

the well understood rules of constitutional government, and we have found as a whole that we have prospered in that way. But while that is so, are we not pretending to go a little too far? Are we not pretending to do too much when not content with the liberty which we enjoy ourselves, we propose to dictate to the Imperial Parliament which has delegated to us these powers, what they should do under circumstances where they have great responsibility and full knowledge, whereas we have neither the knowledge nor the responsibility which belongs to that great body? What is this Coercion Bill, so called, and why has it been introduced? I am not going to argue to-night in favor of that measure, nor am I going to argue against it. I humbly admit differing altogether from hon. gentlemen on the opposite side, for whom their leader spoke, that my acquaintance with the subject is not sufficient to enable me to discuss it in that way on my own account and form a competent opinion upon it, much less to bind those whom 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 of 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 civilized 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 characterized 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 of 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