

—it is something, at all events, to be descended from a patriotic strain (applause). My first words to-night must take the shape of an apology. I have to apologise to the Belfast Young Ireland Society for having broken my engagements with them on no fewer than two occasions. Twice they invited me to your city. Twice I accepted the invitation, but was unable to come. If you were disappointed, I was doubly so, for I had long looked forward to the pleasure of making your acquaintance. In offering my apology, my contrition for past failing is quickened and intensified by my high appreciation of the compliment paid me by the Society in inviting me again to lecture here on this the inaugural night of their session. Now that I have come let me express my satisfaction at having come. It gives me more pleasure than I can convey to find myself in this great Northern metropolis, and to meet so many of those who have helped to prove the North of Ireland Irish; who have brought at least one portion of Belfast into line with Cork and Dublin; who have given to the Irish Parliamentary Party its most vigilant and brilliant Parliamentarian (cheers); who have so signally overthrown the argument that the North is not in sympathy with the South; that Ulster feels and thinks differently with Munster, and that the cradle one hundred years ago of the United Irishmen is not in those our days in favour of a United Ireland (cheers). Whatever outsiders may say, whatever outsiders may ask you to believe, we of the South are proud of you men of the North. We admire your courage. We envy your sturdy patriotism. We are grateful for your splendid services to the common cause. We look upon you as one of the main factors in helping that cause to victory. It is, therefore, as a Southern, a Roman Catholic, and a Nationalist that I am glad and proud to stand upon this platform in Belfast, in the capital of the Protestant North, to greet my fellow-countrymen of prosperous Ulster, my comrades and fellow soldiers in the grand and holy cause of Ireland's regeneration (cheers). And now to my text. I am to speak to you to-night about Young Ireland. That name is now an old name. My application of it shall be a new one. I do not purpose dealing with the Young Irelanders nor the Young Irelanders that have gone before us. With reference to them, it is enough to say that we believe in the faith transmitted to us by Mitchell and Martin and Smith O'Brien (cheers). We hold their memory in ever-constant affection. We revere their teachings; we inherit their spirit; we follow their ideals; we worship at the same shrine (cheers). My purpose this evening is to deal with our own Young Ireland—the Ireland of our own time, the Ireland with which are bound up our lives, our loves, our hopes, our fortunes, our duty—the Ireland that is and is to be. Would you have my political confession? I am no cosmopolitan. I place my own country foremost in my thoughts and actions, as in my affections. She is my first concern. First—immeasurably first—I place her honour, her happiness, her prosperity. What other peoples think, what other peoples do, how other peoples are circumstanced or affected, affects me only in relation to my own. I am ready to sympathise with other peoples, to work for them if I may, to help them if I can. But I am an Irishman first, and my only real interest is in Ireland (cheers). My sentiments may be held to savour of narrow-mindedness ("No, no"). I care nothing if they be—for I can conceive no loftier aim, no more glorious ambition than the pre-eminence of one's own nation, the pre-eminence of one's own race. As for a community of interests among peoples it never has existed, nor ever can exist. And as for a universal brotherhood of mankind in practice I don't believe in it. What then is the outlook for this land of ours? What are her immediate prospects? We are all believers in the Nationalist creed (hear, hear). We lay down as the fundamental dogma of our political faith, the distinct Nationality of Ireland (cheers). And we hold as the doctrine, as the ultimate aim of all our political efforts, the establishment of an Irish Government in Ireland (loud cheers). That point is already conceded by our friends in Great Britain. Its actual accomplishment is all but won. Another year or two of waiting, and of agitating, of suffering perhaps; of fighting against the evil old régime, now tottering to its fall, and against the desperate despairing efforts of its supporters to uphold their lost cause, and an Irish Parliament will be an accomplished fact (cheers). This is certain. This is inevitable. It is useless, therefore, to discuss the probabilities of a foregone conclusion. A conclusion patent to all men of common sense. But afterwards! What will happen then? What will then be the position of the Irish Government, and what the probabilities for the Irish people? It is questionable if circumstances have ever created a situation of greater delicacy, graver difficulty or of more serious responsibility than will confront the trustees of our nation's destinies, when the portals of the Old House in College Green open again to Ireland's elected representatives. They will be face to face with utter disorganisation. Disorganisation social—disorganisation political—disorganisation industrial. They will find a society shaken to its foundations by the storms of generations of persecution and repression, a society in which the throes of our long conflict for National existence will still make themselves felt, a society but in the budding of its evolution from an old decrepit order of things to a newer and a better one, and in which the young spirit of a younger will have scarcely yet had time to assert its influence. In the political domain there will be a still more intricate problem to solve. What will the case be then? There will be found the logical outcome of centuries of foreign intermeddling in Irish matters. An executive which has never known the functions nor the duties of a constitutional executive, and which has never discharged them even by accident—an administrative structure never formed for the people, whose business it administered, nor in any fashion stamped with the stamp of their idiosyncracies nor their sympathies, but made and branded in the shape and with the brand of an engine of exploitation, of plunder, of coercion, ready to the hands of alien despots, or to those of the place-hunters and renegades, who found it more lucrative to serve the stranger than the people from whom they sprang; a machinery of Government in fine, whose hated memory is likely to survive it in the bias against anything savouring of authority which it has given to the Irish mind. In matters industrial and commercial the coming national administration will be met practically with inanition (hear, hear). It will find a country drained and depleted,

