

HOME RULE.

Mr. Gladstone's Great Speech.

Details of the Measure to Give Ireland Self-Government—
Two Hours of Powerful
Oratory and Intense
Interest.

At last the time, so anxiously expected and so long hoped for, has come, and the Grand Old Man has proclaimed to the listening world the programme which he intends carrying out with regard to Ireland. Needless to say that lobbies, galleries and every available spot in the Parliament House were occupied by eager listeners. Owing to the great length and still greater importance of the speech we are obliged to refrain from any comment and merely to give our readers the text and substance of an address that will pass into history with the most momentous speeches of Burke and Pitt.

Mr. Gladstone spoke as follows in a clear, strong and resonant voice:—I may appropriately remind the House that the voices which usually pleaded the cause of Irish self-government in Irish affairs within these walls during the last seven years have been almost entirely mute. I return, therefore, to the period of 1886 when a proposition of this kind was submitted on the part of the government of the day, and I beg to remind the House of the position then taken up by all the promoters of these measures. I said that we had arrived at a point in our transactions with Ireland where the two roads parted. You have, we said, to choose one or the other. One is the way of Irish autonomy according to the conceptions I have just referred to; the other is the way of coercion. That is our contention. It will be in the recollection of the House how that contention was most stoutly and largely denied. It was said over and over again by many members opposite, "We are not coercionists; we do not adopt that alternative and neither can we adopt it." (Ministerial cheers.) That assertion of theirs was undoubtedly sustained by the proposals, especially from the dissentient Liberals, of various plans dealing with Irish affairs. Those plans, though they fell entirely short in principle and in scope of Irish self-government, yet were of no trivial or mean importance. They went far beyond what had heretofore been usually proposed in the way of local self-government for Ireland.

THE FAILURE OF COERCION.

Well, what has been the result of the dilemma as it was then put forward on this side of the House and repelled by the other? Has our contention that the choice lay between autonomy and coercion been justified or not? (Liberal cheers.) What has become of each and all of these important schemes for giving Ireland self-government in provinces, and giving her even a central establishment in Dublin with limited powers? All vanished into thin air, but the reality remains. The roads were still there—autonomy or coercion. The choice lay between them, and the choice made was to repel autonomy and embrace coercion. You cannot always follow coercion in an absolutely uniform method. In 1886 for the first time coercion was imposed on Ireland in the shape of a permanent law added to the statute book. This state of things constituted an offending against the harmony and traditions of self-government. It was a distinct and violent breach of the promise of the faith of which union was obtained. The permanent system of representation inflicted upon the country a state of things which could not continue to exist. It was impossible to bring the inhabitants of the country under coercion into sympathy with the coercive power. Mr. Gladstone proceeded to dilate at length upon the circumstances under which the act of union was passed, the promise of equality in the laws and of the

commercial equality under which the union was effected.

THE GROWTH OF THE IRISH DEMAND.

It was then prophesied confidently, he said, that Irishmen would take their places in the Cabinet of the United Kingdom, but it had been his honored distinction to sit in the Cabinet with no less than sixty to seventy statesmen, of whom only one, the Duke of Wellington, was an Irishman, while Castlereagh was the only other Irishman who had sat in the Cabinet since the Union. Pitt promised equal laws when the Union was formed, but the broken promises made to Ireland were unhappily written in indelible characters in the history of the country. Coming to 1832, when the resurrection of the people began, and then down to 1880, Ireland would be presented only with a favor in restoring to her the nature of constitutional rights and practical self-government. It is to me astonishing that so little weight is attached by many to the fact that before 1886—before 1886, in fact—Irish wishes for self-government were represented only by a small minority. Since 1885, when the wide extension of the franchise was protected by the secret ballot, Ireland's position has been improved in Parliament. In 1886 there were 85 Nationalists. They have been reduced from 85 to 80 under circumstances somewhat peculiar (hear, hear), and I must own to myself among others for reasons totally and absolutely unintelligible. (Loud cheers.)

HE BECOMES SOMEWHAT SARCASTIC.

