

of coercive measures. Well, I hold in my hand a report of a meeting of Protestant Home Rulers in the city of Dublin, only a short time ago, in connection with this very Coercion Act. The report states:

"Upon the motion of Mr. C. H. Oldham, the chair was taken amidst applause by Mr. James Johnstone, of Belfast. There was a large attendance. Amongst those present were:—

"Thomas A. Dickson, J.P.; Rev. Prof. Galbraith, F.T.C.D.; J. Johnstone, J.P.; Alfred Webb, Alderman Winstanley, Surgeon-Gen. King, T. H. Webb, Richard Ashe King, J. F. Keatinge, T.C.; R. Gregg, T. C.; James Walker, C. H. Oldham, Edward Purser, Surgeon Myles, F. J. Gregg, Amos Varian, Henry E. Brown, A. Andrews, Thomas Mason, &c.

"Mr. Thomas Dickson, J.P., on coming forward, was greeted with loud applause. He said it was a pleasure for him to come to that meeting to-night, and to see it presided over by an Ulster man, a Gladstonian Liberal like himself (applause), a gentleman who was not afraid of applying Liberal principles to Ireland at the present time. (Hear, hear.) They met there to-night, he need not say, at another very important crisis of the history of their country, to consider and discuss the policy of Lord Salisbury—(hisses)—to consider the policy of coercion, as again announced by his Government in connection with the introduction of fresh coercive legislation for Ireland. Again the Tory party and an English party bring forward coercion as a remedy for Irish grievances and discontent. He had been asked, in view of this crisis, to propose the following resolutions:

And then he read the resolution, which was very much in the tone of those that I have the honor to lay before the House to-day, and he went on to speak as follows, as an Irish Protestant, to the Irish Protestants there assembled:—

"He could only say, and he was sure they all agreed with him, that if the Tory Government expect to succeed in a policy of coercion in Ireland—a policy that had failed in the strong hands of Earl Spencer and Mr. Forster—that that policy would never succeed in the hands of Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Balfour (cries of 'Never'). Never was a Coercion Act more vigorously administered than it was administered by Lord Spencer, but the policy ignominiously failed; and yet when Lord Spencer was in Dublin Castle administering this Act, he was backed up by the whole Liberal party, and that party was now as much opposed to the renewal of such a Coercion Act as Lord Spencer was (applause). But then they were told that remedial legislation was to accompany Coercion. Now, this was only repeating the old blunder over again. One Government goes out and another Government comes in, and these Governments never seem to learn a lesson from their predecessors (hear, hear). Coercion failed with one of the strongest Governments which ever existed, and the Tory party helped to discard it when administered by the Liberal party, and yet with the light of the past before them the Conservatives ventured to try another oppressive measure for Ireland. What happened in 1881, when Mr. Gladstone brought forward his Land Act? There was then a strong cry from the landlords and Dublin Castle that coercion was wanted, and Mr. Gladstone then, as he now admits, erred in listening to the advice which reached him from Dublin Castle, and his Government pushed forward side by side the two measures. What was the result of the Coercion Act? It discredited the Land Act, and placed serious difficulties in the way of the Act being administered. Coercion, which had failed in the hands of Mr. Gladstone, will never succeed in the hands of Lord Salisbury (applause)."

Now, Sir, we are told in some quarters that the people of this country are talking about what they really do not understand. That they know nothing at all about the nature of this Coercion Act; that they have not the text of this Act before them, and consequently are not able to express an opinion upon it. Well, I think it will not be out of place, as the Act is a very short one, to read the text of it to the House. I give it as published in *United Ireland*:

The following is the text of the 87th Coercion Bill:

1. Magistrates may examine witnesses on oath, even in cases where no person is charged before them with the committal of the crime which is the subject of enquiry.

2. The jury system is abolished altogether for certain classes of crime, punishable by a limited term of imprisonment. In other words, two stipendiary magistrates are to have summary jurisdiction, and may impose sentences not exceeding six months hard labor for any of the following offences: Criminal conspiracy, boycotting, rioting, offences under the Whiteboy Acts; assaulting officers of the law, taking forcible possession or inciting to any of the foregoing offences.

3. In jury trials the venue may be changed on the certificate of the Attorney General that a fairer trial can be had in some other place in Ireland. A prisoner, however, is to have a right to appeal against any proposed change of venue.

