

say that it would be wise or practicable to set out all those particulars; but they sometimes complain that they know nothing about the principles upon which it is to be founded. Now I state that they know a great deal about the principles upon which it is to be founded, and for that purpose I go back to the declarations of 1886. Those declarations it was my duty to make on the part of the Government of that year, and they have never been retracted, never disowned, not a word has ever been spoken in the way of recession of any one of them (cheers). What we stated then was this—that the object of such a Bill was to give to Ireland full and effective control of her own properly local affairs (cheers). And then it was my duty to state the conditions under which, and under which, as far as we were concerned, alone, that control could be given, and the conditions named by me were five. The first of them was the full and effective maintenance of the supremacy of Parliament. Now shall I say one word to you upon that important phrase “the supremacy of Parliament”? Lord Salisbury says it is or will be in the case of Ireland a sham. Well, is it a thing unknown to us now beyond the limits of our own country? Have we not scattered over the world a number of States, colonial in their origin, which have in more than one case swollen to national dimensions? (cheers). Is it not true that every one of those is subject to the supremacy of Parliament? And I want to know whether you consider that that supremacy is or is not a shadow or a fiction (cheers). In my opinion it is a real, overshadowing, controlling power (cheers), a power which is meant to be called into action should occasion arise, but with respect to which the prayer of every man is that such an occasion may not come, and the belief of every rational man, founded on experience, is that such an occasion need not come and will not come (cheers). I mean the supremacy, the occasion for the exercise of which imports the smallest interference with the local freedom of such States as the Dominion of Canada and the colonies of Australia (cheers). If we had been debating this question 50 years ago undoubtedly it might have seemed insulting to Ireland, which then had eight millions of people, to compare her with Canada, which at that time I do not think had two millions—hardly, perhaps, one—or with Australia, which was likewise limited to a very small number of hundreds of thousands. But both Australia and Canada—Australia is in separate States, but still I may very fairly speak of them as a political unity—both Australia and Canada have grown into national dimensions. Ireland, owing to a variety of circumstances, among which I am grieved to say I cannot but reckon as one the unhappy system of government that has too often been pursued towards her (cheers), Ireland has sunk in population while they have been rising, and they are now in point of magnitude not unfit to be compared together. Probably at this moment while I speak the Dominion of Canada has a larger population than the ancient kingdom of Ireland. It would be monstrous in my opinion to suppose that either in Canada, or Australia, or Ireland or any of these which are under constitutional local autonomy, that in any of these the majority should practise gross injustice against the minority (cheers). That is a disposition that nowhere exists. It exists no more in Ireland—it exists if possible less in Ireland than it does or might in some of the colonies. It is not for a moment to be supposed that such injustice will be practised, but neither is it to be supposed—if you are to bring into view the monstrous and almost incredible case of its being resorted to—neither is it to be supposed that then Parliament would remain inactive and suffer such oppression to remain without a remedy (cheers). Now that may be described as the case of the supremacy of Parliament, which in 1886 we declared to be the first and essential condition of the granting of autonomy to Ireland. The second condition was a fair adjustment of pecuniary burdens. That seems to have been not made in principle the subject of objection. The third condition was the special care of minorities (cheers). We declared our intention to go all possible lengths in considering—aye, in adopting—every reasonable method of guarantee to defend the minority as against the possibility of injustice, by wise provision in the local constitution. We made those declarations without the smallest objection from the Nationalists. We even went the immense length of saying that possibly the counties of Down and Antrim, the only two counties in which the Orange feeling appears to be so dominant, that the language held and the temper indulged about the Nationalists of Ireland—that is, about the body of the nation—seem to present the greatest difficulty in the way of permanent reconciliation—we even went the length of saying that if a proposal were made by Ireland—by these counties of Ireland in particular—for the purpose of severing them from the rest of their countrymen and keeping them under the British Parliament, even that proposal ought to be entitled to respectful and tender consideration (cheers). That was the third of these conditions. But I am bound to say, and I say it in honour of the inhabitants of these counties, that, as far as they made any declaration, their declaration was “No; we refuse to be severed from the rest of Ireland.” The two counties—they did not call themselves the two counties, but they are the two counties which return the principal part of the anti-Irish members (laughter) from Ulster—said, “No; we don't want to be severed from the other three provinces of Ireland. What we desire is that the counties of Ulster which return nothing but Nationalists, four or