Let us look at the state of the case as it now stands. There are but 80 out of 101, that is to say, the wishes of Ireland for Irish self-government in Irish matters are represented only by four-fifths. (Laughter.) Honorable gentlemen seem to have no respect for such a majority as that. Do they recollect, sir, that in England there has never been such a majority? (Cheers.) No parliament of the last fifty years has come within measurable distance of it. If there be anything in the great principle of self-government, which if it be reality, never can work except through the machinery and by the laws of representation, at any rate the voice of the Irish people, the persistency of the Irish people in delivering that voice, and the peaceful constitutioned circumstances under which it has been delivered (Ministerial cheers and Opposition laughter) constitute a great fact in history. It is said—and I admit with truth—that Ireland is not an united country. I don't deny that the division which exists is a fact of great moment. In truth were Ireland united anything that can render Ireland formidable would become much more formidable. Were Ireland united all opposition would vanish as a shadow. (Hear, hear.) Ireland is not united in this sense that in one portion of the country not a mere majority of the higher classes, but a considerable popular feeling is opposed to the present national movement. I will not attempt to measure this numerical strength of the minority.

THE NORTH OF IRELAND OPPOSITION.

It is said by the party opposite that the minority in the North of Ireland is arrayed in unalterable opposition to home rule; Ireland was divided by the animosity of religious circles. Inasmuch as their political life was at that period more highly developed, they led on the Roman Catholic population in the political movement which distinguished that period. This is written broadcast upon the history of the time. Genuine national sentiment in the sense of national unity had a long time prevailed among the North of Ireland Protestants. We have had them altered, not through their own fault, and we are not ready to be persuaded that they will not alter back again to the sentiments of their own ancestors (cheers), and with their own blood and their own people form one in noble glorious unity. Alluding to English feeling toward Irish home rule, Mr. Gladstone said he would refrain from urging that England would find herself exhausted and her work made unpracticable by resistance to Irish demands. He could well conceive England maintaining, if so minded, resistance to Irish demands, but England's conversion to home rule had been rapid. In England the majority adverse to home rule was 211. It had now declined to 71. In face of such a fact who would guarantee the permanence of the opposition of the remainder? (Cheers.)

BUT LITTLE CHANGED FROM BILL OF 1886.

He would now ask the patient indul-

gence of the House while giving an account of the bill. (Cheers.) He could not undertake to supply a mere table of contents. The bill, if he did, would probably bewilder his hearers. He would rather seek to present the salient points, hoping to leave a living impression on the minds and memories of his hearers. He might omit what, in the view of some members ought to be mentioned, and, therefore, he begged them to wait and consult the bill itself, which he hoped would soon be in their hands. It would be remembered that the bill of 1886 laid down five propositions as cardinal principles, to which he had endeavored to closely adhere. Change there was, but not a trenchant change from the principles of 1886. The object of the bill remained as in 1886, to establish a legislative body in Dublin for the conduct of both legislation and administration in Ireland, as distinct from Imperial affairs. (Cheers.) The limiting conditions, which were then observed and have since so far as we were able to do so, been sedulously and closely served, were these. We were to do nothing inconsistent with Imperial unity. Of this I will say, whatever our opponents may say, that so far as our convictions and intentions are concerned they would be but feebly stated by being couched in the declaration that we do not mean to impair it. We wish to strengthen it. (Cheers.) We wish to give it greater intensity than it has ever yet possessed.

ALL CAREFULLY LOOKED AFTER.

First, then, Imperial unity is observed and the equality of all is observed. Secondly, the equality of all the kingdoms would be borne in mind, and thirdly, there would be equitable reparation of Imperial charges. Fourthly, any and every practical provision for the manufacturers would be included. In the first place, we have made it a desire to meet what we thought was no unreasonable demand, for the express mention of the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. There were two methods in which that might be done. It might be done by a clause; it might be done in the preamble. We have chosen the preamble as the worthier, the better, for if it were done by clause it would be too much in the character of a mere enactment. It is not necessary to say many words for such a purpose. Our words are: "Whereas, it is expedient, without impairing or restricting the supreme authority of Parliament," and then the preamble goes on to declare the creation of an Irish legislature. With reference to the charge, frequently with good faith, made against us, that we are destroying the act of union, I wish to challenge enquiry upon this fundamental point. What is the essence of the act of union? (Hear, hear.) That essence is to be appreciated by comparing the constitution of things found in the country before 1800 with the constitution of things now existing in England. Before 1800 we had two sovereignties in the country. One of these was collectively lodged in the King and the Houses of Lords and Commons of Ireland. There was no more right, in a true historical and legal sense, in the sovereignty residence in Great Britain to interfere with the sovereignty of Ireland than there was in the sovereignty of Ireland to interfere with the sovereignty in England. This bill respects and maintains these rights of sovereignty equally throughout the entire range of the three Kingdoms.