4. In jury trials either the Attorney General or the prisoner may demand a special jury.

5. In cases of murder, attempt to murder, aggravated crimes of violence, arson, or breaking or firing into dwellings, the Attorney Generals for England and Ireland together may certify that a fair trial can be

had in England, the State to pay expenses of carrying prisoner, his witnesses, solicitor and counsel to England.

6. These enactments are only to apply to such districts of Ireland as may be proclaimed by the Lord Lieutenant.

7. The Lord Lieutenant in Council will have power to declare it an offence against the Act to have anything to do with an association formed for the purpose of commission of crimes or of inciting or enabling persons to commit crime, or of inciting to intimidation, or of interfering with the administration of the law or the maintenance of order.

8. The Act is to be permanent.

Now, Sir, anyone knowing, as I said before, the history of Ireland, anyone knowing what has occurred there and the unfortunate circumstances that have surrounded the trials of prisoners for each and every offence enumerated in this Act, will realise the full import of this legislation. In the first section magistrates are empowered to examine on oath witnesses in cases where no person is charged with the committal of the crime which is the subject of enquiry. Those gentlemen are to have a roving commission, they are to be authorised to fish about for evidence; and the country is to be made, what? Why, it is to be made a regular elysium for the informer, a regular elysium for those who will first of all induce poor, unfortunate and misguided men into secret societies and conspiracies against the Government, that those informers and traitors may hand them over to the authorities and receive the reward for their noble and disinterested services. That is one of the effects of this first clause. It will make Ireland a land where no man who values liberty, no man who hopes to call his soul his own, can live for a day. He will be at the mercy of every traitor, every spy and every scoundrel who wishes to induce poor men to become his victims. We now take the last section, and we find that this Act is to be permanent. And thus we are told that after all those years of Union, after all those Coercion Acts I have enumerated have been passed and have failed to produce the effect desired, the people of Ireland are told that this document which I hold in my hand is to be the charter of their liberties for ever, that the Act is to be permanent, the light shut out for ever. And this is the result of coercion as practiced during the last 87 years. I shall not trust myself to speak on the other clauses of this Act; I shall quote the words of Mr. Gladstone's speech on the subject at the time the measure was introduced into Parliament, in answer to Mr. Balfour's explanation of the Bill. He said:

"It is an extreme measure, in my opinion; to grant that demand would be one of the most formidable breaches of trust that any popular assembly could perpetrate. In my opinion, one of the greatest and grossest breaches of trust will be committed by this House if it relaxes the conditions on which it has been its rule to give its sanction to changes in the criminal law for the purpose of giving it increased stringency against a portion of Her Majesty's subjects (cheers). No case, I must say, has been made out for such a demand, not even a shadow of a cause to justify the demand, and none has, by candid confession on the other side, been made on account of the extreme crime and offences which exist in Ireland (hear, hear). The right hon. gentleman the Chief Secretary, has been good enough to explain to us the provisions of the Bill. One proposal, however, would have to be carefully examined. I refer to the Irish trials which are to be heard here in London by English juries (laughter). There have been sinister predictions in the newspapers of a proposal of this kind; but I thought it my duty to the Government not to believe it (cheers). I did not believe that I should live to see the day when a proposal so wanton, so insulting, so exasperating, so utterly in contrast with the whole of the lessons of Irish history, would ever have been submitted to the British House of Commons (loud cheers). I shall have an opportunity of saying more than this when the exact provisions are before me; but this I must say—this I always understood—that trial by jury meant trial by our peers—trial, as nearly as possible, by persons as near as may be in the same circumstances. But the enforcement of such a proposal as this would be an exact reversal of the fundamental principle of trial by jury (hear, hear). Whenever we do interfere with trial by jury it is well that you should avoid the capital and fatal error of discarding the substance while you keep only the form, as seems to me to be at the bottom of the cruel and grievous proposal of the Government. Another provision on which I would say a word, or rather the absence of provision, is in relation to the duration of time. That, I must say, makes our blood run cold (hear, and cheers). It is a very sad state of things if, after our eighty-seven years of legislation, which was, no doubt, intended by many, even of those who used such discreditable means of promoting the union, to be the harbinger and certain hope of peace and goodwill between the countries—after going through three