

NOV. 27, 1886.

MR. J. MORLEY, M. P., ON THE URGENCY OF HOME RULE AND THE TORY TACTICS.

Dublin Freeman. A Journal. Leeds, Nov. 3.

This evening a great meeting was held in the Coliseum, Cookridge street, to which not only the delegates who attended the meeting of the National Liberal Federation but a great body of the public were admitted. The proceedings commenced at half past seven o'clock, but when the doors were opened at half past six the people poured in so eagerly that...

Mr. J. Morley, M. P., on rising to open the proceedings was received with loud cheering and "Kentish fire." He said: "Ladies and gentlemen, this is, I think, the third time on which I have had the honor of addressing a great audience in Leeds. The first time was in connection with the Leeds Conference three years ago, and we know that that gathering preceded the carrying of a great and immense reform. The second occasion, gentlemen, was the great public assembly that I have ever seen in Yorkshire—that great gathering on Woodhouse Moor (cheers). Now, on the first occasion (interruption) caused by the overcrowded state of the hall—on the first occasion, gentlemen, we won our battle (hear, hear). On the second occasion, which was the occasion of the question whether the Lords or the Commons should decide the reconstitution of the Commons, on that, too, as on the first question, we won (hear, hear). Well, now, to-day we have begun a third great controversy and...

A THIRD GREAT BATTLE, and so far the omens are as favorable in this case as they were in either of the two cases to which I have already referred. We have had this afternoon, gentlemen, what I do not hesitate to pronounce as successful a gathering of representative Liberals as it was possible to have (cheers). It is impossible to deny that these gentlemen who met together to-day in the Albert Hall represent the will, the intention, and the conviction of the Liberal party throughout the country (cheers). Though not a very "old Parliamentary hand," I have had some experience (renewed interruption). Well, gentlemen, I see that it has been said that the Federation has met in Leeds to-day, and that we have come here to-day in order to go through the process of "climbing down" (laughter). All I can say is that if I was obliged to go through the rather delicate performance Leeds is the very last place in the whole world I would choose to go through it (cheers) and renewed interruption from one part of the hall, which was densely crowded.

Mr. Morley unable to continue his speech and had to sit down for a few minutes. After some delay in clearing the doorway order was again restored.

Mr. Morley continued—Well, gentlemen, I was saying that we have had to-day a gathering which for its numbers, for its representative character, for the importance and weight of many of those who have attended it, is a gathering which I think is full of good omen for the future of our cause and our party (cheers). Gentlemen, they declare that the Liberal Party is destroyed by its divisions. Nothing has happened to-day to give the least color of any hope or apprehension, as the case may be, of the Liberal Party. There is one article, gentlemen, added since last year, and it is this—it is beneath an article in the programme, and the first article in the programme of the Liberal Party, that there must be now a serious attempt to carry on the effort that was begun by Mr. Gladstone (cheers), to effect...

A DURABLE SETTLEMENT OF THE IRISH QUESTION.

We added to it, gentlemen, the expression of the conviction of the delegates who came to that most important gathering that such a settlement, to be durable, must meet the wishes and the voice of the Irish electors, as expressed by their representatives in the House of Commons (cheers), and we gave expression to a third article, viz., that the only settlement that will comply with this condition is the creation of a legislative body for managing such affairs as Parliament shall determine to be distinctively, peculiarly, and exclusively Irish affairs (cheers). Gentlemen, I gather that that article in our programme and the placing of that article first in our programme meets with your approval (cheers); and I am perfectly sure that the resolution that we passed this afternoon before that is one which no less will command your approval. Gentlemen, I sometimes think that we are in for a long day of degraded politics (hear, hear). We have had such periods in our history before, and we may be on the eve of one now. By degraded politics I mean that state of things in which generous controversy about policy and about principles gives...

place to cabals, intrigues, and quarrels about men (hear, hear)—a period in which, instead of clearing the way by honest argument, we are going to be poisoned by...

