

provide the ablest governors and statesmen for the colonies (renewed applause). There are two things absolutely essential to the transaction of business by a legislature—the first, that the members of the Legislature should have time; and the second, that they should have the necessary knowledge of the people they are supposed to govern. Now, sir, if there is a subject upon which all men are agreed, it is this: that Parliament has not sufficient time to transact half the business it has to do. Let alone all colonial and foreign matters, the Imperial Parliament, it is notorious, has sufficient Irish matters to occupy its attention for many sessions to come. And the same remark applies equally to English and Scotch affairs, when Parliament is engaged in dealing with Irish matters, and all subjects of English and Scotch interest are shelved. The question of the day *par excellence* for Irish, English and Scotch is how to lighten the labours of the Imperial Parliament. Mr. Gladstone himself has acknowledged this, and he has admitted that they can be lightened by Decentralisation of Government, as he calls it, or Home Rule, as we of the National League prefer to call it (cheers). But deficient as is the Imperial Parliament in time, it is more so in the knowledge of Ireland requisite for proper Irish legislation. The ordinary English and Scotch member knows little or nothing of Ireland. He was never there, never studied the question, has no interests in the country such as arise from the ties of birth, property, or affection. Is it to be wondered at, then, that mistakes—most serious sometimes, often most ludicrous—creep into their legislation for Ireland? The Government officials in Ireland are equally ignorant. The Viceroy is an Englishman, the Chief Secretary, I believe, is a Scotchman, the Under-Secretary an Englishman, and so on. Indeed, every officer of the Executive is an Englishman or a Scotchman. Now, sir, under these circumstances, can it be wondered at if Irish wants and aspirations are misunderstood? These gentlemen may be very estimable gentlemen for aught I know—they may have the most angelic qualities, they may possess the wisdom of so many Justinians; but still they are devoid of the knowledge which is most essential to the successful governing of a country, and which is only to be gained by living among the people (loud applause). In every constitutionally governed country in the world there is one essential condition which must be fulfilled by any Minister of the Crown before he can take office, and that is that he represent the will of the majority of the people he is going to rule, and that he enjoy their confidence. In Ireland there is also an essential condition that must be fulfilled before any man can hold office under the Crown, and that is that before accepting office he must hold opinions notoriously opposed to four-fifths of the people he has to govern. Can any reasonable and impartial man doubt, if Irish discontent has proven to be inseparable from the present system of government; can he doubt as to the enormous practical benefit to be got from Home Rule, which would give men enjoying the confidence and representing the opinions of the majority the reins of Government? (cheers and applause). Were I to mention all the interests to be benefited I should have to enumerate every possible interest and industry—the commercial interest, agricultural, manufacturing and railway interests, the fisheries; an education that has been stunted, a trade and industry dead, a national life suppressed. I could quote extracts upon this matter from the writings of many of the leading men who have dealt with such subjects. A man whose name is well known to you, Sir George Grey (applause), has said:—“Give to Ireland a State Legislature and a State Executive in Dublin; secure thereby the residence of its ablest men in the country; open a fair field as ministers, legislators, orators, to its best and wisest men; afford from the same source, as would necessarily and certainly be done, occupation to Irish architects, sculptors, painters; and secure a resident aristocracy of worth, talent, and wisdom; and you will at the same time restore the wealth, trade, and commerce of Dublin and Ireland. Dumb Ireland will then speak again. Half-inanimate Ireland will again awaken to national life and breathe the breath of hope and freedom. Whilst by again accustoming the Irish people to the management of their own affairs, and to the administrative duties of the highest order, a willing people will be educated in that political knowledge which will enable them to put an end to the ills which afflict them, ‘the cause and cure of which none can understand so well as themselves.’” So much, then, for the practical advantages likely to ensue for Ireland. But what practical advantages to England and the Empire? I may be asked. What advantage to England? Would it be no advantage to England to give the Imperial Parliament time to attend to English matters? Would it be no advantage to the Empire to have Ireland changed from a weak spot in the armour of the Empire into a nation contented because prosperous, and loyal because contented? Henry Grattan warned Pitt that by the Union he was destroying one of the pillars of the Empire. I don't know whether the loyalty of Ireland may be considered as one of the pillars of the Empire, but I do know this—that if the Union has not destroyed Irish loyalty, it certainly has weakened it. Would it be of no advantage to England to change Ireland from a disaffected people into an ally as loyal in time of danger as she has proved herself to be brave on many a hard fought field? (Continued applause.) Mr. Lecky speaking on this subject said it appeared to him that to bring about a system by which Ireland should be governed by the Irish people should be the aim of every Englishman. And, sir, not only abstract political thinkers and writers like Lecky, and statesmen in far lands like Sir George Grey; but recently two members of the English Government have used very significant words indeed. The member for Leeds, Mr. Herbert Gladstone, the Prime Minister's own son, addressed these words to his constituents:—“The form of government in Ireland was as bad as it could be. In his opinion it was one of the worst forms of government to be found in Europe. Centralisation was the curse of the country. The form of government should before long be radically changed, and the people allowed to manage their own affairs (applause). No Government could claim to exist on Constitutional principles which did not rest on the will and support of the people.” And Mr. Chamberlain, also a member of the present Government, speaking at a meeting at Ashton in England, used these words:—“Do not let us deceive ourselves. Do not let us suppose that our work is yet complete. As long as Ireland is with-

