MR. GLADSTONE'S
TWO IRISH POLICIES:
1868 and 1886.

A Letter to an Ulster Liberal Elector.

BY

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"Without a Union with Great Britain, the inhabitants of Ireland are not
likely for many ages to consider themselves as one people."

ADAM SMITH: Wealth of Nations, Book V., Chap. iii.

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MY DEAR FRIEND,

When I saw you for a short time during my hurried visit to the North in the autumn, you told me how much you were perplexed and embarrassed by the present position of political parties in Ireland, and how very difficult you found it, with a clear conscience and a full conviction of duty, to take the active part you used to do in political life. You told me how completely Mr. Gladstone's new policy for Ireland had extinguished the Liberal party in Ulster as a distinct force in politics; and you asked me how you, who had been since 1868 one of the warmest and most enthusiastic supporters of Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy, could appear upon platforms where Mr. Gladstone's name and character and career were held up to scorn and contempt. You asked me how you, who had been all your life advocating a thoroughly Liberal policy upon Irish questions, were to take common action with our old Tory neighbours, whose policy in the past you could not but regard as the source of most of our present difficulties, and whose policy for the future you regarded with deep distrust.

I told you at the time how entirely I understood your embarrassment, and how very careful I thought we ought to be to make our political position clear and definite, so that no one should suppose that we either regretted the Liberal policy towards Ireland in the past, or despaired of a Liberal
policy for Ireland in the future. We cannot consent to argue for the maintenance of the Union upon any but the broadest principles of Liberal policy. We cannot consent, either by word or action, to the theory that Ireland is to be governed by, or in the interest of, any section of its inhabitants. We cannot consent to treat the great bulk of our fellow-countrymen as politically, morally, or socially inferior to, or as less to be considered than, their Protestant neighbours. You would not, nor would I, uphold the Union even in the interest of our native Ulster, if we were convinced that its repeal would be a political benefit to Ireland as a whole. Much less would we consent to maintain the Union, if the only object of its maintenance were to gratify the pride, self-complacency, and religious bigotry of a narrow and arrogant faction.

But still the fact remained that we were both profoundly convinced of the necessity for the maintenance of the Union; and that we had long ago arrived at the deliberate conclusion that the true interest of Ireland lay in making her political union with Great Britain closer and more complete. And the practical question arose—What were we to do to give effect to these our deliberate political convictions? Were we to allow our admiration and respect for Mr. Gladstone's character and career to shut our mouths and tie our hands when we believed him to have gone utterly wrong on a question vital to our country's interests? Were we to allow our distrust of the principles and policy of our old Tory opponents to prevent us from using their aid in combating what we believed to be a retrograde and illiberal policy?

For neither you nor I was ever in any doubt as to the nature and consequences of Mr. Gladstone's new Irish policy. We had long studied the history of our country, and deliberately and maturely formed our opinions as to the natural and inevitable relations between Ireland and Great Britain. All the views and arguments which seem to have influenced Mr. Gladstone, and which he has recently urged with so much force and frequency, had long been present to our minds, had been discussed by us over and over again, and what we thought their full weight assigned to them. Therefore we were not thrown into a state of helpless doubt and bewilderment when our political leader was suddenly converted to views which we had fully discussed and deliberately rejected.

Mr. Gladstone's conversion was, no doubt, to both of us a painful surprise. We had been in full sympathy with his Irish policy of 1868. That policy seemed to us statesmanlike and liberal. It was to make Ireland a contented and loyal member of the United Kingdom—as contented and loyal as Scotland or Wales. It was to make Irishmen in general contented and loyal citizens of the Empire—as contented and loyal as the great bulk of the inhabitants of Ulster already were. It was to be carried out by bringing Irish law and Irish institutions into harmony with the interests and feelings of the great bulk of the Irish people, and by ruling Ireland no longer through, or in the interest of, a small class of the people, but in the interest of the people as a whole. You well remember the hope and exultation with which we hailed the inauguration of this great policy by Mr. Gladstone. We recognised in it—in the sentiments which inspired it, in the statesmanlike arguments which supported it, and in the elevated and inspiring tone of the noble eloquence with which it was expounded and enforced, the same spirit and the same large policy which we had learned in our boyhood from the pages of Macaulay, and which we had in later years learned yet more fully from the deeper wisdom, the more penetrating insight, and the more masculine eloquence of Edmund Burke. We did not expect this policy to succeed in a year, or in a score of years. We knew too well that the effects of the misgovernment of centuries could not be effaced as by the wand of a magician. We knew that our carcasses would fall in the wilderness, and that it would be well if our sons saw the promised land of Irish peace, content, and prosperity. We were not, therefore, of those who pronounced Mr. Gladstone's policy a miserable failure because he was obliged to
put Mr. Parnell in jail, and to proclaim the Land League. You know how often we had to maintain, against the taunts of our Tory friends, that Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy could not be adequately tested or judged by its effects in the present generation.

But, to our surprise and utter confusion, Mr. Gladstone himself suddenly took up the Tory position, and proclaimed his own policy of 1868 a failure, because the Irish people, with a lowered franchise, in the midst of an acute agricultural crisis, pressed by hard times, and full of the heat of conflict with Lord Spencer, had pronounced against it. Mr. Gladstone threw up his policy of 1868 in despair, because he had not succeeded within 17 years in conciliating the Irish people, although the same policy, tried under far more favourable circumstances, did not succeed in conciliating the Scottish people for more than 50 years. "He that believeth shall not make haste" is a favourite text of Mr. Gladstone's, and no words of wisdom were ever uttered which ought to be more constantly present to a statesman's mind. But there was surely some great want of faith in this sudden abandonment of a great policy. Was not Mr. Gladstone more statesmanlike, wise, and liberal when, at Aberdeen, on the 26th September, 1871, he used these words?

"One word more on this subject, and it is this—People say that we have tried to conciliate Ireland, and that we have failed. I do not admit that Ireland is not going to be conciliated; but I say this, that we must always keep in mind that there is a higher law to govern the actions of Parliament and of politicians than the law of conciliation, good as that law may be. We desire to conciliate Ireland, and we desire to soothe her people—the wounded feelings and painful recollections of her people. We desire to attach her to this country in the silken cords of love; but there was a higher and a paramount aim in the measures that Parliament has passed—and that was, that it should do its duty. It was to set itself right with the national conscience, with the opinion of the world, and with the principles of justice; and when that is done, I say fearlessly, that whether conciliation be at once reached or not, the position of this country is firm and invulnerable."

But more astounding even than Mr. Gladstone's suddenly conceived despair of the large and liberal policy which he had himself inaugurated, was the policy which he proposed to substitute in its place. That new policy seemed to us almost as illiberal and reactionary as if he had proposed to return to the old system of Protestant ascendancy. Our country, which had suffered for centuries from the selfishness and misgovernment of one faction, was to be handed over to the government of another. Its woes were to be finally terminated, and its intestine distractions composed, by the uncontrolled ascendancy of an embittered faction, full of a passionate sense of past wrongs, and eager to avenge them. We Liberals, who had been fighting all our lives against the mischievous ideas and policy of the Orange Lodges, were to rejoice in the triumph of the ideas and policy of the National League. Mr. Gladstone, who set out with the purpose of uniting Ireland in the closest bonds to the British Empire by unity of government, of interest, and of feeling, now proposes to cement the Union by handing over Ireland to the government of England's bitterest enemies, whose hatred of England, and of England's power and glory, they themselves, in season and out of season, openly, boastfully, and offensively proclaim.

