

it was weakness in men of high degree or tyranny over men of low estate; whether it was the curse of the grog-shop or the iron hand of the despot at home or abroad,—so it was that like the lightning Phillips flashed and struck. The scorching, hissing bolt rent the air, now here, now there. From heaven to earth, now wild at random, now straight it shot. It streamed across the sky. It leaped in broken links of a chain of fire. It sometimes fell with reckless indiscriminatio alike on the just and on the unjust. It sometimes smote the innocent as well as blasted the guilty. But when the tempest was over there was a purer and fresher spirit in the air, and a sweeter health.

Louder than the thunder, mightier than the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, a still small voice spake in the public heart, and the public conscience woke.

JOHN MORLEY



RIGHT HON. JOHN MORLEY, P.C., D.C.L., an eminent English statesman, and man of letters, was born at Blackburn, Lancashire, Dec. 24, 1833. He was educated at Cheltenham College and at Lincoln College, Oxford. On receiving his degree he qualified for the Bar, but never practiced law, drifting instead into journalism. His contributions to the London "Leader" were of such excellence that they led to his appointment on the staff of the "Saturday Review." He afterwards became editor of the "Fortnightly Review," 1867-83; of the "Pall Mall Gazette," 1880-83, and of "Macmillan's Magazine," 1883-85. From 1883 to 1895 he was Liberal member of Parliament for Newcastle-on-Tyne, and in 1896 became representative of the Scotch boroughs of Montrose. He was chief secretary for Ireland in 1886 and again from 1892 to 1895. He has been a close student of political problems, and an able and prolific writer. His power as a statesman has lain in his ability to clothe his arguments in strong and exact phrases, and in his honesty and sincerity. He has been one of the most earnest advocates of home rule for Ireland, and also given his best efforts to the solution of labor problems. As historian, editor, and man of letters, Mr. Morley has earned a world-wide reputation. He is one of the first living masters of the English language. Among his most notable publications are: "Edmund Burke" (1867); "Critical Miscellanies" (1871); "Voltaire" (1871); "Rousseau" (1873); "On Compromise" (1874); "Diderot and the Encyclopædist" (1878); "Life of Richard Cobden" (1881); "Studies in Literature" (1891); and "Walpole," in the series of "Twelve English Statesmen." He is also well known as the editor of the "English Men of Letters" series.

ON HOME RULE

DELIVERED AT OXFORD, FEBRUARY 29, 1888

SIR,—This is not my maiden speech to the Oxford Union, therefore it is not upon that ground that I venture to claim your indulgence. I was warned before I came here—and what I have heard since does not alter the weight of that warning—that I must be prepared to face a decisively hostile majority.

But, in spite of that I confess I felt in coming here none of those misgivings which the great Master of Romance made

Louis XI feel when he was infatuated enough to put himself in the hands of Charles the Bold of Burgundy. I feel perfectly confident that I shall receive from gentlemen present the courteous and kindly attention which Englishmen seldom refuse, even to their political opponents. It is quite true that at this moment party passion and political passion have reached a pitch of bitterness, and in some quarters I would almost say of ferocity, which has not been equalled in English history since the break-up of the Conservative party on the repeal of the Corn Laws forty-two years ago.

In spite of that I venture to commend the remarks which I shall intrude upon you to your favorable and indulgent consideration. I am accused very often of choosing to address what are called ignorant and credulous audiences. It cannot, at all events, be said that, in venturing to accept your very kind invitation to come here to-night, I have sought an audience which is ignorant, or an audience which is credulous. I suspect I shall find a scepticism in regard to my arguments the prevailing mood rather than credulity.

An old Parliamentarian was once asked whether he had ever known a speech change opinions, and he answered: "Oh, yes, I have constantly known a speech to change opinions, but I have never known a speech to change votes."

I do not aspire to-night to change votes; I content myself with the less arduous and more modest task of trying to change your opinions. I have listened with enormous interest and sincere pleasure to the debate which has proceeded since I entered the room. It has been animated and exhilarating, and if on one side I heard prejudices and sophisms to which I am accustomed, these prejudices and sophisms were expressed with very great ability and with evident sincerity.

