. Crown 8vo, cloth. 5/-

SHEEHY-SKEFFINGTON

MICHAEL DAYITT: Revolutionary, Agitator, and Labour Leader

By F. SHEEHY-SKEFFINGTON. With an Introduction by Justin McCarthy, and a portrait. Demy 8vo, cloth, net 7/6

STACPOOLE

PATSY

- By H. de VERE STACPOOLE. With Frontispiece. Crown
8vo, cloth. 6/-
Also Paper Covers. net 1/-
Also Popular Edition, cloth. net 2/-

GARRYOWEN : The Romance of a Racehorse

- By H. de V. STACPOOLE. Crown 8vo, cloth. 6/-

YEATS

PLAYS FOR AN IRISH THEATRE

- By W. B. YEATS, with 4 designs by Gordon Craig. Demy
8vo, cloth. net 8/6

POEMS

- By W. B. YEATS. A New Edition entirely revised and
reset. With a Photogravure Portrait. Large crown 8vo,
cloth. net 7/6

POEMS

- 1899-1905. By W. B. YEATS. Large crown 8vo. net 6/-

THE SECRET ROSE

- By W. B. YEATS. Large crown 8vo. net 6/-

THE CELTIC TWILIGHT

- By W. B. YEATS. Large crown 8vo. 6/-

IDEAS OF GOOD AND EVIL

- By W. B. YEATS. Large crown 8vo. 6/-

THE SHADOWY WATERS

- (1st version). By W. B. YEATS. Large crown 8vo. 3/6

WHERE THERE IS NOTHING

- By W. B. YEATS. Large crown 8vo. net 3/6

SHORTER PLAYS

- By W. B. YEATS. Large crown 8vo. net 3/6

THE KING'S THRESHOLD, and ON BAILE'S STRAND

- By W. B. YEATS. Large crown 8vo. net 3/6

DEIRDRE

- By W. B. YEATS. Large crown 8vo. net 3/6

THE HOUR GLASS

- Acting version, in paper covers. 6d.

THE SHADOWY WATERS

- Acting version, in paper covers. 6d.

ON BAILE'S STRAND

- Acting version, in paper covers. 6d.

THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN

- Large crown 8vo, paper. net 1/-

THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

- Large crown 8vo, paper. net 1/-

DATE OF ISSUE

This book must be returned within 3, 7, 14 days of its issue. A fine of ONE ANNA per day will be charged if the book is overdue.

--	--

327.42

Home rule from

The Treasury Bench.

9386.