But, strangest and most perverse of all as it appears to us, Mr. Gladstone now openly encourages, and rejoices in the prevalence of, that spirit of dissidence and discontent which he set himself in 1868 to remove for ever. Having failed, as he says, to conciliate Ireland, he now tells Irishmen that they ought not to be conciliated, and that they do well to be discontented with their position in the Empire. And he actually upbraids and reproaches loyal and contented citizens like you and me with our contentment and loyalty, and reminds us, perhaps more in sorrow than in anger, that our forefathers
used to be as disloyal and discontented as the rest of Irishmen.

"Nothing can be more legitimate," he says, "than the appeal to the Protestants of Ireland to retain and maintain the traditions of their sires. Strange as it may seem, I believe that a very large portion of the English people, and no small number of their representatives in Parliament, are still ignorant of the elementary fact of Irish history, that down to the time of the Union the Irish Protestants—nay, even the now too famous town and people of Belfast—were undoubtedly the most prominent supporters of Irish nationality."* And again he writes to the Secretary of a Young Ireland Society at Belfast:

"September 28, 1887.

"Dear Sir,

"I have received with lively pleasure your account of the recent meeting in Belfast.

"Coming as it does from Belfast, it recalls the memory of the years preceding 1795, when Protestants and Roman Catholics were united in the prosecution of measures for the welfare of Ireland.

"The return of those days in the present struggle would be to the great advantage, not only of one kingdom, but of all the three."

I confess that when I read those letters of Mr. Gladstone they filled me with an amazement that almost made me doubt my own identity. Could it be possible that I, who had been a follower of Mr. Gladstone all my life—who had glowed with sympathetic fervour when his lofty eloquence touched upon the greatness and glory of England's sway, and the freedom and happiness of England's subjects—who had dreamed of the time when every Irishman would understand the greatness, and glory in the freedom, of the British Empire as I did myself—could it be possible that all this time I was an object of Mr. Gladstone's secret disapprobation and displeasure because I was not a rebel like my great-grandfather?

* Letter from Mr. Gladstone, dated Feb. 16, 1887, to the proprietor of North and South, the organ (since defunct) of the Irish Protestant Home Rulers.

Truly, of all the perplexities that have arisen out of this most perplexed and confused crisis, this seems to me the most unintelligible, that a great English statesman should deplore as a calamity the disappearance of discontent and rebellion from a great province of the Empire.

You are not, nor am I, ashamed of the fact that our ancestors were United Irishmen. We do not fear to speak of '98. Had we lived in '98 we should probably have been rebels ourselves, just as our rebellious forefathers, were they now alive, would be contented and loyal subjects of the Empire. We surely can claim to know something of the objects and motives of the Ulster rebels. We were brought up in the district where Ulster disaffection assumed its acutest form. We have talked in our boyhood with aged relatives who remembered the scenes and incidents of the Rebellion, and whose fathers and brothers were deeply involved in the conflict. We were taught to reverence and respect the memory of those who took up arms against intolerable oppression, and struck a blow for freedom. But, at the same time, we were taught that every object which our forefathers fought for had long since been attained. Our forefathers took up arms against an Irish Parliament which represented only a small and interested faction; against an Irish Executive which was dominated by the narrow, prejudiced, and obstinate spirit of George III., the same spirit which drove the Ulster colonists into rebellion in America; against Irish laws which were carefully drawn so as to exclude the religion, the property, and the dearest interests of the vast majority from the pale of their protection; against an English sovereignty which was a symbol to the Irish people only of the dominance of a cruel, selfish, and hated faction. Had our forefathers been offered before the Rebellion a Union such as we now enjoy with Great Britain, we know on the best authority that in Ulster at least there would have been no Rebellion. Catholic Emancipation, a Reformed Parliament, a responsible Executive, and equal laws for the whole Irish people—these were
the declared and the real objects of the United Irishmen. And it was only when they saw no hope of attaining these objects through an Irish Parliament that they took up arms against the King. Separation from England was no part of their object, as they declared over and over again; and they would gladly have accepted a legislative union with Great Britain on the basis of a free and equal representation in the Imperial Parliament. We know beyond all doubt that, after the Rebellion had failed, the popular leaders in Ulster turned their minds to a union with Great Britain as their only way of escape from the savage triumph of their foes. Samuel Neilson, of Belfast, the editor of the Northern Star, was the ablest, most active, and most trusted leader of the United Irishmen in Ulster; and the following passage from a letter to his wife, written from his prison in Fort George on July 21, 1799, is a clear proof that it was not separation from England, or Parliamentary independence for Ireland, that he looked to for the cure of Irish misgovernment:

"I see a union is determined on between Great Britain and Ireland. I am glad of it. In a commercial point of view, it cannot be injurious; and I can see no injury the country will sustain from it politically. So decidedly am I of this opinion, that I would purchase or rent land in Ireland at this moment in preference to any country on earth, had I it in my power. Many persons, however, of great merit differ from me on this subject; but time will show who is right. You will say this is a point with which you have no concern. Very true. But as I know it will make a bustle with you, I wish you to be in possession of my opinion, in order that any person may have it who thinks it worth the asking for. If I had possessed the means, I would have published my sentiments on this subject in a short, nervous pamphlet—so deeply am I impressed with its national utility. In spite of fate, in spite of persecution, in spite even of ingratitude itself, I find Ireland will be uppermost in my thoughts, go where I will."—Madden's United Irishmen, vol. iv., p. 105.

And in the same year Archibald Hamilton Rowan wrote to a member of his family:

"I congratulate you upon the report which spreads here that a union is intended. In that measure I see the downfall of one of the most corrupt assemblies I believe ever existed, and instead of an empty title, a source of industrious enterprise for the people."—Madden, vol. ii., p. 210.

What, then? Are we "who speak the tongue

That Shakspeare spake: the faith and morals hold

Which Milton held,"

to join with those who revile the name and fame of England, and glory in every disaster that befalls her arms or her diplomacy, because our forefathers rebelled against the squalid rule of the Irish squireen and tithe-proctor? Are we to forget all that has happened since 1798, and to throw away our inheritance in England's freedom, power, and glory, because our fathers found in England only a stony-hearted stepmother? Why are we to be disloyal and discontented? What privilege of English freedom is it that we do not enjoy? What legal right is denied us? What career is open to England's sons that is not open to us? What place of power or honour is there that any citizen of the Empire can aspire to which is denied to the aspirations of any Irishman? If our forefathers hated England, they had good reason. What reason have we that we could offer to God or our own consciences as an excuse for joining hands with England's enemies? Will Mr. Gladstone tell us why we are to "retain and maintain the traditions of our sires" when the wrongs of our sires have been all redressed? We have not so learnt the traditions of our fathers. We were taught to love England and England's Queen by those who loved and remembered the rebels of '98, and who loved Ireland as deeply and as ardently as the men who shed their blood at Ballynahinch. We have grown to manhood, and have taken our share in the politics of our country. Have we ever found any reason to doubt the consistency or the wisdom of the lessons of our youth? Can you conceive any additional or greater political
privilege you would enjoy if your acres were in Yorkshire or the Lothians instead of in Down? Can I point out any political advantage which I would gain by shifting my residence to London or Edinburgh? I confess I have in vain striven to find out in what particular we are oppressed or neglected; and I think it would puzzle Mr. Gladstone to tell us plainly why we should revive the memories of the years preceding 1795, except to remind us of what Ireland may suffer at the hands of an Irish Parliament.