RANCOROUS PERSONALITIES

(cheer)—a period in which, instead of great parties based upon broad convictions, we should see little factions, shifting combinations existing from some paltry convenience of the hour. There are some signs in the heavens that look very like an approach to such a state of things as that. Gentlemen, we shall have something to do with the dispelling of that (cheers), but let us say how we stand in the present matter. The conference expressed this afternoon our view of the position in that respect. I am all for perfect tolerance to those who do not agree with us about the Irish question, whether they are of our party or of the opposite party, but there is one kind of sentiment and one kind of action for which none of us will have any tolerance for a particular personal argument, and I will illustrate what I mean by an historical instance, if you will allow me. One hundred and fifty years ago there was a great English statesman, one of the two or three greatest Ministers that England has ever had, because for nearly twenty years he tried to give England and to give Europe peace. Men of that stamp one hundred and fifty years ago, and to-day, naturally excite many enemies, and Sir Robert Walpole aroused many enemies, and a great combination of Tories and Whigs, who agreed in nothing else, agreed in a motion which they brought forward in the House of Commons, and the motion was this—you will see the point of it. That a humble address be presented to his Majesty that he would be graciously pleased to remove the Right Hon. Sir Robert Walpole from his Majesty's presence and out of his favor.

(Laughter). I see that you comprehend the drift of that quotation (cheer). There is a combination to-day of men who agree in nothing else than that her Majesty should be graciously pleased to remove from her councils a Minister as great as Sir Robert Walpole (cheer). Gentlemen, we are all for union, but with those who are in that state of mind we cannot argue (hear, hear). We can make no terms with them (hear, hear). We are not here to choose a leader. There is no vacancy (renewed cheering, followed by "The Grand Old Man," which the audience joined in singing). He is chosen our leader on account of his long years of devoted service to the country and to the great cause of justice and freedom, not only in his own country, but also over the world. These are Mr. Gladstone's titles to fame, and they are his titles to our allegiance, which, as to-day's events have written up in great letters which no man can pretend to mistake, is all over the kingdom—not in Yorkshire only—an allegiance unbroken, a loyalty unquenched, a gratitude that time will not dim (cheer). Now we are confronted with...

A RIVAL PROGRAMME

(laughter), which, as we understand, is to displace our leaders and our party for the present generation, not merely from office, which, from my small experience, I do not entirely regard as a serious loss, but from influence and from the confidence of our countrymen (hear, hear). Well, I am not going to say many words about the Tory programme of reform. I will say this much, gentlemen—I believe that I have always been a very good and tolerably brisk business man, with a hearty dislike to the principles of the old Tories and a very hearty belief of a very complete contempt for those things of absurd, for those rickety puppets (laughter), which are dangled in the name of Conservative principles before your neighbors, for instance, at Bradford (laughter and cheer). Why, what was passed off at Bradford as a Tory principle is no more a principle of a living thing any more than the puppet of a street show is a living thing (cheer). You can make it move, you can make it squeak (renewed laughter), you can draw enormous crowds to witness the performance, but when all that is over it is only paint and wood and wire and squeak and other materials (great laughter). But gentlemen, good party man as I am, I am perfectly persuaded that if the Government bring in good bills it will be our duty to support them (cheer). As long as they play our tunes, it is a secondary matter, who conducts the orchestra (cheers and laughter). If they mean to promote reforms, about which I will say a word or two in a moment, we will take them at their word. We are not going to turn Tories because they pretend to have turned Radical (cheer). We shall not accept the golden rule, and it is the only approach to a Tory principle I could gather from the speech at Bradford—the golden rule that statesmen must change their mind according to circumstances, the circumstance being the question whether you are in office or out of office (cheers and laughter). If these evolutions are politics, gentlemen, I declare quite sincerely and simply that...

I WOULD RATHER BE A HIGHWAYMAN THAN A POLITICIAN.

