

tion was on the horizon, had passed an address for the Union—this Parliament was appealed to by the people declaring that they were opposed to confederation. You did not recognise that protest. You determined to accept the voice of the Legislature, and the Act was passed. I should have dilated upon this subject but for this settlement, because it shows the vast importance of obtaining and acting upon recognised popular opinion when expressed in the genuine manner by the people concerned. The circumstance that Nova Scotia had not had the opportunity the Australian States have had of speaking injured the success of federation for at least twenty years, and has been got over only within a recent period. But even then Parliament passed that great Bill as you intend to pass this Bill. It regarded the measure as a treaty or convention between the provinces, and passed it, if I recollect aright, without any substantial alteration. Now all the elements lacking then are present here. You have the march of popular government and administration shown here. You have the methods by which the popular sanction should be obtained laid before us. You have popular resolutions and authority from legislatures. You have freely elected conventions framing the constitution. You have Acts authorising popular *referenda*, and you have popular sanction thereupon. You have the text of the Bill so framed and so approved; and it is upon that we act. There never was an instance of such long consideration and such deliberate sanction, and thus the ease for absolute acceptance here in all domestic affairs is infinitely stronger even than it was in the case of Canada. I join in the regret expressed by my right hon. friend, a moment ago, that at quite an early stage of these Australian discussions the Imperial Government did not come to a conclusion as to what they thought vital to Imperial interests, and did not communicate what they thought absolutely essential. I believe that discussion initiated, as I think it ought to have been, on the other side or here, at an earlier period, would have prevented that which might have been an unhappy circumstance connected with this measure. Now I quite agree that a vote on a referendum does not and cannot imply the same measure of assent to all the proposals contained in the measure. There

is no opportunity for separate expression. It is yea or nay to the whole. But the people knew, as we know, that this constitution was the fruit of compromise and concession. They knew that it was created as the best that was feasible by their trusted leaders whom they had commissioned to do their work. They may have had even a distaste for some of its provisions. What, after all, the people had to determine was whether they would take it all or leave it all. And by what you rightly call overwhelming majorities in every colony—though not at all so overwhelming as those you refuse to recognise every day in Ireland—this constitution was actually passed and accepted. In this great transaction in all matters exclusively Australian, and that is as regards almost all in the Bill, we are not in any sense its authors. The decision may be right or wrong, it may be fortunate or unfortunate for Australia; but it is their affair, not ours. This creature has not been conceived in the womb of this mother of Parliaments. We do but take her on our knees for adoption. We give her a name and place, a title, and a blessing. But we know that she was begotten, fashioned and born on the other side of the globe. Nor is this attitude of ours a humiliating attitude for the mother of Parliaments. It is but a wise, temperate, and dignified recognition of the march of events, of the spread of popular government and popular control. It is indeed a recognition of the fact that this is rather a daughter who is coming of age than a child new born; that she is able to speak for herself, that she has become in truth, as has been said, rather a being now grown up, and is now rather a sister than a daughter nation. Indeed on this view only can the links of empire be maintained. But I may be asked what links are left if on this principle we deal with this great transaction. You may say, "Are we mere registrars of Australian plebiscites? May we not discuss and decide?" I agree in the principle laid down on both sides as to matters exclusively Australian—that we are but the registrars of the Australian will. As to these we are trustees for her of our legislative power, and should use it according to her wish. But as to matters touching the public interests of the Empire, or of parts of the Empire beyond Australia, we are the trustees for