But then, it is said, we are not really Irishmen; and though we may be contented, and have good reason for our contentment, we cannot be expected to understand the feelings and wishes of Irishmen. I declare if you and I are not Irishmen, I do not know who can be entitled to the name. Eight generations of your ancestors and of mine sleep beneath the shadow of the old Abbey walls. These men through their several generations were born and lived and died in Ireland. Every morning they went forth to their work and to their labour till the evening; they spent their days and their strength and their substance on Irish soil. They subdued the earth and planted it. The wilderness and the solitary place were glad for them; and they made the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. There is not a square yard round the places where we were born which does not bear the marks of their industry and care. Every spot where we sported in childhood is associated with their patient and humble toil. All their cares and hopes were centred in Ireland. Ireland's prosperity was their prosperity—Ireland's woes were their woes. At the time when Burns was meditating how he

“for puir auld Scotland's sake
Some usefu' plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least,”

his kinsmen in Ulster were sharpening their pikes and furnishing their muskets, and meditating how they could strike a blow for “puir auld Ireland.” And in what respect are we unfaithful to the traditions of our sires? Are we less Irishmen than they? Do we love the old country less? Have we less sympathy with the sufferings of our fellow-countrymen? Is the soil upon which we were born and nourished less dear to us than it was to them? You, my dear friend, live where you were born, and enjoy the happiness of the man

“whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound.”

I, who had no paternal acres to care for, am obliged to live far from the scenes of my happy boyhood. But I wonder if you, who live upon the soil, are more deeply attached to the old acres than I who am exiled from them. When I close my eyes on the bright June days, and shut out the dust and turmoil of the Four Courts, my heart travels back to the old home. I see the green hills of my native Ards stretching down in their summer gladness on both sides to the sea. I hear the cry of the corncrake from the lush meadow grass, and the whistle of the blackbird from the garden hedge, as I wander over the fields in the long, sweet evenings of June. And I pray that it may be my lot to spend the last days of my life surrounded by the sights and sounds amidst which my life began. And yet we are told that we are not Irishmen; that we have no love for Ireland, and no care for her prosperity or her future! I protest against the insolence of the assumption that no man can love Ireland unless he hates England; and that no man is qualified as an Irishman to discuss an Irish question if he does not fret against the English connexion. We cannot for a moment admit the assumption that a full third of the most industrious, most energetic, and most capable members of the Irish race are to be excluded from the pale of Irish nationality, and that their opinions and wishes are not to be reckoned in any estimate of Irish sentiment. From 1868 till 1885 Mr. Gladstone attached great weight to the opinion and example of Ulster in dealing with Irish affairs. The Ulster Liberals in those days were wise
and patriotic Irishmen. Now they are devoid of national feeling, and recreant to the traditions of their sires, because they do not join the ranks of those who cheer Mr. Gladstone and groan his Sovereign. We have a great regard for our old leader; but we cannot consent to make his changes of opinion the barometer of Irish nationality, and to say that the true Nationalist is the man who through all changes follows Mr. Gladstone.

Notwithstanding, therefore, the deep censure which Mr. Gladstone has pronounced against us, you and I must continue to treat ourselves as Irishmen, with our share of national sentiment and of national aspiration, and to discuss Irish questions as men who have a deep, sincere, and permanent interest in the welfare of our country.

Let us, then, consider this new policy of Mr. Gladstone for Ireland fairly and dispassionately, looking at it as Irishmen who love our country, and desire above all things her highest welfare, but as Irishmen who are not inspired by any hatred of England, or by any determination, at all costs and at all hazards, to shake ourselves free from connexion with England.

I. In the first place, then, this policy seems to me to be clearly a retrograde policy. I do not think a policy is ipso facto condemned when you have shown it to be retrograde. I can easily conceive circumstances in which it would be an act of the highest statesmanship to take a step backwards, and to recur to a policy which had been deliberately discarded by our predecessors. But when the whole current of a nation's history has for centuries steadily set in one direction, I think there is at least a prima facie case against an attempt to turn the current in the opposite direction. Now, the history of these islands since the English Conquest of Britain has been one steady movement towards consolidation and unity. First of all, the various English kingdoms were gradually united into one, and consolidated under the rule of one King and one Parliament. Next, the Welsh Principalities, which had maintained their independence and their separate govern-
as enemies, nor frankly accept them as friends and fellow-subjects.

But, whatever we may think of the manner in which the conquest was accomplished, any reasonable man who looks at the geographical situation of the two islands must see that the conquest was inevitable, and even the most ardent Home Rulers are agreed that it cannot now be undone. National independence for Ireland, with the mighty power of Great Britain interposed between her and the Continent, is the dream of fanatics and fools. An independent Ireland would be a constant menace to England’s peace and power, such a menace as no powerful nation would long endure. There can be no question now as to Irish independence. The practical question is as to the terms on which Ireland is to remain under the government of the British Empire—whether Irishmen are to be British citizens with an equal share in the government of a great Empire, or whether they are to be the protected subjects of a tributary province.

After the subjection of Ireland to the crown of England, came in due course the union of her Parliament with that of Great Britain. I do not know how English statesmen, who had seen the happy results of the legislative union with Scotland, could fail, in the circumstances of Ireland after 1798, to grasp at the legislative union of the three kingdoms as a step towards the better government of Ireland, and the greater security and power of the United Kingdom. It was impossible, at any rate, that such a scheme should not occur to William Pitt, the pupil of Adam Smith. It was the completion of the process of consolidation which had been going on for centuries—a process every step in which had hitherto been attended with success, and had been accompanied or followed by an increase of peace and security at home, and of power and glory abroad. The legislative union of Ireland with Great Britain was a measure suggested by the highest statesmanship; and had Pitt been able to carry it on his own terms, there can be no doubt it would have been as fully successful as the union with Scotland. But, unfortunately, the union was as incomplete and as half-hearted as English measures for Ireland have generally been. There could be no real or effective union with the Irish people without the abolition of the Catholic disabilities. The frank recognition of the whole Irish people as free and equal before the law, and entitled to every privilege of citizens, was essential to the very idea of a real political union. Pitt knew this well; but he was overborne by the obstinate bigotry of the King. Had the Irish people in 1800 been treated as the Scotch were in 1707, what a different history ours would have been!

But, admitting all this, and deploring as we do the manner in which Pitt’s great policy was maimed and disabled, can we with reason say that the legislative union of Ireland with Great Britain has proved a failure? What reason can anyone give us for supposing that Ireland would have been happier, better governed, or more contented under the Parliament of 1782? No doubt it took 29 years to wring Catholic Emancipation from the British Parliament. But how long would it have taken to wring Catholic Emancipation from a Parliament representing all the fears, the prejudices, the rancorous memories and passions, of the Protestant colony in Ireland?

