

say, because Mr. Bright is guided in his argument by precedent, and I am not guided by precedent. I say there is no precedent for the British Empire, and you cannot find a precedent for it. The British Empire is going on a way of its own without a precedent. It must be guided by the wants and powers of the moment. Citizens of the British Empire must never be discouraged into the belief that it is going to fall because other empires have fallen before it. Then Mr. Bright said, "Look at Ireland. You have been trying to govern Ireland for centuries, and you cannot do it. What is the use of trying to govern more?" Well, one of my greatest reasons for wishing to associate the colonies more closely with the mother country is that I am unwilling to be left alone in the world with Ireland. It may be a political Utopia, to be left as a united kingdom—more or less united—of which a considerable proportion is Ireland, but that does not realise my idea of the maximum of human happiness. The third argument was that we could not bind our colonies closer to ourselves for the purpose of defence, because they had not the same tariffs as we had. We wish to treat that argument with all respect, but I submit that it really amounts to very much the same as if you were to say because Australians are allowed by local law to marry their deceased wife's sister, and we are not, that it imposes an insuperable barrier in the way of our union.

I suppose the position of the Imperial Federation League is this, that the armaments and fleets of this country may have to be increased in order to afford protection to our colonies and coaling stations. The colonies might, in that case, wish to contribute to the support of these armaments, and of course the contribution would be raised in whatever way the colony thought fit—whether by a protective or free-trade tariff is a matter it does not occur to us to investigate. We have given them local government, and local government must be respected in tariffs as in everything else. Let me go back for one moment to the words "childish and absurd." You observe that these words rankle in my sensitive mind. I felt very deeply this scheme being called "childish and absurd." But let me read you a quotation of what was said by the Liberal Prime Minister of this country in March, 1841. This is what Lord Melbourne said:—"To leave the whole agricultural interests without protection I declare, before God, I think it the wildest and the maddest scheme that it has ever entered the human mind to conceive." Five years later, owing to the exertions and eloquence of Mr. Bright, the agricultural interests were left without protection, and that "wildest and maddest" scheme had been revised. I think we may take comfort from the fact that Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden were able to upset a much stronger dictum uttered by a man engaged in guiding the State; and if Mr. Bright could give us the eloquence and influence which he exerted then it would not take five years to bring about this federation. It is with distress that I have even appeared to differ in the remotest degree from one that I admire