out any institutions of local government worthy of the name—as long as nothing is done to cultivate the sense of responsibility among the people—as long as the large proportion of the population are shut out from any part in the management of their own affairs, while the education of the people is stunted, their prejudices ignored—so long the seeds of discontent and disloyalty will remain, only to burst forth into luxuriant growth at the first favourable season.” Now, sir, I trust that this meeting will think I have also established my second proposition—namely, that Home Rule was likely to prove advantageous to England and to the Empire as well as to Ireland. Before I conclude let me briefly notice what I may call, for want of a better word, two of the most vulgar objections of the little critics of Home Rule. These objections I meet with on all sides, and if I come across them so often in the Press of these Australasian Colonies I may probably attribute it to the fact that they require no very deep knowledge or any very great research (laughter). These critics say, “Oh, Home Rule as you describe it is very reasonable and just; but it cannot be conceded, because, if the Irish got Home Rule one day they would vote for separation the day after.” Let us treat this objection seriously—or as seriously as we can. Would Ireland not separate to-day if she could? They eagerly answer, yes. What, then, prevents her? England's power, her army and navy, I am told. But England's power, her army and her navy would be just as powerful the day after Home Rule was granted as the day before, and the Imperial Government would be just as powerful then to cope with any attempt at separation as she is now (hear, hear). But the great bulk of the Irish people do not ask for separation, and I will venture to affirm that if we obtain the measure of Home Rule I have sketched out to-night, before five years are passed the most extreme separatist in the land will be satisfied to remain a loyal citizen of a self-governed and independent part of the Empire. (Applause.) Then these critics make a second objection—a very common objection—which may be summed up in the one word, Scotland. Scotland! Scotland, say these objectors, is contented and prosperous with the Union [A Voice: “No Dublin Castle in that country!”] but is that a proof that the principle of self-government is wrong? Is it not rather the exception that proves the rule—that no nation can prosper and be content that is not the mistress of her own destinies? Scotland is contented and prosperous not because of the Union, but in spite of it. Scotland is absolutely entitled in principle to Home Rule (cheers and applause), and I feel confident that if the majority of the people demanded it for Scotland as we now demand it for Ireland it would very soon be conceded (loud applause). But, say these objectors, Scotland does not ask for Home Rule. And why? Because Scotland to-day is practically ruled by Scotchmen. Never have I seen in my experience a Bill affecting Scotland which was supported by a majority of the Scotch members, but was as invariably accepted by Parliament, with just as little hesitation as an Irish Bill, supported by a majority of the Irish members, is always rejected (applause). Then, again, all the official positions in Scotland were occupied by Scotchmen, and, as my friend in the gallery immediately saw, Scotland is not weighed down by Castle rule, a system of bureaucracy of the rottenest description, such as exists in Ireland to-day. But, in addition to all this, there are not wanting signs that, owing to pressure of business in the Imperial Parliament, the day is not very distant when Scotland will demand and obtain that Home Rule which we demand. In a few words let me recapitulate what I have striven to explain to-night. I have shown what Home Rule means clearly and unmistakably, and supported my exposition by statements of Mr. Butt and Mr. Parnell, the latter one of the leaders of the present agitation in Ireland. Next, I have shown that Home Rule is reasonable, judged by the tests of common-sense, political philosophy, and history; and then, that it will be advantageous to England, to Ireland, and to the Empire; and finally, I have encountered, and, I hope, demolished, two of the most popular objections to the scheme. I have but little more to say. I am afraid a number of people present—at any rate a number of people in this town—will be seriously disappointed with the character of the speech I have delivered. (“No,” and cheers). I am led to believe that a very decided opinion has been formed about me in Dunedin, before very much was actually known about me (laughter). I am led to believe that it has been supposed by some persons that I was coming here on a mission of discord and disunion, and I believe that, unconsciously, those gentlemen of the Press have paid a very great and very undeserved compliment to my abilities. They seem to have imagined that, even had I the diabolical intentions attributed to me, I—a young and comparatively unknown politician—have the power to do all this mischief, and to ruin the future of this great and free land (laughter and applause). I am sorry I can make no pretensions to such ability, and I must say that I certainly have no such evil intentions. I believe it has been said that I was coming here to divide colonists of different nationalities, to sow discontent, and throw down the torch of discord and hatred between colonists of different creeds; and I think it was elsewhere I read a statement made by an intelligent and enterprising journalist that my malign influence was likely to penetrate the domestic circle (loud laughter), to divide firm ties, aye, even to sow discord between husband and wife (renewed laughter). It is one of the misfortunes of the life of public men that they cannot always fulfil the anticipations formed of them by friends and enemies. For the sake of these gentlemen who will be disappointed and are likely to look foolish to-morrow morning, I am sorry I have not the power of pleasing them; but I have been trained in a school of moderate political thought (loud cheers); I am the representative of a political party which is a moderate political party (renewed applause), and under these circumstances I feel sorry at being obliged to disappoint the gentlemen who thought I was going to commit mischief (applause). I hope that what I have said to-night will do something to dispel the absurd and childish ideas which people in certain quarters seem to have entertained of us and our cause. And, remember, I speak here—and I challenge contradiction—as I have spoken elsewhere and everywhere, in Australia and New Zealand as in the House of Commons and on the hillsides in Ireland (cheers and applause). I trust that what I have said to-night will