The interests of the people who inhabit these islands have hitherto been found to be best and most surely promoted by gradually abolishing every separate and independent jurisdiction, and by uniting them more completely under the sovereign control of one central government. Their union has proved their strength and happiness. Unity of government and of administration has gradually produced unity of interest, of feeling, and of aim. Internal peace, mutual good-will, the disappearance of national jealousies and of race hatreds, the creation of a great common sentiment of patriotism, the feeling that the subjects of the Queen have a common inheritance in the glory, and a common interest in the honour and greatness, of the British Empire—these have been the
results of a policy of consolidation in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ulster. Are we to reverse this policy because it has not yet succeeded in three provinces of Ireland? I could understand such a suggestion if we did not know the reasons why this policy has not yet fully succeeded in Catholic Ireland. But we know the reasons too well. Every man who knows the elements of Irish history can point to the errors, the crimes, and the follies of English rule which have made Ireland discontented and disloyal. To know the cause of discontent, if that cause be within our own control, is to know its certain cure. A nation is not more certainly made discontented by bad government than it is made contented by good government. It was bad government, and not the Union, which was the source of Irish discontent. It is not the repeal of the Union, but perseverance in good government, which will remove Irish discontent. If the policy of union and consolidation has been successful in every other case, and if we can clearly point out the reasons why it has not been successful in this case, surely the inference is, not that we should reverse the policy which the wisest statesmen have pursued for ages, but that we should remove the causes which in Ireland have prevented or retarded its natural and beneficent operation.

And, after all that we can say, the slow growth of unity of feeling between England and the bulk of the Irish people is not such a portentous and unprecedented phenomenon as to frighten us out of all our ordinary political principles and methods. It is the same sort of thing as we are accustomed to see whenever two peoples of different histories and different traditions are brought together under one government. Unity of feeling under such circumstances does not grow in a few years. Was there no discontent or disloyalty in Scotland after the union of 1707? You remember our early readings in Scott's "Tales of a Grandfather"; you remember "The Black Dwarf" and "The Heart of Midlothian." You and I who were bred upon Scott and Burns know well that at the time of the Scottish Union, and for many a long year afterwards, the state of feeling between the English and Scottish peoples was such as to threaten the most disastrous outbreaks of civil violence. The union with Scotland was not the work of gushing sentimentallists. It was the work of men with the foresight, the tenacity, and the hard grit of statesmen. They never dreamt of abandoning the Union because the English and Scottish people did not rush into each other's arms and embrace in fraternal affection. What would the verdict of history be upon any English statesman who in 1736 had proposed to repeal the union with Scotland because all Scotland was aflame with jealousy of England and hatred of English influence? If that great matter had been dealt with by an appeal to national sentiment, what would have become of the great Chatham and the expansion of England in the eighteenth century?

Look at the people among whom we were ourselves brought up. There is not a people over the wide expanse of the British Empire more obedient to the law, more loyal to the Queen, more cordially attached to the English connexion. Yet you and I have both talked in our boyhood with those who were born and bred in the same district when it was the most intensely disaffected and rebellious spot of all the wide realms of George III. What would we now think of an English statesman who had proposed to yield to the sentiment of Ulster in 1797, and to set up a separate government under the patronage of the French Directory? Surely time and the influences of steady good government are forces upon which statesmen can count, as well as national sentiment, national jealousies, or the remembrance of past wrongs. I confess it seems to me a very narrow and short-sighted statesmanship which would break the continuity of British history, and set at defiance all the natural forces which are making for the unity of law and government in these islands, merely because Ireland has grown less rapidly than the rest of the kingdom into the feeling of a common interest, and the
desire for common counsels and a common policy. If it was bad statesmanship in the past to hinder and retard the working of the natural forces and tendencies which were making for the union of Ireland with Great Britain, surely it cannot be good statesmanship now to abandon the idea of union altogether, and to leave Ireland to work out her own destiny in isolation and independence.

I think I am justified in speaking of this new policy of Mr. Gladstone as a retrograde policy; and although I do not think that any statesman is to be held to every expression of opinion or exposition of policy which he has uttered in the past, yet I cannot help saying that no other statesman of our time has shown so fully and clearly as Mr. Gladstone how retrogressive his own present policy is. The following passage from Mr. Gladstone's speech at Aberdeen, on Sept. 26, 1871, seems to me absolutely unanswerable from the point of view of British statesmanship, and certainly Mr. Gladstone has never yet answered it:

"This United Kingdom, which we have endeavoured to make a united kingdom in heart as well as in law, we trust will remain a united kingdom; and although, as human beings, the issues of great events are not in our hands, but are directed by a higher Power, yet we intend and mean, every one of us, high and low—not those merely who meet within this hall, but those who crowd the streets of your city, and of every city from the north to the south of this island—we intend that it shall remain a united kingdom. We are told that Ireland is to be a separate country, and that Ireland is to have a Parliament of her own. Well, now, why is Parliament to be broken up? Has Ireland great grievances? What is it that Ireland has demanded from the Imperial Parliament, and that the Imperial Parliament has refused? It will not do to deal with this matter in vague and shadowy assertions. I have looked in vain for the setting forth of any practical scheme of policy which the Imperial Parliament is not equal to deal with, or which it refuses to deal with, and which is to be brought about by Home Rule. . . . You would expect, when it is said that the Imperial Parliament is to be broken up, that, at the very least, a case should be made out showing that there were great subjects of policy and great demands necessary for the welfare of Ireland which the representatives of Ireland had united to ask, and which the representatives of England, Scotland, and Wales had united to refuse. There is no such grievance; there is nothing that Ireland has asked, and which this Parliament and this country have refused. . . . But if the doctrines of Home Rule are to be established in Ireland, I protest, on your behalf, that you will be just as well entitled to it in Scotland; and, moreover, I protest, on behalf of Wales, that they are entitled to Home Rule there. Can any sensible man, can any rational man, suppose that, at this time of day, we are going to disintegrate the great, capital institutions of this country for the purpose of making ourselves ridiculous in the sight of all mankind, and destroying any power we possess for bestowing benefits through legislation on the countries to which they belong?"

II. But, if this policy would be a retrograde policy as regards the history of the British Empire, it appears to me that it would be still more retrograde as regards the history and destinies of our own country.

It would be retrogressive in two respects especially—

(1) It would deprive Irishmen of all power over, interest in, or responsibility for, the affairs of the British Empire outside the limits of our own island.

(2) It would leave Irishmen to deal with the affairs of their own country in isolation and independence, uncontrolled and uninfluenced by the knowledge, wisdom, and experience of the other parts of the United Kingdom.

In both respects it appears to me that the new policy would have a disastrous effect on the progress and prosperity of our own island.