The arguments on the other side—the side which I am

here to press upon your attention—were admirably put, and I hope that they may have caused searching of hearts among some of those who are going to-night to vote against the resolution before the House.

I am following to-night a very distinguished statesman¹ whom you rightly welcomed last week. That noble lord has shown himself to be a man of great shrewdness, some insight, and of very considerable liberality of mind. I am glad that you agree with me in that account. I hope you will go further with me when I say that, considering that he is a man of shrewdness, of insight, and of liberality of mind, it is no wonder that he has left her Majesty's government.

But the noble lord, in his speech, as far as practical issues were concerned, dealt mainly in the prophetic. Now the prophetic is a line in respect to Irish affairs in which the noble lord does not at all excel. I remember very well in 1884, when the Franchise Bill was before the House of Commons, that the noble lord advocated and defended the enlargement of the franchise in Ireland, on the ground that the new voters whom that bill would admit to political power would, on the whole, be a Conservative force, and would to some extent neutralize the Nationalist forces in the towns.

The election of 1885 showed what foresight there was in that particular prophecy of the noble lord; and I venture, with all respect, to warn you that the prophecies which he made to you last week, with respect to the probable course of events affecting self-government, will, within the next two or three years, be seen by you in this hall to have been as futile, as random, and as ill-founded as the prophecy which he made in 1885.

¹ Lord Randolph Churchill, who spoke a week previously opposing the establishment of a statutory Parliament in Dublin.

You must not forget that the noble lord himself was once a Home Ruler. ["No, no!"]

Some gentleman says "No," but I assure him he is mistaken. Lord Randolph Churchill said in the House of Commons that he had been himself in Mr. Butt's days inclined to look favorably upon Home Rule on Mr. Butt's lines. It cannot be denied that Lord Randolph Churchill has been himself in his day a Home Ruler, and in his day he may be a Home Ruler again.

I will not detain you long in dealing with Lord Randolph Churchill's positions, but there are one or two of them so remarkable that I cannot allow them, considering the noble lord's importance in the public eye, to pass without a word of remark.

The noble lord defined the Irish question, and I have no fault to find with that definition. He said that the Irish question arose from this fact, that we cannot obtain from Ireland, first of all, the same reverence for the law; secondly, the same material prosperity; and thirdly, the same contentment and tranquillity that we obtain in England and Scotland.

I think that is a perfectly fair statement of the question. But then, does it not occur even to those who are going to vote against this resolution to-night, that a statesman who admitted that we had obtained nothing better than a result so unsatisfactory, so discreditable, and so deplorable, would say: "Since the result has been such, we must change the system which has produced that result"?

I think that is a fair way of answering the question as the noble lord defines it. Did he so answer it? On the contrary, what he said was: "Since the result has been so discreditable, so deplorable, and so unsatisfactory, therefore I urge you of

the Oxford Union to vote in favor practically of maintaining every jot and tittle of that system exactly as it now stands."

I do not know how the school of logic goes in Oxford since my day; but I think if theoretic logic had been dealt with on the same principle as the noble lord deals with questions of practical logic, he would have come away from the schools with no *testamur*.

And now I come to a more important part of the noble lord's speech. What is the good of the policy which he pressed upon your attention? What is the bright and cheerful prospect that he holds out to you as the result of following that policy? It is so extraordinary and so remarkable from a man of the noble lord's shrewdness, that I really will beg your very close scrutiny of the position which he then took up, and of the very astonishing arguments to which he resorted.

The noble lord said that the Irish party is deeply divided into two sharply opposed sections—one of them is the section which is content with Parliamentary, Constitutional, and peaceful methods; and the other is the party of violence and force. That is perfectly true. There have always been in Irish history these two opposed forces.

It is a very old story; and one part of the story that I have always heard is that in the old days when the quarrel between the moral force party and the physical force party waxed very hot, it generally ended in the moral force party kicking the physical force party downstairs. The noble lord reversed this. He said, Depend upon it, as Home Rule receded in the distance, those who do not believe in the efficacy of Parliamentary methods would assert their superiority over those who do believe in Parliamentary methods.

