

the caprice or the decisions of such an assemblage. Sir, the hon. gentleman tells us that he desires that none of his friends should in this matter vote against their consciences. Well, Sir, unless the hon. gentleman has been much misrepresented, but a few months have elapsed since at a meeting which he attended in the city of Toronto, he was good enough to tell his followers that he did not want them to support the Government when they were right but when they were wrong; and this is the man who first attacks my hon. friend for insincerity, and then tells his followers that he does not want them to vote against their consciences when he does not particularly desire or want them to do so. Now, as I understand, there are two questions in these resolutions. One is a question of fact. I agree with the mover, with my hon. friend beside me, and with the hon. Minister himself, in thinking that only in circumstances of an extreme character would we be justified in offering any formal expression of opinion to the British people; but, Sir, no man who knows anything of the state of Ireland for the past thirty years at least, no man who has paid any attention to the way in which that country has, from decade to decade, been depopulated, no man who knows anything of the condition in which the vast mass of the Irish people live, can pretend to say that the condition of Ireland does not warrant every man in the British dominions who has any connection with Ireland in expressing his opinion—and that is all we propose to do—that that condition is eminently unsatisfactory, that the condition of the Irish people is one to which no civilized people before have ever been reduced, and that no exertion is too great, no measure too stringent or too drastic, if it will give relief and satisfaction to the Irish people. My hon. friend alluded to the extraordinary depopulation which had taken place in Ireland. That, Sir, will bear a few words of further remark. It is well known that prior to the Irish famine the population of Ireland approached 9,000,000 of people; 8,750,000—I speak from memory—was, I believe, the estimated population of Ireland by the Census in the year 1846. Five years from that time that population had fallen to 6,500,000, in ten years to 5,750,000, in ten years more to 5,400,000, and in thirty-five years it had fallen to 5,159,000. Now, Sir, no man who has paid any attention to the way in which population moves can fail to know that these figures in themselves alone reveal a tale of depression, a tale of distress, a tale of misgovernment, such as no other country in Europe can show. It is well known that men of the most opposite opinions, men as wide apart as Mr. Carlyle and Mr. Lecky, who differ in all other points almost, agree in this, that the whole condition, the whole Government of Ireland, not for the time my hon. friend speaks of, but for centuries back, has been such as to call for the reprobation of the whole civilized world. And though I would deprecate as much as any man acts committed by many of those people within the last few years—although I am not a friend of anarchy, or of communism—still I am bound to say that nothing the law can do ought to be omitted to provide a better means of existence, greater means of comfort, and of leading a reasonable Christian-like life than have recently been within the power of the Irish people. But I will not waste words on a point which the universal concurrence of all impartial observers bears out. From my own knowledge of the condition of the people of Ireland, I can say it has been such as to deprive any Irishman of bettering his condition so long as he remained in Ireland. I shall proceed to consider what is perhaps more pertinent to our present purpose, our rights as subjects of the Dominion to express our opinion on this point. In the first place the whole composition of our people, which is to a large extent an Irish-Scotch colony rather than an English one, gives us a very large interest indeed in this Irish question. It is well known that we have not succeeded in obtaining as large a proportion as could be de-

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sired of Irish immigration, probably one-fourth of the English-speaking part of our inhabitants are Irish by birth or descent. It is only too well known what that great mass of Irishmen must bring with their descendants. Several millions who have gone to the United States have been unfortunately, I am sorry to say, but not unnaturally, imbued with a feeling of very bitter hostility to the English people and the English institutions. Now, how has that reacted upon us? Does not every man know that the whole position of Canada has been jeopardized, not once, but again and again, by reason of the animosity felt toward us by Irish Americans? Must I recall to the memory of hon. members the fact that for five or six years together we were obliged to stand in arms against attempted inroads on the part of these people, and that hundreds of thousands of dollars of the people of Canada, and many valuable lives, were sacrificed to repel those invasions. And must I, in the last place, recall to mind this unfortunate disgraceful fact that the Government of England proved themselves quite unable either to exact any reparation for those inroads. I am willing to make all reasonable concessions for the sake of peace. I know how deeply our interests are involved in maintaining friendly relations with the great people opposite; so I am always desirous to speak of them with the utmost possible consideration, but no such consideration should warrant the British Government in consenting, as they did, at the time of that ignominious capitulation, to forego our just right to have satisfaction for the outrages committed on us by the Fenians, and at the same time to consent to reparation for injuries inflicted on American commerce by cruisers fitted out in British ports. I believe it is not one of the least reproaches against the hon. Premier that he is the first Minister of Canada who put his signature to a treaty which practically deprived us of all right, or power at any rate, of enforcing our just rights in that matter, or of obtaining any satisfaction. We stand in a position such as no other colony of England does or can occupy. We have experienced in our proper person the bitter fruits of the English misgovernment of Ireland for many years; and we therefore have the right which belongs to men who have suffered injuries to lend our advice to the Throne in this matter, if in no other. Moreover, as was observed justly by the hon. member for West Durham, we have special grounds for saying that we ourselves having tried the experiment for nearly fifty years, having previously had a different form of Government, are able to speak with knowledge and experience of the advantages of a local form of Government for Provinces of widely different character. No man, I think, at any rate no man who really desires the welfare of his country, will desire to see the old Legislative Union brought about. Therefore, having so far, with reasonable success, carried out this project, which the best statesmen are admitting would be a very desirable thing to carry out in England and in Ireland, we are able to speak with some authority on that branch of the subject. It is no secret, it has been no secret for many years, that English statesmen of the highest rank—Mr. Gladstone himself and a great many others of equal note—have been obliged to point out again and again that the attempt to carry on the enormous affairs of the British Empire in a Parliament charged with the pettiest local details as well as the most important issues, was, from the very multitude of affairs thrust upon their hands, becoming a failure. What is it, at this moment, the British Parliament are engaged in doing? They have got great questions to decide. They have this burning question before them, yet almost their whole time until now has been taken up in devising some means whereby the very cumbrous procedure may be simplified and they may be able to carry on their ordinary business. I cannot but regret that the right hon. the First Minister should have taken the line he did towards my hon. friends. My hon. friend had a right to speak as he did.