1. To deprive Irishmen of all share in directing the policy,
or influencing the councils of the British Empire was an essential part of Mr. Gladstone’s Home Rule Bill, and, with all deference to the opinion of Sir George Trevelyan, it will be found to be a necessary part of any scheme for Irish Home Rule that would have any chance of acceptance from a British Parliament. For no assembly of English and Scottish representatives will ever consent to a measure by which all Irish concerns would be withdrawn from their cognisance and control, whilst the representatives of Ireland would continue to exercise a controlling influence over the affairs of Great Britain. But to anyone who has been brought up in high ideas of the duties, the privileges, and the responsibilities of citizenship, can anything be conceived more degrading, more depressing, more fatal to the growth of an exalted patriotism, than an arrangement by which we are to be deprived of all influence in the government of the Empire, of which, at the same time, we are to remain subjects? We are to lose all control over the army and navy, for which we are to continue to pay. We are to have no influence over a foreign policy, in which we may yet be vitally interested. We are not even to have a voice in fixing the tariffs which are to regulate the course of our own trade, and determine the productiveness of our own industries. We are, in fact, to be saddled with all the burdens and dangers of citizenship in a great Empire, without one of the ennobling privileges or of the inspiring responsibilities which make the dangers and burdens of Empire more desirable than the security of protected weakness. As an Irishman, I am content with my share in the government of this great Empire; as an Irishman, I can understand and sympathise with the dreams that have often been dreamt of Irish independence; but I protest that, as an Irishman, I cannot conceive how Irishmen could contentedly sit down, as tributaries of an Empire in whose glories they had no share, to administer for a foreign power the affairs of a conquered province. That would be, to my mind, a disastrous surrender of the political future of our country; and it could not be carried out without degrading to the parochial level the political instincts and the political capabilities of Irishmen. Our share in the government of a great Empire, small though it may be—if only we take our share in the spirit of patriotic citizens—is an influence which cannot but elevate the character, and promote the intellectual progress, of our race. Independence, if independence were possible, might compensate us for the loss of the larger sway and more animating hopes of Empire. But dependence without dignity, subordination without influence, the administration of provincial concerns under the protection and patronage of men whose partners we once were in the government of an Empire—this is a fate which men might submit to if it were inevitable, but which it is hard to conceive as deliberately chosen and eagerly striven after by the representatives of a proud and high-spirited race.

2. But I go a step further, and I affirm that, whilst to deprive Irishmen of their share in the government of the Empire would be disastrous to their political character and their political future, to give them the exclusive and uncontrollable government of Ireland would be still more disastrous to the good government and the political future of our own island.

In the first place, the Irish people are undoubtedly inferior to the other inhabitants of the United Kingdom in political aptitude and political sense. I do not think this is to be imputed to us as a fault, nor is it due, as some assert, to any natural inferiority of race. It is a result of our history and of our past misgovernment, and may be fully accounted for by the simple fact that, whilst the English and Scottish peoples have been exercised in the practice of government for centuries, the political education of the Irish people only commenced about fifty years ago. But, account for it as we may, I do not think any reasonable man who observes the political ideas and the political methods of the Irish people, who has considered the social and economic theories pro-
pounded by their most able and eloquent men, and the kind
of arguments by which these theories are most successfully
recommended to the people they lead, can doubt for a
moment that the political education of the Irish people is in
a very backward state. Nor can anyone doubt that England
has hitherto been the great mistress of the nations in the
difficult and noble art of free government. If the Scottish
and Welsh peoples are now adepts in the prudent, orderly,
and successful management of their political affairs, it is
chiefly owing to their long and intimate association with
England in the great work of government. It is no reproach
to the Irish people to say that they are not at present fit for
the uncontrolled management of their own affairs. Their
political education is, in fact, only commencing; and, instead
of being set, unaided and unguided, to the most difficult of
all political tasks—the task of self-government—they need,
above all things, to be politically trained by association and
co-operation in the work of government with older and more
experienced hands. It seems to me that the controlling and
steadying influence of the other parts of the United Kingdom
was never more needed in Ireland than at present, when the
masses of the people—ignorant, prejudiced, and embittered
by poverty and suffering—have been suddenly admitted to
the franchise; when an acute economic crisis has inflamed
and aggravated their discontent; when there is a wider
separation than ever, both in interest and in feeling, between
them and their social superiors; and when their leaders are
men who have attained their position by stimulating to the
utmost the bitter jealousies and rankling animosities which
divide class from class in Ireland.

But, in the next place, we cannot overlook the immense
importance of the fact that the people of Ireland are not yet
a homogeneous people. There is no such unity of history,
feeling, or aim among them as is absolutely necessary to
constitute a self-governing people. They are, unhappily, still
divided by profound differences of character, of history, and
of political tendency. They have never been welded into
one nation by a great struggle against a common foe, by a
great outburst of national sentiment, by the memory of great
deeds or great victories which were achieved by the whole
people. They have no Bannockburn in their history. All
their struggles have been against one another. Their anni-
versaries are of victories in which Irishmen were the victors
and other Irishmen the vanquished. Their history has been
the struggle of one faction after another for supremacy or for
revenge; it has never been the struggle of a whole people for
the common freedom or the common weal. No doubt other
nations have had their intestine factions and their intestine
feuds as bitter as ours; but they have outlived them before
they were fit for self-government. The English people were
not fit for self-government before Norman and Englishman
had forgotten their differences of race, and the mutual jealousies
and fears of oppressors and oppressed. It was only the stern
absolutism of the Tudors that made it possible for Englishmen
to live together in unity and peace after the Wars of the Roses.
The misfortune of Ireland is that Irishmen have not forgotten
their quarrels, or acquired that feeling of a common country
and a common weal which is essential to a just and settled
government. A deep chasm separates the mass of the people
from their natural leaders. The landed property, the com-
merce, the education, and the enterprise of the nation belong
mainly to classes which are wholly out of sympathy with the
political aims and aspirations of the people. The people are
under the leadership of men who are full of all their own
bitterest prejudices and antipathies, who are politically as
untrained and uneducated as they are themselves, and whose
chief capacity for leadership is the power of giving eloquent
expression to the wildest and most vindictive passions of
those whom they lead.

How is it possible that, under such circumstances, an Irish
Parliament and an Irish Executive could govern this country
with any tolerable degree of success? We had an experi-
ment in the end of the last century of governing Ireland through one faction of the Irish people. Was it so successful as to encourage us to try, in the end of this century, the experiment of governing Ireland through another faction? Edmund Burke, in one of his letters, has given us a picture, drawn by the hand of a great master, of the result of withdrawing the control of the British Parliament, and leaving Ireland to the uncontrolled sway of an Irish Parliament, in which one section of a divided people was predominant. Let those who, under different circumstances, would renew the experiment, study this picture with attention, and say if it does not appear like an awful prophecy of what an Irish Parliament in our own time would be, with the sole difference that the dominant faction of Burke's day would be the vanquished faction of ours:

