

tent in the guise of Liberals, want to avoid being put face to face with other popular and democratic measures, and being obliged to say "yes" or "no" to them; and that is one of the reasons they were anxious for the dissolution.

The Irish Nationalists of Great Britain, than whom there is no more intelligent and patriotic body, no body determined to do justice to Ireland, no body more keen to perceive the tactics and course by which justice may be best done; the Irish Nationalists of Great Britain, mixing as they did with their British allies every day, and fighting their battles together, were themselves fully convinced of the necessity and importance of putting the Tories face to face with these popular and democratic reforms, and of continuing the Parliamentary contest to that end.

There was another reason. Just laws are wanted for the elections. The battle is to be fought at the polls within a few months, and laws are required in order that we may get a just verdict at those polls. These laws we ought to pass through Parliament if we can, and if not through the whole Parliament, at any rate through the popular body, and throw the odium of rejection on the House of Lords, which has stood between us and our dearest aspirations (applause).

TORIES LEARN THE ART OF OBSTRUCTION.

Well, gentlemen, the government proceeded, and they placed before the House of Commons popular and democratic measures, some affecting both countries, some affecting Ireland, some affecting Britain. The Tories in the Commons have pursued a course of persistent obstruction. Their plan is that unless the majority give way to the minority, and emasculate measures, cut them and carve them to suit the minority, the minority shall take up so much time in so called discussion that the Government shall only be able, with the greatest difficulty, to pass a single measure or so, and shall be obliged to throw aside all the remaining measures. And to a considerable extent that policy of obstruction has prevailed in point of delay, and more time has been taken than was at first expected. The Lords have used their legislative power to mutilate and murder; they have taken the good out of some measures, and others they have altogether destroyed. Still much British and Irish business has been dealt with in one shape or another. A good deal has been pushed forward. There has been much House of Commons' decision, and I point your attention to that as no unimportant circumstance. It is the fact that no first-rate measure keenly exciting political feeling has ever passed the House of Commons by a fair and good majority which ultimately failed to get on the statute book; the consummation may be postponed, but the result so far as precedent goes is inevitable. And the circumstance, with reference to Irish measures, that those to which I shall point have passed their House of Commons' stages by majorities always beyond the normal, sometimes twice as great, once half as great again, and once considerably in excess of the normal Government majority, is pregnant with good fortune and good omen for the ultimate triumph of those measures (cheers).

WISDOM OF THE IRISH PROGRAMME.

Meantime I want to know whether the position of Ireland, and of Irish claims and of the Irish members as the representatives of those claims, was not being improved by our course? Time and again have the most responsible statesmen in office and out of office gravely and publicly acknowledged the debt of thankfulness which the British democracy owes to the Irish Parliamentary Party for its self-sacrificing and assiduous attendance in pressing forward the objects of that democracy. Do you suppose that that is not advancing the cause of Home Rule? Do you suppose that to accumulate claim after claim upon the good feeling, upon the attachment, upon the respect, upon the confidence, upon the fidelity of our Liberal allies, is not to forge link after link in an inexorable chain, an irrefragable chain, which shall draw and keep our own questions to the front in proper time and season, and which shall prevent the possibility of a capture or of a desertion in reference to our claims? (applause.) The Liberal debt to Ireland, great early in the struggle, has been increasing every day. And this is a debt which we don't count out in dollars and cents, in respect of which there is no bond or mortgage; but it is a debt of honor, it is a debt of good faith, it is a debt of sympathy, it is a debt of kindness, which is always repaid, not, indeed, with usurious or counted interest, but with measure heaped up and running over by those who are worthy of the name of men (cheers).

The Liberals, our allies, expect shortly to present to the people a considerable programme, and to fortify our case against those men in the gilded chamber who have for the moment blighted our hopes, to fortify our case by the attitude which these men may take with reference to unsettled reforms. In that programme the very first and most prominent article must be, is to be, is understood to be, the concession of Home Rule to Ireland. (Loud applause). The concession of Home Rule to Ireland is to be taken as the settled Liberal policy, announced in 1886, upon which they then ran an election, upon which they were then defeated, announced again in 1892, upon which they again ran an election, upon which they were then successful, and on which they expect a decisive verdict now!