(Cheer). A highwayman has more exercise, he has more open air, he keeps better hours, and is treated quite as respectable (laughter and cheer). Gentlemen, if they propose real reforms of course we shall accept them, but depend upon it that the gush of spring of Tory Reform will not be long before it runs dry (cheer). You won't get a bounteous affluence of fresh water into the Tory pump by the simple act of fitting it with a brand new Radical handle, kindly lent for the occasion by a friend from Birmingham (laughter and cheer). Now when they bring in their programme for the reform of...

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

We shall want to know whether they are going to make these local authorities really representative. Will they include in these powers for instance local option? I fancy not, because at Newport Lord Salisbury said that local option—Sir W. Lawson is not present here, but he is not far off (cheers)—that local option trenches upon the elementary liberties of mankind. Will they, in promoting their local government schemes, under the guise of reducing the burdens on land, attempt to take the old hereditary burdens off land...

A PLACE THEN ON THE RATEPAYERS AT LARGE (Cheer). Then about...

LAND REFORM

We shall have one or two very serious questions to put to them (cheer). We know they will keep their reforming knife very clear of the real root of the evil of the land question (cheers). I dare say they may consent one of these days to a bill for repealing the law of primogeniture of descent in cases of intestacy, but will they raise the question of abolishing the hereditary settlement of land (cheers)—so that in the words of Mr. Bright, "Every present generation will have absolute control over the soil, free from paralyzing influences and the prejudices, the obstinacy, the pride, or ignorance of the generations that have passed away." (cheer). You may depend upon it that they will not touch it in that sense, and that our good friend Mr. Arthur Arnold and the free land league will have plenty of work to do in spite of Bradford and Dartford programmes. I am not going through the list, because my right hon. friend on the right, Sir Wm. Harcourt, will have a great deal to say upon that subject. I only want to say that I believe we are all agreed; you agree the Conference to-day and all of us on this platform, members of Parliament especially, agree that we shall not oppose where it is fairly reasonable to support, but while supporting we shall watch (loud cheer) the continual support and unconditional backing (cheer and laughter). Gentlemen, there is one subject at any rate upon which I feel that there would be a gulf profound as the Serboman bog between us and the Government, and that is the subject which cannot be evaded, and which cannot be postponed. In reference to...

IRELAND

there can be no sort of agreement, I fear, because the Government have openly announced that they will approach the Irish question from a point of view which, as Liberals, we are bound by our principles and profession most emphatically to repudiate (cheer). Not long ago a Cabinet Minister of the House of Commons, whom both parties respect very much, Mr. Stanhope, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, made a speech at Lincoln. He then made this declaration, which has not received much attention until it was mentioned this afternoon by my friend Mr. Ellis at the conference, but which is a very important and very vital declaration. Mr. Stanhope said that they would undertake a policy which would take no account of the Irish vote, whatever the Irish vote might do.

A VOICE—"SHAME!"

Mr. Morley—Yes, let us look at what that really means. They really intend, and hope, and expect to bring about a settlement of the Irish question because they have said that they hope to settle the Irish question without regard to the wishes or the views of the great majority of the Irish electors (renewed cries of "Shame!"). The Irish members may move what amendments they please, may make what speeches they please, may go into what lobbies they please—it will all count for nothing, and less than nothing, in the settlement of the Irish question. They will have their own plans for the government of our own country (cheer). Now, suppose the measure was brought forward, or was about to be brought forward, which affected merely Yorkshire, Yorkshire is an immense area, with an enormous population, and it has 52 members of Parliament. I am glad to think there are two Liberals for every Tory (cheer). What would you think, gentlemen, if the Government and common sense of a Ministry which should publicly declare beforehand that they were going to take the opinion of Englishmen, excepting Yorkshiremen, and Scotchmen and Welshmen, upon their plan, but that the Yorkshire members and their votes should count for nothing, and that the question should be settled irrespective of their opinion? I wonder that the Government and their confederates upon our side, if they are about to support them in this extraordinary doctrine—I wonder if they have asked themselves these one or two questions—How will this fine plan of settling Irish policy and the future of Irish government without reference to the views of the Irish electors be carried in Parliament at Westminster? (Cheer). 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