"English government has farmed out Ireland, without the reservation of a pepper-corn rent in power or influence, public or individual, to the little narrow faction that domineers there. Through that alone they see, feel, hear, or understand anything relative to that kingdom. Nor do they any way interfere, that I know of, except in giving their countenance and the sanction of their names to whatever is done by that junto. Ireland has derived some advantage from its independence of the Parliament of this kingdom, or, rather, it did derive advantage from the arrangements that were made at the time of the establishment of that independence. But human blessings are mixed, and I cannot but think that even these great blessings were bought dearly enough when, along with the weight of the authority, they have totally lost all benefit from the superintendence, of the British Parliament. Our pride of England is succeeded by fear. It is little less than a breach of order even to mention Ireland in the House of Commons of Great Britain. If the people of Ireland were to be flayed alive by the predominant faction, it would be the most critical of all attempts so much as to discuss the subject in any public assembly upon this side of the water. If such a faction should hereafter happen, by its folly or its iniquity, or both, to promote disturbances in Ireland, the force paid by this kingdom (supposing their own insufficient) would infallibly be employed to redress them. This would be right enough, and indeed our duty, if our public councils at the same time possessed and employed the means of inquiring into the merits of that cause in which their blood and treasure were to be laid out. By a strange inversion of the order of things, not only the largest part of the natives of Ireland are thus annihilated, but the Parliament of Great Britain itself is rendered no better than an instrument in the hands of an Irish faction. This is ascendency with a witness! In what all this will end, it is not impossible to conjecture, though the exact time of the accomplishment cannot be fixed with the same certainty as you may calculate an eclipse." *

Can any man read these weighty words of the greatest and wisest of Irishmen, and fail to think of Mr. Gladstone's scheme of farming out Ireland to the faction that domineers here, and of using the forces of the British Crown, under the sanction of the British Parliament, to enforce upon British subjects a rule over which neither Crown nor Parliament would exercise an efficient control?

I say nothing of the character of the domineering faction. I say nothing of its avowed disloyalty to the British Crown, or of its open contempt for the British Parliament. If it were as loyal as it professes to be disloyal, if it were as loyal as the domineering faction of Grattan's Parliament professed to be, that would make no difference to my argument. It is enough for me, in the words of Burke, that it is proposed to render the British Parliament no better than an instrument in the hands of an Irish faction.

It was from a situation like this that the Union freed us. The dominance of a faction, though it might linger on for a time, was doomed to extinction from the moment that Irish affairs came under the direct control of the British Parliament,

* Burke's Correspondence, vol. iv., p. 387.
George III. might wish to maintain the Protestant ascendency in its most hateful form; but any wise man could have foreseen that the Protestant ascendency would not long survive the provincial Parliament in which it found its natural origin and its proper nourishment. An Imperial Parliament could not long be swayed by the interest of a local faction, or the influence of local passion. Adam Smith saw this inevitable consequence of a legislative union, and has pointed it out in one of those memorable passages which make his great work a mine of political wisdom:

“By a union with Great Britain, Ireland would gain, besides the freedom of trade, other advantages much more important, and which would much more than compensate any increase of taxes that might accompany that union. By the union with England, the middling and inferior ranks of people in Scotland gained a complete deliverance from the power of an aristocracy which had always before oppressed them. By a union with Great Britain, the greater part of the people of all ranks in Ireland would gain an equally complete deliverance from the power of an aristocracy which had always before oppressed them. By a union with Great Britain, the inhabitants of Ireland are not likely for many ages to consider themselves as one people.”

The history of the Union has justified Adam Smith’s political sagacity and foresight, even though the Union was marred by concessions to that oppressive and odious aristocracy whose ascendency Adam Smith so much deplored. But the moment that the British Parliament withdraws its controlling influence from Irish politics, a new faction will domineer in Ireland, in which the passion for revenge and the low malignity of social envy will play the part which the insolence of religious ascendency did before. The “British peace,” under which Irishmen would gradually have forgotten their enmities and been fused into one people, will be succeeded by a strife of factions, and an outbreak of social and religious jealousies, such as the modern world has seldom seen, and which can only be faintly indicated, in Mr. John Morley’s words, as “a squalid version of the Thirty Years’ War.”

III. But a great many of our former friends and political associates tell us that they agree in all this; that they know the measures now proposed by Mr. Gladstone are retrograde and illiberal; that they dislike such measures as much as we do; but that, as a matter of fact, such measures are necessary, and that, however little they may like them, they are driven to assent to them as the only possible solution of a very grave political problem. When we ask them what is the necessity which forces upon them measures so contrary to their political principles, they tell us that Ireland must at all hazards and at any cost be reconciled to Great Britain; that Irish discontent must be appeased; and that nothing can satisfy or reconcile the Irish people but a measure of self-government. This is the kind of language we are accustomed to hear from men who are supporting a Home Rule policy, whilst they admit that the very idea of Home Rule is utterly distasteful to them.

Now, I think it may be laid down as an evident principle in politics, that we ought to be very cautious about promoting measures which we dislike and disapprove, on the ground that they will remove other evils greater than themselves. This form of doing evil that good may come is at best but a doubtful expedient in politics, and I think we may fairly assume that it is only admissible (if it is admissible at all) when the good we propose to attain is at least as certain as the evil by which we propose to attain it. Is it certain that
a measure of Home Rule will content or reconcile the Irish people? Is it even reasonably probable that it will?

Let us first consider the probable effect of a measure of Home Rule upon that part of the Irish people with whom we are ourselves best acquainted. There is at present in the Province of Ulster a large body of industrious, contented, and loyal inhabitants. These men are as firmly attached to the British Empire, and as loyally obedient to British law, as the inhabitants of any part of England or Scotland. Their industry will compare favourably with that of any other people on the face of the globe. Their energy and enterprise have made Ulster the industrial and commercial centre of Ireland. The progress of towns like Belfast, Derry, Ballymena, Lurgan, and Coleraine, in population, in manufactures, in commerce, and in wealth, since the Union, is one of the most striking facts in our history, especially when it is contrasted with the decay, during the same period, of towns like Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and Waterford. Belfast has become one of the great manufacturing and commercial cities of the Empire. The industry, energy, and enterprise of its inhabitants strike every visitor with amazement, after what he has seen in the rest of Ireland; and the enthusiastic loyalty of the people of Ulster, and their pride in their connexion with the British Empire, are as conspicuous as their patient and contented industry. They have, of course, their grievances, like other people; but they look with confidence for the redress of their grievances to the equity and statesmanship of the United Parliament. They ask for no revolutionary changes; they ask for nothing but to cast in their lot with the destinies of the British Empire—to have their share in the peace, security, and freedom which have been won for them by the wisdom and the struggles of their fathers, and to hand down that share unimpaired as an inheritance to their children.

Will Home Rule be a measure of conciliation to these men? Will it leave them as contented, as peaceful, and as hopeful as it found them? You and I know too well that Home Rule would convert Ulster into the most discontented, most disaffected, and most turbulent province in the British dominions. The people of Ulster would resent—justly, deeply, and bitterly resent—their expulsion from the United Kingdom under whose beneficent rule they were born and bred, their exclusion from the communion and fellowship of their brethren in Scotland and England in which they have taken so much pride. They would feel like soldiers who, after loyal service, had been unjustly degraded and cashiered. Their resentment would be as deep as their loyalty has been sincere, and every feeling of pride they have had in their connexion with the Empire would be turned into a stinging sense of ingratitude. And it is such a people, in such a state of mind, whom it is proposed to hand over to the government of men whose political capacity they despise, whose political principles they detest, whose political methods they abhor, and whose characters they profoundly distrust! Does anyone who knows Ulster, or has been bred among its people, believe that under such circumstances Ulster would be a peaceable or contented community? Does anyone believe that the peaceful industry and contented toil which have turned one of the poorest provinces of Ireland into the seat and centre of its prosperity would be undisturbed by such a change of government?—that the men who glory in their loyalty to the Queen, and whose proudest boast is that they were born free citizens of the British Empire, would sit down in contented security to be governed by Mr. Parnell and his lieutenants?—that they would submit in peace to have their industry, their commerce, and their wealth placed under the protection of the men whose policy has paralysed industry, destroyed credit, and ruined trade in every part of Ireland where it now holds sway? If our forefathers rebelled against Grattan's Parliament, will their descendants be happy and contented under Mr. Parnell's? We have heard of the law "wearing a foreign garb" in Ireland. What sort of garb will the law
made by a Parnellite Parliament wear to the Ulster merchant or farmer? We are told that he will be content to see the victories of 1641 and 1689 reversed by the ballot-box, with the English forces standing by to see that the old enemies of the English connexion get the full benefit of their voting power! He will find himself hopelessly outvoted on every question which is vital to his interests by the traditional enemies of his race; and believing (as he assuredly will believe) that, if only the forces of England stood aside, he would be fully able to protect himself, he will be asked to be content whilst the yoke is fastened on his neck by the military power of the State under whose protection he was born!

