

There have been times in the history of our country—many, fortunately, and frequent—when “none were for a party, and all were for the state;” and I must say that it has struck me—I hope it will strike you—that, looking at the last three and a half years, there never was a time when it was more necessary that every honest patriot should remember that he was an Englishman first and a party politician afterwards. (Cheers.) Now, sir, I never entered Parliament for any of the constituencies I have represented—as a mere delegate (hear, hear), and as regards the ancient borough of Hythe and its modern sisters of Sandgate and Folkestone, and that country district which the wisdom of Parliament added to its boundaries, I have always considered that I was representing a constituency eminently independent (hear, hear); and I can assure this meeting, and I believe they will be entirely in accordance with me when I say, that the vote of an independent constituency upon those momentous questions which agitate the public mind is of far more value in a moral and patriotic sense than the vote of a constituency which chooses always to crouch to the whipper-in of the party that it professes to prefer. (Cheers.) And, sir, it has always seemed to me that in our constituency of Hythe we have those elements of electoral independence which unfortunately in some constituencies are absent. We have amongst us, to begin with, a resident population of men who have served their country in every clime of the wide world. Then we have professional gentlemen coming here, for the sake of health, whose opinions upon most questions must be not only important but experienced. Then we have the mercantile portion of our constituency, which, for honour and independence, can hardly be equalled. And beyond all that, we have our fishing trade, our artisans and others—men disposed to think for themselves and to defy dictation. (Cheers.) I think, therefore, that if there is a place in the world which, while holding fast to those great principles upon which all free political action is founded, desire in details not to be chained or fettered—if there is such a constituency, it is this; and such a constituency deserves, I venture to think, an independent member. (Cheers.)

I, sir, have always regarded myself as a trustee for that independence, and whenever difficult questions have arisen, I have taken the precaution to consult those whose opinions I