

sion that parliamentary government is superior to any other. It is a great school of thought by which intelligence is disseminated among the electors, by which the common standard of attainment is raised, and by which the country is made more self-reliant upon questions relating to public affairs. But this question is a wholly different one. When was public opinion expressed upon this question? I read the other day, in the course of this debate, an extract from a speech of Lord Beaconsfield, upon the question of the disestablishment of the Irish Church. He said that the House of Commons, without the sanction of the country, was not morally competent to deal with that question. He denied the moral competency—

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. He did deal with it.

Mr. MILLS. The hon. gentleman says he did what?

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. He did deal with it.

Mr. MILLS. Mr. Gladstone did deal with it, but it was after an election was had, and after the country had sustained it. Mr. Gladstone proposed some resolutions, and those resolutions were carried through the House of Commons, but no further step was taken until an election was had. The views expressed by Mr. Disraeli were acquiesced in, an election was had, and then he admitted the moral competence of Parliament, to deal with that question. Did he say that the supporters of the Government were obliged to support that measure? He said a majority were committed to the principle, but beyond that the majority were not called upon to go. I will read the views of Lord Beaconsfield, and we will see what a great difference there is between the views of the hon. member for King's and his leader, and the views of the great leader of the Conservative party of Great Britain at that time. And, be it remembered, this speech was made on the second reading of the Bill, after the election were had, and after a majority of the country had voted in favor of disestablishment:

"I take the fair interpretation of the decision of the country at the general elections to be this, that it was the opinion of the country that the right hon. gentleman should have the opportunity of dealing with the question of the church in Ireland. I do not understand that the country pledged itself to support any particular measure. No particular measure was then before it; but it declared and decided, in a manner which could not be mistaken, that the right hon. gentleman should have a fair and full opportunity of dealing with the question of the church in Ireland. I cannot, therefore, take this occasion which might otherwise have been a most legitimate one, of preventing the right hon. gentleman from placing his policy before the country, and I shall advise none of those whose conduct I can influence to oppose the motion the right hon. gentleman has just made."

What does that mean? He says it would have been a legitimate and proper thing for him to prevent the passage of that measure, if an election had not been had upon it, but an election having been had upon it, the views of the country having been expressed in its favor, he had not a moral right to oppose the measure by all those resources which the rules of Parliament placed at his disposal, as he would have had, if the views of the country had not been taken. Now, Sir, those are very different views from those advanced by the First Minister, and the hon. gentlemen behind him. Why, Sir, what protection have we under our constitutional system against the conduct of an arbitrary and unprincipled Minister, and a servile majority, if the views of these hon. gentlemen are recognised as sound constitutional views? The hon. gentleman might propose the annexation of this country to the United States. He might get a majority of his supporters to support such a measure.

Some hon. MEMBERS. No fear.

Mr. MILLS. The hon. gentleman says, No fear; but I would ask him if there is any man in this House who, if he had been told two years ago that a motion to enfranchise all the Indians residing on the reservations, from ocean to ocean in this country, would be submitted, would not have indignantly repudiated such a thing. Why, Sir, the descent

Mr. MILLS.

of Avernus is easy; hon. gentlemen are going down hill with facility; they are ready to support propositions which they would have indignantly rejected a short time ago, and I say the only protection we have against the abuse of parliamentary authority is that every proposed change in the constitution shall only be made after public sanction has been given at an election. There is no necessity for this haste, no reason for this hurry. What reason has the hon. gentleman given for taking this extraordinary course on this occasion? Why not go to the country on this question, as well as the question of the National Policy? The hon. gentleman was so anxious to obtain the views of the country, so anxious to find out whether the people had changed their minds on that question, that he dissolved Parliament two years before its time, to ascertain the views of the country; and yet the hon. gentleman proposes in this matter to carry through a measure vitally affecting our constitution, without any recourse to the people, and without giving them the opportunity of expressing their views on it at all. Sir, if the hon. member for King's, N.B., was right, there was no necessity for examining this or any other measure. All he needed was to ascertain the views of the Government to give them his earnest and active support. It is not the exercise of judgment but of implicit obedience which is sought under such a doctrine. The hon. gentleman as a political philosopher, as a disciple of the First Minister, might be anxious to know his views, to make himself conversant with them, but that would be a matter for his own individual pleasure or amusement, because a knowledge of a measure or of its merits would not at all be of any consequence to enable him to do what he says is the bounden duty of the supporters of the Government—simply to register the wishes of the Government on this and every other question. Now, Mr. Chairman, the hon. gentleman's line of discussion suggests the question: To what extent a Government is entitled to the support of a party—how far ought party allegiance to go? I say that when a Government goes to the country upon a question of public policy, and the supporters of that Government go to the country taking the same views as the Administration, they are bound if sustained to give effect to the wishes of the country in that particular. But it does not at all follow that they are bound to support the Government on every other question which may come up, during the five years of its administration. Take the case of Mr. Gladstone, when he carried the United Kingdom with him, in the policy which he initiated in his Midlothian speeches. The country supported those views, and the great majority of those taking the same view were elected. But does that bind Parliament to support Mr. Gladstone's views on the Egyptian war, the war in the Soudan, or the disputed boundaries of Afghanistan? These are questions which have forced themselves on the attention of the Government and the nation, and the members who usually support the Administration are just as free to take that course, which an independent judgment suggests to them as being in the public interests, as any other portion of the community. Sir, upon this question the country was never consulted. I look at the third section of the Bill and I see there no provision that the hon. gentleman explained to the country, no provision as to which the hon. gentleman said, if I am elected I will seek to carry out these views. There was nothing of that sort enunciated; and this is not a question of emergency forcing itself on the attention of the Government, but a question which the hon. gentleman has dangled before Parliament during the last 18 years, and which no one supposed that he would undertake to force upon this House. Sir, there was in this Bill a provision relating to woman suffrage. When was that question submitted to the people of this country? When were they asked to say whether they were willing or not to enfranchise the widows and