I will ask the House to put that proposition into rather plainer English. What it means is, that when Home Rule is put upon the shelf, the Fenian movement—which the noble lord truly remarked could scarcely be said to exist at the present moment—would rise in undisputed triumph, and the Constitutional, peaceful, and Parliamentary movement would receive its quietus.

And that is the noble lord's argument in this House for opposing the resolution now before it! I cannot imagine that the golden prospect which the noble lord places before you is one that is really calculated to bring comfort or relief to British statesmen. I agree with him absolutely in his prediction. I have often said that if you do shelve Home Rule, if you once show the majority of the population of Ireland that they have nothing to hope for from the equity and common sense of Great Britain, then I firmly believe that you will have a revival of the old party of violence, of conspiracy, of sedition, and of treason.

But the prospect that he regards with satisfaction and complacency—the prospect of the revival of the violent party and the depression of the peaceful party—that prospect fills me, and I hope fills all well-considering men here, whether they be Unionists or Home Rulers, with repugnance and horror. We shall regard the revival of such a state of things as most dishonoring to England, and as merciless to Ireland.

But I would ask gentlemen to press the noble lord's argument home, to test it and to probe it to the bottom from his own speech. You are to force Home Rule back, in order to restore those halcyon days of which the noble lord himself gave you an account—when, as he said, and I daresay correctly said, half the population of Ireland were either sworn Fenians or else in close sympathy with Fenianism.

That is extreme language. But what is still more extraordinary is the purpose and object with which you are to effect this most curious manœuvre. What was the purpose and the object of shelving Home Rule with the prospect of a revival of Fenianism? Pursue the noble lord's train of thought. You are to raise Fenianism from the dead, you are to stamp out the Constitutional men, and to give new life to the men of violence and conspiracy; you are to fan into a glow all the sullen elements of insurgency in Ireland, in order, forsooth, that the Empire should be the better able to face all these troubles that are coming upon Europe, as the noble lord thinks, and may truly think—to face all these troubles with concentrated strength and undivided resources!

Surely of all extraordinary short cuts to concentrated strength and undivided resources, none can be more extraordinary than to take care to keep a disaffected province at your very gates. The moral charm of such a policy as that is only equalled by its practical common sense.

Why, the other day, in the wilds of Donegal, there was occasion—or the government thought there was occasion—to arrest a certain priest, and to carry this priest in the midst of his flock to the court-house, where he was about to be tried, it required a force of horse, foot, and artillery of something like 500 or 600 of her Majesty's troops. Now it does not need a very elaborate arithmetical calculation to satisfy ourselves if it takes 600 troops to safely look after one insignificant parish priest in the wilds of Donegal for trial, how many troops will it take to hold Ireland when half the population are sworn Fenians, or else in close sympathy with Fenianism.

So much for the noble lord's argument, because that was the real argument of his speech.

No, sir, gentlemen here may depend upon it that, if the time ever comes, as it has come before, when this great and mighty realm shall be called once more by destiny or her duty to face a world in arms in some high cause and policy of state, she will only have her strength concentrated and her resources undivided on the condition that her statesmen and her people have plucked up the root of strife in Ireland and turned the domestic enemy on our flank into our friend and our ally.

But I think we may all agree to recognize the hollowness of the cause, when so able a man as the noble lord, appealing to you in the name of the Empire and the strength of the Empire, argues for the perpetuation of a state of things which morally, and politically, and materially weakens, disables, and cripples the forces of the Empire. So much for the goal of the policy which the noble lord pressed upon you. It is the same goal which ministers—the same lord is no longer a minister—it is the same goal which ministers are constantly alleging in the House of Commons that they place before themselves, and most paradoxical and extraordinary things they say in defence of the proposition that they are reaching the goal.

What is the goal? The goal is to give to Ireland the same reverence for the laws, the same material prosperity, the same contentment and tranquillity, that we have in England and Scotland. Yes; but there are some very astonishing congratulations to be heard in the ministerial camp as to the speed with which and as to the manner in which they are nearing that goal.