(At this point some smoke appearing in one of the boxes caused commotion.)

Mr. BLAKE—Keep your seats. Don't be frightened by a puff of smoke. (Applause).

Now, our allies, like ourselves, are not all men of exactly the same temperament, and don't view this question from exactly the same standpoint; I have seen many of them; I have addressed many scores of meetings and talked with many scores of the rank and file, besides mixing with the leading men of that party; and I think I have been able to form, as I have made it my business to form, some estimate of the general tone and temper of the Liberal party with reference to Home Rule. The great bulk of them—and the further you go amongst the masses and the more radical and democratic you find the men, the stronger and wider is that sentiment; the great bulk of them are ardent sympathizers in and believers in our right to Home Rule. (Applause). But there are some who think though after all it is the best plan, yet it is experimental and so doubtful; and there are others who think it inevitable, but who still, perhaps, might prefer some other way, if it could be obtained. Gentlemen, everything is fish that comes to my net. (Applause). I would rather have an ardent friend than a cautious, temporizing, doubtful friend, and if I have a cautious friend I will try to turn him into an ardent friend. (Applause).

The vast mass of the Liberal party is as ardent, devoted and determined as you could expect; and for the rest, they are with us, and we expect to make them as ardent, devoted and determined as the great majority of that party.

Then remember that we have common interests. We have the interests of their party, as of our own, to win. Political parties want to win. It is the interest of the British Liberal party to win, it is the interest of the Irish Nationalist party to win; and I think you know enough of politics to appreciate that that is not a little thing. A man will do a great deal, and parties will do a great deal to win. We have the interests of the two democracies against class privileges, against the abused privileges of the House of Lords, against the continuance of unjust conditions respecting the masses. Our co-operation has engendered a better feeling between the two peoples; and all the time, most important for us, we have been still engaged, not as assiduously as we might, as I shall later explain, but yet we have been engaged in still more enlightening and informing the British masses, in still more settling their minds, as to the treatment of this question as an absolutely settled business, which they are determined shall be disposed of, once and for all and that right soon, by the concession of a substantial measure of Home Rule to our country.

THE TASK BEFORE THE ENGLISH LIBERALS.

Now, our Liberal allies have 570 districts to deal with; we have 100 in Ireland. They want to win; and even if we differed a good deal from their opinion as to the best tactics for them to win by, I think you will agree with me that we should on this head defer very greatly to their opinion, because they have much better sources of knowledge, they know more about it, as we know more of the feelings and wants of the people of Ireland and of the secret springs of action in their own country; and when they say "such and such are the tactics which we require to follow in order that we may fight our allied battle successfully," we would be fools if we were lightly to reject their advice and say "We Irishmen are wiser than you about English public opinion, and we tell you you are mistaken, and you ought to act in a different way." We may tender our advice; but, after all, with reference to those who are responsible for 570 constituencies in which they want to win a majority, we must let them to a considerable extent in point of tactics play their game, as they must let us play our game (applause).

A general election, to be fair to the masses, demands more legislation. We want a registration law. At the present time there is an enormous transitory population in the country, and the registration law is so cumbrous that at any general election a very large portion of the population is practically disfranchised. That is unjust, it is unfair, no matter what the politics of the disfranchised are. But it bears infinitely harder on the popular party than it does on the aristocratic and wealthy and stay-at-home part of the population; and, therefore, justice and expediency alike demand that we should prepare for a full and free vote by amending the registration law.

We want every man to have one vote; but at the same time we must see to it that no man shall have more than one vote (applause). At present many men have many votes, and we want that changed. We want the elections held on one day. We want the public expenses of the election, which at present in that country which you will call benighted, are borne by the candidates, to be borne by the public, that the constitution of the great public machine for public purposes should be accomplished, so far as the public expenses of the sheriff and returning officers are concerned, at the public expense. And we want