You and I do not share all the prejudices or fears of our Ulster neighbours; and it is not our theory of government that the prejudices of any part of the people are to be petted and gratified at the expense of the welfare of the whole. But we cannot help observing that the very politicians who are most tender towards the prejudices of one section of Irishmen, and shape their whole Irish policy with a view to conciliate them, become exceedingly impatient and scornful when they are asked to consider the inveterate prejudices and prepossessions of another section. What passes by the fine names of national feeling and national sentiment in the South becomes Orange bigotry and truculence in the North. Discontent in Munster is to be soothed, and conciliated, and coaxed, and petted; discontent in Ulster is to be bantered and jeered at, and, if necessary, put down by armed force.

And our old favourite, Mr. John Morley, from whose pages we have learned so many lessons of mild political wisdom, thought it necessary to begin the great work of reconciling Ireland by stinging into revolt, with carefully constructed jibes and flouts, the Orange populace of Belfast! You and I do not believe that these wise and prudent statesmen are ever likely to see their theories of Irish government put into practice; but, if they do, they will learn too late that the reconciliation of Irish discontent (even if they were able to effect it) would be dearly purchased at the cost of a humiliated and discontented Ulster.

But would they reconcile the rest of Ireland? What grounds are there for believing that they would? We are told that they have the assurances of the Irish leaders that Ireland would be completely satisfied with such a measure of Home Rule as Mr. Gladstone offered. I do not doubt the sincerity of those assurances. I do not doubt the sincerity of the similar assurances given by the Irish Catholic Bishops, that, if Catholic Emancipation were granted, they would never attack the Irish Church Establishment. Such assurances are always given by men who are eagerly bent on carrying a political measure. Men in such circumstances always think that the object which for the time fills their political horizon is the ultimate goal of their desires. The assurances they give are perfectly sincere, and they are wholly worthless. He must be a very childish politician indeed who attaches any serious significance to assurances of this kind, which are as sure to be given as they are sure to be falsified.

The Irish people will not be, and ought not to be, satisfied with such a measure of Home Rule as Mr. Gladstone proposes. If such a measure were passed, no Irishman worthy of the name would be contented whilst a shred of power or influence was left to Great Britain in this island. Irishmen may learn to live contented in free and equal union with Great Britain; it is impossible that they can ever be contented with subordination and dependence. They will never be contented with the form and shadow of free government, without its substance and power. They will fret and fume when they find themselves "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd" within the provisions of an Act of Parliament designedly drawn to hold them in the leash. When they find that all the highest functions of national life, and all the highest objects of national ambition, are forbidden to what is called a National
Government, it is certain that they will be filled with disappointment and angry discontent; and all the reasons which are now urged for the concession of Home Rule will then be as strongly, and far more justly, urged for the concession of independence.

Besides, we must remember that, even if Home Rule were granted, Great Britain would still have to deal with a poor and suffering people. Nobody imagines that Home Rule will act like magic, and relieve Irishmen at a stroke from the economic and social evils under which they suffer. Some of the Irish leaders talk as if it would; but, if they are sincere, it is only another proof of the childishness of their political ideas, and their hopeless incapacity for dealing with the economic interests of any people. And if Home Rule does not remove Irish suffering, then as sure as Irishmen suffer, so surely will their dependence on Great Britain seem to them the cause of their suffering. As long as any remnant or symbol of British power remains in Ireland, so long will the people be told, and believe, that all the evils which their rulers create, or are unable to prevent, arise from the interference of the old enemy. There seems to me to be no reasonable hope of peace between the two countries, except either in complete union or complete separation. The latter is admitted to be impossible. But if once the Legislative Union is abandoned, then, as sure as any connexion with or dependence on Great Britain remains, so surely will the rulers of Ireland and the people of Ireland throw the blame of every calamity that befalls them upon the jealous interference of their more powerful neighbours. Peace and reconciliation are undoubtedly great and worthy objects for a statesman to pursue; but peace and reconciliation are not to be effected by providing perpetual subjects and opportunities of quarrel.

And certainly the scheme of Home Rule, as it is now proposed, seems designedly planned to maintain a perpetual quarrel between the peoples and their parliaments; for the Irish Parliament is to be carefully prohibited from interfering with every matter in which the Irish people and their leaders are most interested. As long as you and I remember, what are the great questions and topics upon which the Irish people and the Irish popular leaders have been most eager and most eloquent?

The first is the Land question. But Mr. Gladstone will not allow the virtuous, patriotic, and moderate party, to whom he is willing to consign the future destinies of Ireland, to touch our old opponents, the landlords. The Irish party are virtuous, patriotic, and moderate so long as they are dealing with questions in which they have no special interest; but once that it comes to dealing with the Land question, which is the question of questions with every Irish patriot, then their virtue and moderation can no longer be trusted, and they must stand aside and allow a “foreign” Parliament to deal with that. Can anyone conceive a greater outrage than that we should be told that the men who are good enough to govern us cannot be trusted to deal in common fairness with the Irish landlords? Is this significant hint as to the character of our future governors intended to conciliate the Irish peasant who is the backbone of Irish discontent? Or is it intended to conciliate the manufacturing and commercial classes, by telling them that a government which is not fit to be trusted with the interests of the landlords is good enough to be trusted with theirs?

Then there is the question of protection for native industries. Every Nationalist member of Parliament, every branch of the National League, is protectionist to the heart’s core. An economic fallacy, when driven from every other stronghold, finds a secure refuge in the Irish patriot’s breast. Mr. Gladstone knows this well, as he showed in his speech at Dover the other day. But on this great question, of vital interest to Ireland and Irishmen, the Irish Parliament is to have no say. The regulation of Irish tariffs is to be in the hands of the British Parliament; the old sore of the eighteenth century is to be reopened; and Irishmen, who believe with a childlike faith
in the power of legislation to create industry, and wealth, and prosperity, are expected to be content whilst this great instrument of national welfare is in the hands of their old enemies.

