

I represent in this House. The hon. gentleman opposite sneered at my two hon. friends who expressed an opinion to that effect, and said their speeches demonstrated their ignorance. Perhaps if he were candid he would have said, —and I think I will point out before I am done— that his knowledge on the subject is not quite so accurate as to enable him to cast a slur on hon. members on this side. I think hon. members on both sides of the House, if they are honest, will say that the percentage of members of this House who are prepared to assert that they know enough of this question to speak intelligently upon it, and to speak with the responsibility of members of Parliament, is very small indeed, though I do not suppose we are to be blamed for that. We have enough, as I have said before, to do in governing our own land, and we cannot pretend to grasp the whole world of politics and understand the minutiae of the different questions which, at one time or other, may arise in the Parliament of Great Britain. Now, if the Coercion Bill, so-called, is for the purpose of enabling the home authorities, the government of the Queen, to enforce the laws of the land, it is not, as the hon. leader of the Opposition said, effecting any change in the criminal law. It does, it is true, effect important changes in the procedure of that law. But there is nothing in the Act of Parliament, of which I have a copy—and I think the hon. gentleman spoke as if he had only read the statement of the Chief Secretary on the subject—there is nothing which, so far as I understand the criminal law, in the slightest degree creates offences, though, undoubtedly it creates changes in the procedure for the suppression of the crimes which, by the common law of England, and by various statutes passed from time to time have been created offences against which they are perhaps necessary if the bonds of civilised society are not to be altogether unloosened. We know that there was a Coercion Bill in 1880 for a limited period of time, and another in 1881, again for a limited period of time. We know that the latter was caused by a terrible tragedy which occurred in Phoenix Park, which the hon. leader of the Opposition has characterised as a massacre; and certainly we can all speak of it as the most diabolical murder of modern days. We are told that these Coercion Bills have only added to the difficulties instead of removing them; and we were told this afternoon by the hon. member for Quebec East (Mr. Laurier) that that will always be so—that the attempt to have the laws of the land enforced must always be followed by meetings, by secret associations, by fresh and greater breaches of the criminal code. Well, Sir, that has not been found to be the result of these enforcements of the criminal law. I hold in my hand a small history of the English Parliament during the last five years, in which, speaking about coercion, the author tells us this fact, which I commend to the attention of this House:

“The improvement was very limited, it must be allowed; too slowly it developed; but eventually brightened considerably, and really another era had dawned for Ireland; if we consider the decrease in the number of agrarian outrages alone. In 1881 there were 4,431. The year following the passage of the Crimes Act saw 762 only, and murders having decreased from twenty-six in 1881 to none in 1884.”

That was the effect of the passage of the Crimes Bill in 1881. And when the period came for that Crimes Bill to be renewed we know the difficulties that were supposed to have occurred in Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet; and it was said by some that it was owing to dissensions with regard to the renewal of that Bill that that Cabinet shortly afterwards fell. We know, too, as a matter of history, that Lord Salisbury's first Administration refused to renew the Crimes Bill, and from that time to this the Government of England has endeavored to govern Ireland by the ordinary law of the land. What has been the result? The result cannot be known to all; but when the Minister comes before the House of Commons and makes the statement to

that House which I am about to read, and asks for powers in order to secure respect for the law of the land, I do not know very well how we, sitting 4,000 miles away, have a right to criticise, much less to censure, that Government. Mr. W. H. Smith, in bringing this matter to the notice of the House of Commons used this language, after quoting Mr. Gladstone's own words used in 1881:

“Is that the state of Ireland—Is one in which the administration of justice has failed, and in which to a very considerable extent the influence of terror places in abeyance the discharge of civil duties and the exercise of civil rights. The powers we ask for are necessary to maintain social order. They are necessary to maintain the very existence of society upon the conditions in force and recognised by every civilised community.”

When the responsible Minister of the Crown, who has information not open to us here, comes down to the House of Commons and uses language like that, I do not know very well how even in the House of Commons the powers they ask are to be denied to them. They went further and said:

“So serious do we find the condition of affairs in Ireland to-day that we tell the House of Commons that if they refuse to give us the powers which we as a Government desire, after having for two years tried to govern the country by the ordinary laws of the land, we will surrender to others the responsibility of advising Her Majesty in the government of the country.”

The Government made that statement, and fortified it by facts in their information, some of which I have here and might mention, although I am not going to make anything like an exhaustive argument on this question. When I find the statement made by the Chief Secretary that out of over one thousand cases of crimes committed during the preceding year there had been only in the neighborhood of sixty convictions—and the statement made by the hon. leader of the Opposition establishes it; when we know that the people in the different parts of the country have joined associations for the purpose of compelling the landlords to come down to their terms; when we know that sometimes, growing out of those associations, crimes are committed, and sometimes crimes are committed not growing out of them, because the bonds of civilised society are relaxed; and when we know that the jurors who are to try those people belong to those various associations, I want to know how it is possible to expect the criminal law to be enforced without special powers. Now, these are facts which induced the authorities charged with the responsibility of governing that country to say that they must have additional powers; and in the face of these facts we are asked here, in our ignorance of the position of affairs there, to practically vote against the principle of the Bill which has received its second reading recently by a majority of over 100 in the House of Commons of England. Are we the people to take such a position? Are we so negligent of law and order in this country? Are we so careful of liberty, as it is called, as to entitle us to tell the people and Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland that the laws which the responsible advisers of the Crown say are requisite for the maintenance of society should not be passed? Do you remember the strike on the Grand Trunk Railway service which occurred, I think, in the year 1877. Do you remember, Sir, the difficulty that occurred when the Grand Trunk servants refused to do the bidding of their master and struck, having combined, as it was their right to combine, for the purpose of advancing their own interests and getting better terms from their employers. But the hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake) who thinks it so wrong to make the Irish people obey the laws of the land, not merely created a new crime and altered the procedure, but brought down an Act of Parliament and backed by the whole strength of the party then in power, including the hon. member for Quebec (Mr. Laurier), said that a breach of civil contract under the circumstances detailed in this Act, should be a crime. A new difficulty had arisen, the