

scattered all over the earth, with no force binding them, but attached to the mother-land simply by their own devotion. If, in the days of the Emperor Augustus, when Rome had reached the summit of her power, when after generations of conflict this empire had at last reached a condition of peace, when her dominions extended all over the basin of the Mediterranean, but when thirty legions were necessary and were kept moving all the time from one end of the empire to another to keep in subjection rebellious races—if then some one had said to the strong Roman statesmen of that day: The time will come when the small island of Britain, now the most distant of Rome's possessions, will itself establish an empire which will extend to the confines of the earth and will be maintained, not by force but by a new principle discovered by her people, the principle that government must rest on the consent of the governed, these great Roman statesmen would have laughed at the idea; they would have said: That is Ptolemy; force and force alone, can build and maintain an empire. If, without going so far back, we go no further back in history than the first year of the reign of the late queen, when Upper Canada and Lower Canada were in the throes of rebellion, if some one had then said the day will come when these two provinces, now kept in subjection and obedience by force of arms, will reject force, will become independent and devoted subjects, and will extend the dominion of the Queen from ocean to ocean—the answer would have been that it was the maddest of all conceptions. Well, Sir, this maddest of all conceptions has become the reality of the present day. And now, Sir, I pause to ask: What is the principle, what is the inspiration, what is the one thing that quickened reaction in Canada, that brought Canada to the position that she occupies to-day?—what is the principle, the inspiration which has made Australia what it is, which has made New Zealand what it is, and which to-day, in South Africa, turn her war only ten years ago, is holding up a nation under the British flag? What is it, but the principle of autonomy, the principle of self-government? Yes, it was when Lord Durham, speaking from Canada, then still in the throes of civil war, said that the only manner in which the colonies could be kept loyal and devoted, was to give them self-government—it was then that the principle was announced upon which the British empire is founded. My hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Gordon) the other day, in his speech on the first reading of this Bill, said that the British empire is of recent date. He is right. It is of recent date; the date was the day when the principle was adopted of self-government for the colonies. Consider, for a moment, what would be the position of Canada if we had

continued to be governed, as we were in 1782, simply by irresponsible ministers in Downing street. Irresponsible I mean to the people of this country? Should we have content, devotion, loyalty? No, we should have to-day what we had then—discontent, and dangerous dissatisfaction. Sir, the history of all countries which have had colonies is the same, with the exception of Britain in the nineteenth century. In every case there arose in the colonies a class of different interests from that of the mother country; the mother country would not yield; discontent crept in and led at last to estrangement. Lord Durham was the first statesman of all the ages to recognize this truth. And he proclaimed it boldly. And bolder yet was the remedy he suggested—give the colonies the same rights and privileges and powers as are exercised by British men in their own islands, the power to govern themselves according to their own rules and notions. The conclusion of Lord Durham was so strong that there was nobody to combat it. But it was so much at variance with the practice of all the ages that there was no one to apply it. When the constitution of 1841 was ostensibly established upon the report of Lord Durham, there was no acknowledgement of the principle of self-government, and the assurances given by Lord John Russell to Mr. Poulet Thomson, the first governor under the new system, was to govern, not according to the views of ministers responsible to the people but in the manner directed by himself alone. And this is the manner in which P. M. Thomson carried on his instructions, as a letter to a friend he said: "I am not a bit afraid of the responsible government. I have already done much to put it down in its inadmissible sense; namely, the demand that the council shall be responsible to the assembly, and that the governor shall take their advice, and be bound by it. In fact, this demand has been made much more for the people than by them."

It was not until there was sent from England a man as grand in genius as Lord Durham himself—Lord Elgin—that, with the assistance of Baldwin and Lafontaine, we had responsible government in this country. And it was from that date that the British empire started upon its triumphant march across the ages. I again pause to ask: When these great men, Durham, Elgin, Lafontaine and Baldwin, laid down the principle of responsible government in this country, did they set a flint upon its potentiality? No, they launched it out, untrammelled and unfettered, to inclose the earth in a bond of union and liberty. They did not tell the people that the principle could be trusted for a certain distance, but that it would have to abandon the moment they came to the ultimate result of its operation.