And what is the next great aspiration of the Irish patriot? It is to be free from English influence at home, and to be free from all complicity with English influence abroad. Mr. Gladstone tells us that the law comes to Ireland in a foreign garb; and undoubtedly one great object of the jealousy and discontent which he seeks to conciliate is the influence of Great Britain over the enactment and administration of the law by which Ireland is governed. But Mr. Gladstone has undertaken to conciliate Sir George Trevelyan as well as Ireland, and Sir George Trevelyan will not be conciliated unless the Imperial Parliament retains its control over the appointment of the judges who are to administer, and of the officers who are to execute, the law in Ireland. How the law is to be stripped of its foreign garb, and yet Sir George Trevelyan's prejudices against Land League law conciliated, is a secret which still remains hidden in the breast of Mr. Gladstone. But it may be confidently predicted that the British Parliament will not entrust the friends and associates of Patrick Egan with the nomination of the Irish judiciary and the command of the Irish police. And if so, what becomes of the conciliation of the Irish people, who are fretting under the bondage of foreign law?

But those who have carefully watched the course of Irish politics are aware that the discontented part of the Irish population are profoundly and bitterly opposed to England on every question of foreign policy. I do not remember a single foreign dispute or complication of any kind in which the leaders of the discontented party did not openly proclaim their good wishes for England's enemies, and their desire to see England's allies defeated and disgraced. Even in foreign wars in which England has no direct concern, the sentiment of discontented Ireland is sure to run counter to the sentiment of the people of Great Britain. It is certain that Irishmen take a deep interest in foreign politics, and it is certain that their sympathies in foreign politics will rarely concur with those of the people of Great Britain. Yet they are to stand by in contented silence whilst a British Government, responsible only to a British Parliament, directs all the military and naval power of the Empire (to which Ireland is to contribute its share) towards objects of which they profoundly disapprove. For Mr. Gladstone carefully excludes the Irish Parliament from even expressing an opinion on questions of foreign policy, and compels them to subsidise a policy which they are powerless to control or modify. Those who imagine that Ireland will be passive, whilst Great Britain is active, in foreign concerns can hardly remember how profoundly Ireland was stirred by the revolt of the British Colonies in America, and by the events of the French Revolution. The events of 1782 and 1798 were the direct result of foreign complications. And no man who has lived in Ireland for the last twenty or thirty years can sincerely believe that, in the possible event of a war between Great Britain and the United States, an Irish Parliament would long remain a silent and passive contributor to the military resources of England. Yet it is part of Mr. Gladstone's great plan of conciliation that Ireland is to pay for a policy which she hates, and to have no voice in the direction of affairs in whose issue she has the deepest interest.

Such are the provisions which are made for the peace and reconciliation of Ireland! Such are the "resources of civilisation" for settling, on a firm and lasting basis, the relations between the two islands! The long controversy between the nations is to be closed for ever by an arrangement under which Ireland is to be civilly dismissed, like a poor relation of whose manners her great friends are somewhat ashamed, and whose presence in the house and interference in the family concerns have become intolerable. It is a hopeful method of dealing with a sensitive and high-spirited
people. It is a truly magnificent and statesmanlike concep-
tion that the two hostile sections of the Irish people are to
be fused into one nation under the pressure of a common
degradation. "In what all this will end it is not impossible
to conjecture, though the exact time of the accomplishment
cannot be fixed with the same certainty as you may calculate
an eclipse." So wrote Edmund Burke of Grattan's Parlia-
ment in 1796. If Grattan's Parliament ended in a bloody
rebellion, and a cruel reconquest of Ireland, it does not need
the political sagacity of an Edmund Burke to foresee that,
if a Parnellite Parliament were established in Ireland, the
closing years of the nineteenth century would witness another
rebellion, another conquest, and a final Union between the
two countries which would be sealed with the blood and
sufferings of both.

It is because we seek to avert such dangers and calamities
from our country, and not because of our satisfaction with
the present state of Ireland, that we oppose Mr. Gladstone's
new policy. We can never be contented whilst Ireland is
discontented—whilst the spirit of rebellious bitterness rankles
within her—whilst her children eye each other with mutual
distrust as traitors or as aliens. But we cannot despair of
Ireland's reconciliation when we see what time and good
government have done elsewhere to reconcile the bitterest
enemies, and to efface the recollection of the most terrible
wrongs. We cannot despair of Ireland's reconciliation when we see the painful anxiety of the British people to make
amends for past wrongs, and to soothe the wounded spirit of
their Irish brethren. We can see, even in what we regard as
the grievous error of Mr. Gladstone, the seed and promise
of a closer union between the two peoples. Whatever may
become of Mr. Gladstone's present policy, it will be extremely
difficult for the Irish leaders ever again to play the part of
the irreconcilable enemies of Great Britain. They have
made themselves part and parcel of the English party game:
they appeal to English sympathy, and ask for English help:
they have left the future government of their country to the
decision of the Imperial Parliament; and they have thereby
given a practical adhesion to the Legislative Union which is
of far more importance than their theoretical denunciation of
it. They cannot thus appeal to the wisdom and authority of
the Imperial Parliament without profoundly modifying their
relations to the British Empire. If they invoke the decision
of Parliament, they must be prepared to abide by it. If the
decision is adverse to their policy, they must either submit or
try again. They can neither rebel nor secede so long as they
admit that the government of Ireland is a matter for the
decision of the Imperial Parliament. And as long as the
Irish members continue to co-operate with one of the great
English parties—seeking the same objects, using the same
arguments, appealing to the same sentiments—they give a
practical demonstration of the reality and efficiency of the
Legislative Union which cannot fail to have its effect upon
the minds of their own constituents. And the longer this co-
operation lasts, and the closer it becomes, the more absurd
will appear the contention that the Imperial Parliament must
be broken up because Irishmen cannot join with Englishmen
and Scotchmen in the government of a United Kingdom.

I have thus endeavoured to set out in brief outline the
main reasons why I think that you, and your neighbours who
look to you for guidance, ought to be ready heartily to co-
operate with any party which stands firm for the maintenance
of the Union. In the presence of the grave danger which
now threatens our country, it would be childish to rake up
old quarrels. Differences of opinion on other questions may
well lie over for the present. In my opinion, there is no
other question which it is worth while for Irishmen to fight
about, as long as the question of Home Rule "holds the
field."

But, whilst we stand firm for the maintenance of the
Union, we ought to make it clear that we do so in no spirit
of hostility or indifference to the bulk of our fellow-country-
men. We ought to avoid all virulence of speech, and all provocations to wrath and bitterness. We need not join in those insulting demonstrations which remind our Catholic neighbours year by year of the battles which they have fought and lost in what they deemed their country's cause. We ought to remember the many wise, virtuous, and patriotic Irishmen who have been unable to take our view of their country's interests. And, although we cannot affect to feel any great respect for those singular patriots who only discovered their country's woes on the afternoon of the day on which they were proclaimed by Mr. Gladstone, yet we ought never to forget the large body of sincere opinion and deep feeling among our countrymen which must be convinced and conciliated before the Union can produce its happiest results. Time and patience will work out this consummation: but vituperation and insult will not help on the process. Contempt is not a happy instrument of conciliation; nor will the Union be strengthened by fomenting bitterness and discord. We must not forget, in our zeal for the Union, the great ends for which the Union exists. We must not forget that the Union can never be what we desire and hope it shall be, until Irishmen of all classes are at one with each other, and at one with all those who in every clime acknowledge the beneficent sway of the English Crown.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

JAMES J. SHAW.