

Meanwhile Gladstone had no counsel to give his followers, except that they should not 'commit themselves.' By this he meant not to commit themselves *against* Home Rule. In favour of Home Rule he said and wrote what seemed good to him. Lord Hartington at once pounced upon this discrepancy. 'Mr. Gladstone,' he wrote, 'may say as much as he likes about our not committing ourselves; but he has committed himself up to his chin.' There was a vast deal of clamour and discussion on all sides. Chamberlain and Harcourt were as much opposed to Home Rule as Lord Hartington, though, as we all know, Harcourt presently found it convenient to swallow his views. Lord Hartington never wavered. His course was clear at the outset. In January 1886 Gladstone offered him office, which he declined. 'He was very civil,' says Lord Hartington, 'and we parted apparently good friends.' But the severance was now final and complete, nor did Lord Hartington delay in making clear his position to the House of Commons. The first speech which he made after the parting left no room for doubt. Its peroration has lost none of its meaning in the years which have elapsed since its delivery. 'I believe that now, at all events,' said Lord Hartington, 'the people of this country will require that their representatives shall, in relation to Irish affairs, agree to sink all minor differences, and to unite as one man for the maintenance of this great Empire, to hand it down to our successors compact as we have received it from our