

is because I feel in the Canadian Parliament, where the liberties and rights of the people are so safe and so well secured—it is because I believe in the Canadian Parliament that we have rights and liberties not enjoyed by the people in Ireland, that I think the people here, feeling and enjoying those blessings, having had experience of a wise Government, and a wise system of government, will readily extend their sympathies to those less fortunate in that respect. I believe the force of the old maxim will be admitted by hon. members of this House, and they will be willing to do to others as they would wish to be done by. I am satisfied there is a feeling in the House, and it is shared by the people of this country, that Ireland stands alone among countries; where hardship has existed, where harsh treatment has been used towards its people, where we in Canada and this Government under which we live—the British Government—have not been foremost in expressing not only a sentiment of sympathy in favor of oppressed people in all parts of the globe, but in taking active steps to carry relief to those people; and it will be hard to convince me that, in the opinion of any public man or intelligent man, Ireland alone should remain mis-governed and have no hope of a better state of things. It will not be my place to attack the policy of different Governments that have ruled Ireland in times past; it will not be my place to show to what an extent the mis-government of that country has been carried. I might create a hostile feeling if I were to attack the Government of any particular party; but I say this, without fear of contradiction, that I need not make any accusation against any Government, in order to establish that point, but I need only quote the opinions of leading Ministers themselves, to prove that it has been admitted by all parties that Ireland has not been wisely and well governed. We find recently that on Mr. Forster visiting Ireland; he was the first, on meeting with the people of Ireland, to declare that they were mis-governed, that they were rendered unhappy by mis-government, and that he would do every thing he could to give them that good government which they had not had before, and he trusted that they would be as happy and prosperous as the people of England were. These, Sir, are admissions which prove, beyond a doubt, that there is a necessity for some change in Ireland, and in the resolutions I shall ask this House to express its sympathy in favor of some measure of self-government for Ireland. I hope I will not be accused of interfering with the rights of the British Parliament. I hope I will not be accused of attacking the policy of that Government because I move in this direction, authorized by the leader of the Government of the day and by his public expression when he announced that the time had come when the self-government of Ireland was a debatable question. It being admitted by the leader of the Government that it is a debatable subject, that is one reason why we, to-day, ought to feel that we have a right to approach it. That is one of the reasons why we offer the long experience we have had as a people of self-government and the happy results of it, should respectfully represent that a like system in Ireland would produce a like favorable result in that country. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that a great change has come over the public mind, and that that change is going on from day to day, and that the time is not far distant when men will not say it is too soon to grant this reform, and the wonder will be that it has not been granted many years ago. We all admit that the question of governing Ireland is a very difficult one, that there are difficulties almost insurmountable; but it appears to me, Mr. Speaker, and I think it appears to the majority of reasonable men in Canada, that if some experiment were made in the way of extending to the people of Ireland a system by which they could legislate for their own local wants, leaving Imperial matters to the Imperial Parliament, that would find the solution of that

difficulty that has puzzled them for so many years. There is, Mr. Speaker, another point to which I may be allowed to allude. I know how difficult and dangerous it is to deal with questions sometimes, which, either in the past or present or possibly in the future, might give rise to discussions of a religious character. Sir, there is no one in the Dominion of Canada who would regret the expression of any word in this debate that would tend to wound the feelings or excite the hostility of any special body of people in the country more than I. I intend, Sir, to make some few allusions, and in the allusions it will not be to decry the minority of our countrymen in Ireland, but to disabuse the mind of some who cling to the fear, more often expressed in the past than the present—but I trust these expressions will disappear in the future—that if Home Rule were granted to Ireland, the minority would suffer persecution at the hands of the majority. At this day that fear is not entertained by a large number of people either in Ireland or out of it. I would be sorry to think, and I have no reason to believe, that there was ground for that fear. The facts of history are all against it. Many men who have laid down their lives and have sacrificed liberty and all they held dear for the rights which they believed Ireland ought to have, many influential men who have ranked among the greatest of Irish patriots have been those who were not Roman Catholics. I will not, however, rely upon my own views or ask you to consider what may be my own opinion upon this important question, but I will quote the words used by a man who was not a Roman Catholic, of a Protestant who took a very active part in the politics of Ireland, and who did a great deal to remove the prejudices that existed in that country, and to secure harmony between the different elements of the people. Sir, I allude to the expressions made use of by Mr. Butt, a prominent man in the history of Ireland:

“Immediately on the fall of the Irish Church, he saw what was coming in Ireland. He knew the feelings—the fears, the hopes, the questionings—that surged in the breasts of his fellow Protestants. He determined to use the great power which now rested with him in an endeavor to close forever the era of revolt and bloodshed; to unite in the common work of patriotism Irishmen long divided by class and creed distinctions, and to establish between Ireland and England a union of friendship and justice which might defy the shocks of time. At this Bilton Hotel Conference he listened long to the utterances of his fellow-Protestants, many of them the familiar associates of his college days. He marked their fears, their apprehensions that the Fenians and the Romanists would be content with nothing less than separation. He rose to his feet and spoke with great earnestness. ‘It is we—it is our inaction, our desertion of the people and the country, the abdication of our position and duties—that have cast these men into the eddies and whirlpools of rebellion.’ He said: ‘If you are but ready to lead them by constitutional courses to their legitimate national rights they are ready to follow you. Trust me, we have all grievously wronged the Irish Catholics, priests and laymen. As for the men whom mis-government has driven into revolt, I say for them that if they cannot aid you they will not throw out your experiment. Arise! behold! have faith; have confidence and you will save Ireland; not Ireland only, but England also.’”

He concluded by proposing:

“That it is the opinion of this meeting, that the true remedy for the evils of Ireland is the establishment of an Irish Parliament, with full control over our domestic affairs. The chairman put the resolution to the meeting, ‘As many as are of opinion that this resolution do pass say, ‘Aye.’ A shout of ‘Aye’ rang through the room. ‘The contrary will say, ‘No.’ Not a dissentient voice was heard. Then every one, greatly astonished, burst into a cheer; the first heard that evening, so grave, and earnest, and almost solemn had been the tone of the deliberations.”

“That was the birth of the Irish Home Rule movement.”

This expression of such sentiments as this must do much to pacify conflicting passion and to bring about in Ireland that state of harmony and good feeling without which, good government is impossible in any country. Doubts have been expressed whether it would be expedient, even if it were possible to give to Ireland a system of self-government. I have been asked during the present Session, since this question came before the attention of the House, what