and bled for ages of money, of material, of men; a country, which but for the remedial legislation, latterly wrung from the English Parliament, would be to-day in a state of galloping consumption; a country that will require years of careful nursing, and of vigilant care to be restored to health and vigour. These are facts, unpalatable, it may be, but facts, nevertheless, to which those of us, who make Ireland the one aim and object of our being, would be worse than fools to shut our eyes. If anything, I have minimised the situation of two or three years' hence. Notwithstanding the gloomy picture of the immediate future, I for one look forward to that future with full hope and with perfect confidence. Whatever difficulties or dangers may beset the ship of State, once that her helm is in Irish hands I have no fear for her (cheers). And why? Firstly, because of my absolute unwavering faith in the patriotism of the Irish people. When our Irish Parliament is regained—that Parliament for which we have struggled and suffered and laboured and sacrificed for so long, so earnestly, and so ungrudgingly—there is not an Irishman within Ireland's shores who will not rally to its support (cheers.) Whatever decision that Parliament may have to make, whatever acts that Parliament may be called to perform, its way will be made easy as far as the nation can make it by the co-operation of Irish public opinion. Next do I rely upon our countrymen's capacity for government. Irishmen seem specially fitted by Providence to that end. The history of continental Europe bears constant testimony to the fact. The history of the United States of America, and of England's great self-governing colonies of South Africa, of Australia, of New Zealand, has proved it time after time; and will continue to prove it with ever increasing force as the years roll onward. 'Tis most extraordinary, and typical too, of the honesty of the objections urged against the concession of Home Rule to Ireland, that whenever it is necessary to select men, specially competent in the arduous work of governing, to protect or promote imperial interests in far-off imperial dependencies, our opponents see no objection to the selection of Irishmen for the purpose (cheers). And surely if we can govern other peoples successfully, if we can legislate well and wisely in the interests of other nations, we may reasonably hope for an equal measure of success in the ruling of our own. Thirdly, I rely upon the marvellous recuperative powers of our race. In the history of no other people will you find a parallel for so desperate a struggle for existence, so long maintained, and so tenaciously and so successfully, as by this race of ours. We have kept our grasp of Ireland in spite of wars, of famines, of persecutions, such as have fallen to the lot of no other family of mankind. We have survived every attack. We have risen again after every disaster. Were it not indeed for our miraculous vitality, and virility we should long since have been swept from off the face of the earth. But we are here still (cheers). We are still the holders—as we shall soon be the masters—of our native land. To such a race so tried and proven in the fire of cycles of calamity, so unquenchable in the energy of their determination for national existence, everything and anything is possible. Remember too the land in which we live. I honestly declare, that in all my travels, and I have traversed now some three quarters of the habitable globe, I have never yet found a country more variously blessed by nature, more healthful to inhabit, more advantageously situated; nor better fitted to support a hardy happy population, than this our "Erin of the silver streams" (cheers). The three considerations to which I have referred, will prove the main buttresses of the coming Irish Government, when it sets itself down to its work of reconstruction and regeneration. With their aid most of its difficulties will be readily overcome. At the same time we must not expect too much from our Government of the near future. We must remember its position, we must remember its opportunities. Above all we must not forget the immensity of the work it has to do. From the beginning its programme must be a homely, matter of fact, prosaic programme. Everything will have to be made anew; everything will have to be built up from the ground. The foundations of the Irish State must be other than those of the administrative edifice it will have overthrown. And of the materials its opponents leave behind them very little will be serviceable or sound or safe for future use. The coming Irish Government must begin where no government of Ireland ever yet began. It must found its structure upon the only safe basis of Government—the will and the good wishes of the Irish people; it must model its institutions and its machinery upon Irish plans. Then it will be strong, then will its influence be beneficial and permanent (cheers). But the doing of all this will take time. We must not grudge the time. We must be patient. Whatever we do, let us do well, that there may be no undoing. At any rate this much is to be said; that if we begin anew there is little danger of our following in old grooves. We shall have the mistakes and the misfortunes of others to guide us. We shall have our own experience gained by long years of cruel suffering. We shall have a keen sense of how a Government should work and should behave inasmuch as we have never yet had reason to be satisfied with the work or the behaviour of any Government. If we do not succeed in shaping our system of Government to our own tastes and to our own uses we shall only have ourselves to thank, for it will be only our own fault. But we shall succeed with Heaven's blessing and with courage and patriotism equal to our task (cheers). We shall have plenty of criticism to face. We shall have to face the criticism of the world. For honest advice we shall always be grateful, but we shall have to reckon with dishonest criticism as well. We shall have to reckon with the unsparring vicious criticism of those who never will forgive us our success in bursting the shackles of foreign misrule (hear, hear). For these we need care nothing. They will be no friends of ours nor of our nation's new found dignity. We need heed their carplings no more than the idle wind. For their dearest wish would be to see us fail as they failed, when their feet were upon our necks, and they fondly hoped to keep them there for ever, in which wish they are safe to be disappointed. It has sometimes been put to me, in a spirit of honest inquiry, will not the North prove a difficulty for Home Rule? Have you not Orangemen in Ulster? How can you hope to unite such men to the South? My reply has always been easy—I do not realise the difficulty. The majority of the northern Parliamentary representatives are in favour of Home Rule, therefore, the majority