

speech was delivered by that same statesman, under the responsibility of office, in the Imperial House of Commons, not very long ago, in which he once again recurred to this subject and said:

"We attach great value," said Mr. Gladstone, "to the extension, perhaps I should say to the establishment—(hear, hear)—of the principles of Local Government in Ireland. We believe that one of the great evils under which Ireland labors is the want of local administration, and a more central system of authority. We believe that the state of Ireland never can be satisfactory until its people have acquired and learned by tradition and practice to exercise those powers of Local Government which were so beneficial in other portions of the Empire. Moreover, we believe that where the Irish people had the opportunity within a limited range of giving proof of their powers and qualities and capabilities for Local Government, as they have done under the Poor Law Acts and through some other channels, they have administered well. Indeed, no one can doubt that, or their perfect capacity for such a duty. But this is speaking on the question of purely local administration. The motion of my honorable friend embraces matters of wider scope. I wish to point out to those honorable gentlemen that neither they, nor so far as I know Mr. Butt before them, nor so far as I know Mr. O'Connell before him, ever distinctly explained in an intelligent and practical form the manner in which the real knot of this question was to be untied. The principle on which they profess to proceed is that purely Irish matters are to be dealt with by a purely Irish authority, Imperial matters to be left to the Imperial authority of a Chamber in which Ireland is to be represented. But they have not told us by what authority it is to be determined which matters taken one by one are Irish, and which matters are Imperial. Until they lay before the House a plan in which they go to the very bottom of the question, and give us to understand in what manner that division is to be accomplished, the practical consideration of this subject cannot really be arrived at, and I know not how any effective judgment upon it can be pronounced. I am well convinced that neither this Parliament nor any other House of Commons will at any time assent to any measure by which the one paramount centre of authority necessary for holding together in perfect unanimity and compactness this great Empire can possibly be in the slightest degree impaired. (Ministerial and Opposition cheers.) We are entitled and bound to ask a clear and explicit explanation as to the mode in which that vital matter is to be determined. Who is to say what purposes are Imperial? Who is to determine the circumscription within which the Irish authority is to have a final voice? Quotations have been made in reference to the positions of other countries—for example, Finland in relation to Russia. But this affords no practical illustration of the matter. It would be just as rational for those gentlemen to quote the case of the Channel Islands. With regard to the Isle of Man, we have sometimes interfered in the matter of Custom duties, but not in my recollection have we interfered in the legislation of the Channel Islands. We have left it entirely to their own authority, and we have not felt any inconvenience flow from that arrangement. Thus while some development is given to the principle of Local Government without any practical inconvenience, I think the case of Finland and Russia is not different from the case presented by England and the Channel Islands. The case of Austria and Hungary has also been cited. I fully grant that the magnitude of that case is such that if you can, by the development of that case, show it affords a precedent for us, you certainly make out a strong case. I have heard of the alleged and the great and paramount difficulty of this question to which I have just referred, namely, the establishment of a dividing and a divided authority—as in the case of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—by a reference of the matter to the personal authority of the Sovereign. If that be so, am I really to understand that it is the proposal of those members of this House who take the view I am now referring to that the personal authority of a Sovereign in this country is to decide the question of what subjects are to be referred to the Parliament of Ireland and what subjects are to be referred to the Imperial Parliament of this country. If that is the doctrine held, then I say you are immediately involved in a dilemma more hopeless than any that has presented itself to you, because on the one hand the subjects are to be decided on the authority of responsible Ministers, or on the other hand by a personal will or whim. If the decision is to be determined on the authority of responsible Ministers—the responsible Ministers of Great Britain or the responsible Ministers of Ireland who are to exist under the plan that is now proposed (hear, hear), evidently you can't refer to the responsible Ministers of Great Britain the power of drawing a distinction which involves the most vital, delicate and practical parts of the subject. Then, if in the highest and nicest matter of Government you are going again to set up the personal responsibility of the Sovereign apart from the advice of responsible Ministers, you are at once proposing a revolution in this country more profound than you need bring about by the establishment of any form of Government whatever. (Hear, hear.) I express for myself, and I am sure for my colleagues, that we are most favorable to the introduction of a rightly understood principle of Local Government in Ireland, and most desirous to promote it. For the first of the purposes they have in view they cannot take the first step, they cannot establish one foot of ground upon which and from which to address their arguments to the House of Commons, until they have proposed a plan in which it shall be clearly set forth by what authority, by what machinery, they mean to divide Imperial and local questions, and so to give satisfaction to the members of this House upon its first and most paramount duty, namely, the maintaining of the supremacy of

Mr. BLAKE.

the Imperial authority for every practical purpose relating to the interests and the purposes of this great Empire." (Cheers.)

Now, Sir, in that speech, while announcing once again his adhesion to the principle of Local Government, that great statesman has endeavored to shift from the shoulders of the responsible Government of the Empire to the shoulders of those who are in a hopeless minority, a question which belongs to that Government to solve. I say that it belongs to those who are responsible for the good government of the Empire, who have the majority, who have the power, who can initiate legislation themselves to grapple with the difficulty. I say that those who admit that the present system is unjust, who admit that the present condition of Ireland cannot be satisfactory without some change, who acknowledge that a change can be made, are in an untenable position when they tell the minority: "Gentlemen, come forward, propound some plan, solve every difficulty, tell us how you would settle this question, and until you do that we are not called upon to act." That is not, in my opinion, language worthy of any statesman, be he Conservative or Reformer. It is not upon such statements that the Irish question can be settled. It would be folly to blink the consideration that any measure that Mr. Gladstone may propose on this question would be unsatisfactory to many, and at any rate it would not be accepted by the Irish people as a final settlement of the question. But I maintain that the longer you delay, the greater the difficulties, and I maintain that though the proposition you are able to propose may not be satisfactory to all, it is no ground whatever for declining to do that which you yourself acknowledged it is just should be done. True justice will do that which is right, and will give that measure for relief which it knows is just, and which believe it will give that added measure of safety and security which will result from the changed state of affairs. What is the state of affairs? The Prime Minister of England says the condition of Ireland is unsatisfactory, because the Irish people have not the measure of Local Government which they ought to have, and he says: "I will not give that measure of Local Government to you; I will not stir hand or foot in the matter until the Irish members in the House of Commons, who are in the minority, and are powerless to do anything, shall propose a measure which shall be satisfactory to themselves, and that they will undertake to deal with this complicated and exacerbated question, so full of difficulties and in the light of all the errors and circumstances of the past.

It being Six o'clock, the Speaker left the Chair.

After Recess.

Mr. BLAKE. I will not engage in a discussion of the various hypothetical cases and somewhat strained difficulties which it seems to me are dealt with in that speech on that question. I frankly admit that the division power, local and federal is one of them; but how there can be a difficulty in deciding how that is to be regulated and in determining how it is to be regulated by a general Act of justice, I cannot at all see. There can be no doubt whatever that the difficulty which occurred to the Prime Minister on this occasion, was the view which he has entertained and expressed so freely and which is that same difficulty which has prevented justice being done to Ireland in former years and under other circumstances; it is the difficulty of having to deal with a recalcitrant and inert mass of public opinion not sufficiently advanced to enable him to grapple with the subject. To him I believe the words of the great poet of the adjoining republic apply when he says:

"His statecraft was the golden rule,
His right of vote a sacred trust,
Clear above threat and ridicule,
All heard his challenge 'Is it just?'"