For instance, the Attorney-General said the other day that they must be considered to be surmounting the difficulties that concerned English government in Ireland. Well, but

why? The Attorney-General said that the government were surmounting difficulties in Ireland, because meetings and movements which had once been open were now secret.

I am sure that many of you, though you have other things to do than to follow very closely the history of Ireland, and of the good and bad movements in Ireland, must be well aware that the great bane of Ireland and of Scotland when they cross the seas—whether they go to the United States or the English colonies—has been secret association.

The great triumph, I will say, of the League and of the National Movement since the year 1880, has been that those associations which formerly were secret, and therefore dangerous, are now open, and will be open as long as this most reckless government will allow them to be. Ask yourselves—I appeal to your candor—ask yourselves whether, if treason is taught, and if murder is hatched, is treason likely to be taught, is murder likely to be hatched, in open meetings?

No, it is impossible. But what is possible? I am afraid that what is certain is, that if you repress public combination—if you go through that odious and ridiculous process which is called driving discontent beneath the surface—if you do that, you are taking the surest steps that can be taken to have treason taught and murder hatched.

Now, I ask gentlemen here before they vote to-night—or, at all events, to turn it over in their minds after they have voted, whether the goal is being reached by the present policy, a policy which the rejection of this resolution encourages and endorses.

I am not talking away from the resolution, because I am trying to call the attention of gentlemen to the alternative of the policy set out in the resolution of the honorable mover. I hope, therefore, you will agree that I am keeping close to

the point. The point is the alternative of the policy of Home Rule. We have had, since the session began, a series of debates in the House of Commons upon the administration of the Coercion Act.

Of course I am not an impartial witness, but I think that the subtle something which is called the impression of a great assembly, the impression of the House of Commons, is that the government have not shown that they have attained any of the ends which they proposed to themselves when they passed this piece of legislation. All the tests that can be applied to the success of the operation of that Act appear to me to show that it has achieved none of the ends that were proposed.

Have they put down the League? It is perfectly certain that the League is as strong as ever. I know that an attempt is made to make out the contrary case, but from any test that you can apply to the strength of the League, whether it be to the number of branches, to the copiousness of subscriptions, or to the numbers at the meetings—according to any of these tests, so far as I can make out, the League is not in the least degree weakened.

Have they put down the Plan of Campaign? It is very clear that the Plan of Campaign has not been put down. It is true, to come to a third point, that there is a great decline in boycotting. That is quite true, but the point that you have got to make good is that the decline in boycotting is due to the government policy. There are more explanations than one for the decline of boycotting.

If you want my explanation, since you have been so very kind as to ask me to come here, and are so good as to listen to me so attentively, my explanation is that the decline of boycotting is due, first of all, to the fact that a great many

of the boycotted persons have wisely, or unwisely, yielded to and joined the League; and, secondly, what is a far more important consideration, boycotting has declined because a great many landlords have under pressure, or from other motives, made those reductions which equity required and which the peace of the country demanded.

Now, I think it is very important that you should try and realize for yourselves what the policy of coercion is in actual practice. I am not going to detain this House very long by reading extracts. One of the most respected lawyers in the North of England and a very old friend of mine, who is a very experienced man, was in the court at Galway on the thirteenth of this month during a trial of twelve men for rioting. Now, this is what he says:

“There was a great crowd to welcome Mr. Blunt on the evening of January 7. When Mr. Blunt was brought to the jail at Galway the people were orderly on the whole, but they cheered for Mr. Blunt, and they pushed through the police at the station in their anxiety to see Mr. Blunt.”

Was there any harm in that? My friend goes on to say that orders were given to clear the station. I will ask you to mark that I am not criticising what happened. I want to get you into court. My friend goes on to say:

“The station was cleared in half a minute, the police batoning the people and knocking them down. What attempt was made on February 13 to bring any offence home to the twelve accused persons? All that could be urged against them was that they had waited for and had cheered Mr. Blunt.”

And I think they had as much right to do so as if they had been in Oxford Station. To continue:

“The charge was not dismissed, it was adjourned and resumed on February 14, the next day. The Crown then