

I believe that a love of justice and of generous and liberal treatment is an instinct I might say of that statesman's nature; but he must be sustained, his hands must be held up in order to give him the power to accomplish the task which, though advanced in years, remains for him to do in order to crown a life spent in the service of his country. The hon. gentleman who moved the resolution (Mr. Costigan) said that Scotland was also moving on the subject. Within the last ten days a very important meeting was held which came to the conclusion to ask for a Local Legislature for Scotland with triennial elective Parliaments; and there can be no doubt, notwithstanding the remarkable business tact and talent by which the Scotch business has been managed in Parliament, there have been great and injurious effects in the management of that business. What has been accomplished, has been accomplished by a sort of imperfect federation in that regard. We know that, in regard to all parliamentary measures, the Scotch members have met together and agreed as to what was wanted for the country, and what was agreed upon has been passed through Parliament, unless it trench upon the prejudices and views of others almost without debate. They have not succeeded in all things—they have not succeeded in many important things. They have had strong fights when questions came up which involved the interests of other parts of the United Kingdom; but this agitation in Scotland cannot fail to have an important influence in maturing public opinion on the Irish question. I maintain that the English Parliament cannot deal efficiently with these questions, that from lack of knowledge and sympathy, in consequence of being, as Mr. Gladstone has said, wholly over-weighted, it is not competent, and its incompetency has been proved and confessed by the present Premier, to deal satisfactorily with these questions. Let the British people then give to the Irish people this legitimate vent for their somewhat restless energies, and utilize them in the legitimate occupation of dealing with their own concerns. I have once again to trouble the House with another extract from a still later speech by Mr. Gladstone. Speaking of Parliament the hon. gentleman said:

"Sir, this a subject on which I have very distinct and clear opinions, which I have never scrupled to declare. They are not shared by many gentlemen; probably in this House they may be considered of a speculative character, and it is highly unlikely that I shall ever be called upon to take a practical part in any matter relating to these opinions, but I have the very strongest opinions, upon the advantages of Local Government, and I have the strongest objections to the tendency which I see constantly prevailing to centralization. Not for Ireland merely, but for England, I would take and profess it at all points a cardinal rule of policy, so far as I can with safety to the general structure of the Empire, to decentralise Parliament. We believe that the institution of secondary and local authorities in a country is a great source of strength, and that in principle the only necessary limit to these powers is an adequate and necessary provision for the supremacy of the central authority. (Hear, hear.) I believe that when the demand is made from Ireland for bringing purely Irish affairs more specially or more largely under Irish control outside the walls of Parliament the wise way to meet that demand will not be the method recommended by the member for the University of Dublin, who, if I understood him aright, said that anything recognising purely Irish control for purely Irish affairs must be necessarily a step towards separation, and must therefore be fraught with danger. (Opposition cheers.) That I do not believe to be either a wise or a just method of dealing with that demand. In my opinion the wise and the just method is to require that before any such plan can be dealt with or can be examined with the view of being dealt with on its merits, we must ask those who propose it; and this is the question I have invariably put—"What are the provisions which you propose to make for the supremacy of Parliament." That has been my course, and that is the course I intend to pursue. I am bound to say I have not received an answer to that question. I have never heard in the time of Mr. Butt or from the mouth of any other gentleman any adequate or satisfactory explanation upon that subject. To this declaration I have only one limitation more to add, and that is I am not prepared to give to Ireland anything which in point of principle it would be wrong to give to Scotland if Scotland ask for it. (Home Rule cheers.) That is, I apprehend, what Irish members, those members of the most popular classes, will be ready to accept. (Cheers.) The right hon. gentleman was determined to make out that these declarations on my part were a formidable novelty and he said he believed that I had in Mid-Lothian—the scene of so many misdeeds—(laughter)—and likewise at the Guildhall, which might have been considered a more consecrated precinct—

delivered opinions of this kind. Well, I cannot recall all the speeches I have delivered on the subject, but I have taken the pains to recall six of them—(laughter)—which seems to me a very tolerable allowance. One was made in 1872 at Aberdeen, when I was Prime Minister. The next was in 1879 in Mid-Lothian, and another was made in the Guildhall in 1881. But the three speeches made out of Parliament were balanced by three made in Parliament, for in 1872 as Prime Minister I made a reply to Mr. Butt precisely in the same spirit of the declarations I have now made, and in the spirit of the sentences I uttered last week. I did the same in 1874, when I was not Prime Minister, but leader of the Opposition, and I did the same thing in 1880, when I sat on these benches as an independent member. Perhaps I may be allowed to read a few words of that speech. My hon. friend the member for Cork (Mr. Shaw), in the beginning of 1880, on the 27th of February, made a remarkable speech upon this question. He made a proposition which I could not accept any more than I could accept the proposition of my hon. friend the member for Tipperary (Mr. P. J. Smyth) the other night, and, professing himself an advocate of what I think he termed Home Rule, argued for it and pleaded for it in a spirit I own won my sympathy and regard, and I did not hesitate, as I do not which now, to use these words. (The hon. gentlemen then quoted the words in which he said that from the tone of the hon. member's remarks, if the relations between England and Ireland were to become satisfactory, the most important contribution to that essential end would have been made by Mr. Shaw.) That was the spirit in which I received the declaration made by the hon. member as leader, for he then was leader of the party from Ireland, and every one of the speeches to which I have referred is, I believe, in complete and exact conformity with the brief outline of my opinions upon this question."

Now, Sir, I have read that speech for two or three reasons. First of all, because you will observe that the hon. the Prime Minister, after an interval of reflection, comment and criticism reiterates the demand as an essential condition preliminary to any action on this subject, that a satisfactory solution of all these difficulties should be propounded by those who ask for it on the Home Rule benches. Therefore we find the suggestion that it stand until a day which may never come. Secondly, there is a declaration which he says he has made for ten years, and therefore we find no advance in his views upon this question. Lastly, and most importantly, we find him using these same fatal words with which Irish questions, as I have proved, have been always postponed until the day of grace and utility were passed. This is a practical question. I do not expect to be called upon to deal with it. I care nothing for these speculations. I say it is a practical, a burning question. It is the most practical and burning question we can conceive, and when the Minister has stated that the results are not satisfactory as they stand, that there ought to be a change, that there ought to be a grant of local rights and privileges, that justice demands it, and that it cannot be expected that they will be satisfied if the Parliament of the United Kingdom does not discharge that duty, justice demands that those who have the power and the responsibility should propound that legislation. Now, Sir, I come to the consideration of another branch of this question, and that is whether we have any interest in this question calling upon us to interfere in it, and I deal with that branch of the question now, partly because the hon. gentleman has alluded to it, and partly because it is not the first occasion on which a great Irish question has come under the consideration of this House and has been treated by this House in one way or another. I alluded a while ago to the question of the disestablishment of the Irish Church as one of vast importance both in its direct and indirect relations to the condition of Ireland, and it happened that while that question was under debate a late respected member of this House, the hon. Mr. Holton, seconded by Mr. Mackenzie, moved on the 31st of May, 1869:

"That this House do immediately resolve itself into a Committee to consider the following proposed resolutions:—

"1. That in the opinion of this House the measure now pending before the Imperial Parliament for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church will, if it becomes law, by the removal of one of the chief causes of the deeply rooted discontents which have long existed among a numerous body of Her Majesty's subjects, promote the tranquillity, increase the prosperity and add unmeasurably to the strength as well as the just renown of the great Empire of which this Dominion forms no inconsiderable part.

"2. That this opinion is strengthened and supported by the recent experience of the late Province of Canada; for the controversies which