TWO LEGISLATIVE HOUSES.

Then the bill constitutes the Irish legislature. Power is granted to the Irish legislature, which consists first, of a legislative council, and secondly, of a legislative assembly, empowered to make laws for the peace, order and good Government of Ireland in respect to matters exclusively relating to Ireland or to a part thereof. That power is subject to a double limitation. First of all it is subject to necessary and obvious limitations imposing certain incapacities on the Irish Parliament, including all that relates to the Crown regency or the viceroyalty. The subjects of peace and war, public defence treaties and foreign relations, dignities, law and treason do not belong to the Irish legislature. The law of alienage does not belong to it, nor anything that belongs to external trade, the coinage and other subsidiary subjects. Other incapacities are imposed similar to those contained in the bill of 1886. These provide for the security of religious, freedom, the safeguard of education and for the security of personal freedom, in which we en-

deavored to borrow one of the modern amendments to the American constitution.

CHANGES IN THE VICEROYAL POSITION.

Then, coming to exclusive powers, we retain the Viceroyalty of Ireland; but we divest it of the party character it has heretofore borne by making the appointment every six years, subject to the revoking power of the Crown. Then, also, the post is freed from all religious disability. (Cheers.) Then comes a clause which may be considered formal, although it is of great importance, providing for the full revolution of executive power from the Sovereign to the Viceroy. Then comes an important provision for the appointment of an executive committee of the Privy Council of Ireland. We propose to make this an Executive Council for the ordinary affairs of the Cabinet of the Viceroy. The question arises shall there be any Legislative Council. All decided that there ought to be such a council. It has appeared to us to be highly inconvenient to alter the members of the Legislative Assembly. If we were to increase the number we do not know what the increase ought to be. If we were to reduce it we run serious risks of causing practical inconvenience in Dublin, especially at the time when the functions of internal government come to be newly exercised, and when, probably, there will be a great deal to do. We, therefore, leave the number at 103, and we fix the term at five years. We leave the constituency as it is now.

AN ELECTIVE COUNCIL.

Next as to the Legislative council, Mr. Gladstone said he did not think they would have been warranted without some strong necessity in establishing the system of a single chamber, "but in Ireland," he added, "far from finding any such necessity we look to the Legislative council as enabling us to meet the expectation that we shall give to the minority some means of freer and fuller consideration of its views."

The next thing is shall the Legislative council be nominated or elected? We came to the conclusion that a nominated council would be a weak council. (Ministerial cheers.) If it should be made a weak council would be probably enjoy a very short term of existence. We, therefore, propose an elective council, believing it to be the only form wherein we can give any great force to the vitality of the institution. Well, then, how do we differentiate this council from the popular assembly? He proposes to fix the number at forty-eight, with an eight years' term of office, the term of the popular assembly being less. We then constitute a new constituency. The council constituency must in the first place be associated with a ratable value of £20 whereby to secure an aggregate constituency approaching 170,000 persons, including owners as well as occupiers, but subject to a provision that no owner or occupier has a vote in more than one constituency. Then there is no provision in the bill making the Legislative council alterable by Irish acts.

PROVISION FOR DEADLOCKS.

Regarding the Legislative assembly these 103 members must be elected for Irish legislative business by constituencies in Ireland. We make these provisions in regard to the assembly alterable in respect to electors and constituencies after six years, but in altering constituencies the power of the assembly will be limited by the declaratory act to the effect that due regard must be had to the distribution of population. The bill must include a provision for meeting, what is called a deadlock. In a case where a bill has been adopted by the assembly more than once, and where there is an interval of two years between the two adoptions or a dissolution of parliament, then, upon its second adoption, the two assemblies may be required to meet, and the fate of the bill is to be decided in joint assembly. (Cheers.) Next, all appeals shall lie to the Privy council alone, not to the council and Lords. The Privy council may try the question of the invalidity of any Irish act—that is, try it judicially and with reasonable judgment under the initiative of the Viceroy or Secretary of State. This judicial committee is now recognized by us as the only approach we can make to the Supreme Court of the United States. In composing this judicial committee due regard must be had to the different