five counties of Ulster, and the whole of the counties of the other three provinces, should adopt our way of thinking, turn all their own ideas upside down, read backwards everything that they hoped, everything that they wished from the time of their fathers, and join with us in renouncing that which has hitherto been the dearest passion of their hearts” (cheers). I think you will be of opinion—I certainly cannot but be of opinion—that that is a little too much (laughter), and that to invest a handful of persons with that supreme control over the destinies of a nation is an extravagance that no serious Parliament can undertake to put into effect. Those were three conditions. The fourth condition was—and here we had Scotland especially in view—that no principle should be laid down for Ireland with respect to which we were not to admit that Scotland, if she thought fit, was entitled to claim the benefit (loud cheers). I say nothing further upon that subject. The same course applied to England. What we meant and what we contended was that the principle of political equality between the three countries in every substantial respect, and subject to Imperial laws and considerations, was to remain absolute and inviolate (cheers). The last condition was that we should not propose a mere piecemeal or halfway measure, but something which should really constitute a substantial settlement of a long and inveterate controversy and should give reasonable hope of peace and satisfaction to the country and freedom from the frightful strife and from the intolerable burden which that controversy has imposed upon us for the last 50 years (cheers). He who knows those five conditions of a Home Rule Bill knows already a great deal about the Home Rule Bill. One other condition has been suggested to us by the voice of public opinion, and in respect and deference to that voice has been adopted by us. You will readily perceive that I mean the retention of an Irish representation at Westminster (cheers). That was not our opinion, but it was an opinion with respect to which we felt these two things—first, that the country was entitled to impose it upon us if it thought fit; and secondly, that the motive upon which it was founded was a motive in which we ourselves entirely and absolutely shared—namely, the desire that everything should be done to testify to the unity of the Empire and the supremacy of Parliament (cheers). Again, it has been supposed that we have invented some cabalistic scheme for the retention of these Irish members which is to be wilder and to alarm everybody, as if it was in our power, forsooth, to do anything except grapple in an honest and a practical spirit with the practical difficulties that all political problems present. We have never concealed—I do not conceal now—that while the retention of Irish members has a most valuable meaning as a living assertion of the unity of the Empire, it will, and must be, attended, as far as we can see, by certain inconveniences. Now I will just point out to you some of the questions that arise in regard to this retention of Irish members. As to the mode in which they are to be retained, one question that arises is, are you to retain a portion of them, or are you to retain the whole of them? I am not going to discuss this subject now; it would be too long, and must be ineffectual. I am only going to state them as lying on the surface of the case, being palpable to every man who gives it a moment's serious or practical consideration. The first is, shall you retain the whole of the Irish members or shall you retain a part? The next is, shall those who are retained vote on all questions coming before Parliament, or shall you endeavour, if you can, to make a division of questions, and to limit them to one portion, excluding them from another portion? The third is, will you have for Ireland one set of members or two? As you call it, I think, in the arrangement of a mine, will you have one shift of labourers or two? And another is, will you proceed upon the basis of the present Parliamentary system in Ireland, the present division of the country into districts, and the present number of its members, or will you endeavour to reconstruct that system and readjust it with reference to its relations with England and Scotland or with reference to any other consideration? Now you will at once see that all these are practical matters which must be approached in a practical spirit. They do not raise difficulties of a character to be compared for one instant with the dreadful difficulties of the present Irish controversy (cheers). We scout wholly the preposterous representation of those who—mark my words—when we get into this discussion, will take up these difficulties and exaggerate them and endeavour to raise them as objections to the principle of the scheme which we all have at heart (cheers). They are not of that character at all. They are secondary difficulties. They may involve, as almost all practical adjustments do involve, certain inconveniences. And how are those to be dealt with? Why, gentlemen, they are to be dealt with by the responsible Ministers of the Crown, and if the result of your action and the result of the action of other constituencies should be that a Liberal Government is to be established (cheers), then it will be the obvious duty of that Government to consider this important subject of the retention of the Irish members in connection with every other part of the case, to make to Parliament the propositions which in detail they consider upon the whole the best, and to use every effort in their power to carry it into law (cheers). Now I hope you will be able, both in your own minds and in discourse with others, to see how this question stands—a purely practical question, a question that