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THE STATE OF IRELAND.

S P E E C H

DELIVERED BY THE

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THE STATE OF IRELAND.

A MEETING of Conservatives was held on Tuesday evening, December 13, in the Leicester Temperance Hall, to consider the state of Ireland. The hall was densely crowded, and the meeting was enthusiastic. Mr. Albert Pell, M.P., presided, and many of the neighbouring gentry attended. A resolution, "that the present deplorable condition of Ireland demands immediate and energetic action on the part of Her Majesty's Government with a view to the restoration of law and order and the security of life and property," having been proposed by Major-General Burnaby, M.P., and seconded by Mr. Heygate, J.P., Mr. Plunket, who was received with great cheering, after some preliminary remarks, said: Gentlemen,— I am grateful to you for the opportunity you have given me of speaking to you this evening, and of telling you, and whoever may read my words, what is really happening in Ireland at this moment. For I deem it of urgent importance that loyal, law-abiding men throughout the three kingdoms should realise the amazing and awful fact that, bad as has been the state of my unhappy country during the last twelve months, great as has been the peril to society in Ireland, and even to the safety of your empire, never before have these difficulties and dangers been so great and formidable as they are at this moment; and the gloom grows darker every day. If it were merely my purpose this evening to make a party attack upon the Government, I could spend all the time that you could give me, and much more, in recalling the history of recklessness and timidity, of weakness and procrastination, of divided counsels and disastrous delays that have made acts of the largest concession come to a demoralised people without conciliating them, and acts of strong coercion to fall upon them almost without effect. (Applause.) One might expend all the epithets of condemnation and all the ammunition of ridicule without exhausting the topic of this dismal failure to govern. (Hear, hear.) But to-night the dangers of the present and the future to all that is dear to both great parties in the State are too grave for such treatment (hear, hear), and I desire, in the first place, at all events, to realise for you, if I can, the actual state of affairs in Ireland (hear, hear), and to rouse the people of this country, so far as my voice can reach, from the apathy in which it and its Government seems to be

steeped. (Applause.) You have read, no doubt, from day to day, in the news that comes from Ireland, awful instances of agrarian crime, and of the state of terrorism that they have produced (hear, hear); you have read of instances of the oppression of the poor, and of the robbery of the rich, by the action of that lawless organisation which has so long been allowed to overpower the authority of our gracious Queen, and the laws of the realm, till you have begun, perhaps, to think that these are merely sensational stories of newspaper correspondents; and I observe that Liberal politicians tell you that they are but the consequences, inevitable and hardly to be regretted, of an agitation whose objects have been satisfied, and that they still appear as the ocean swell survives the storm which has spent its force. (Applause.) Gentlemen, I have lived the best part of the last three months in Ireland, and I have watched the crisis which is upon us: I have taken counsel with the wisest men I could find on the spot, and now I tell you that the newspaper reports are not exaggerations. I do not speak, of course, of every incident narrated, but of the general meaning of the testimony which they bear. I tell you that murder and arson are rife throughout the greater part of Ireland, and the terror which accompanies such acts of violence in Ireland adds force to the intimidation which is practised there by conspirators who go unpunished and undismayed. (Shame.) I tell you that the oldest men cannot remember a time when the conscience of the Irish people was so demoralised, and the attitude of the lawless so fierce and defiant. I could tell you, from what I have myself seen and heard, tales of the wrongs and sufferings of individuals that would make you blush for shame, and of the ruin of unoffending families that would wring your hearts with pity for these loyal subjects of your own. (Applause.) But it might still be said that I was an excited partizan, misled by antagonism to the aggressors, or by sympathy with their victims. I will therefore trespass upon your kind patience while I found myself upon official documents which cannot be gainsaid; and the deliberately recorded opinions of the highest and most impartial public officers who serve the Crown in Ireland. I will not now recall the statistics of agrarian outrage which form the earlier annals of the Land League; these were stated and proved in both Houses of Parliament by Ministers when they asked for large powers of coercion to repress, and for large measures of concession to conciliate the agitators. What I want to impress upon you is this—that, bad as was the case then, it has since become worse, and is growing daily more desperate. Three months have elapsed since the Land Act was passed—six months have passed since the Coercion Bills were carried into law; yet such has been the utter failure of the Government (applause) that the present state of Ireland is absolutely worse than it was a year ago, and that its future seems at this moment to be more gloomy than ever. (Applause.) Here is the *Dublin Gazette* of last

week ; let me quote some figures from this official return of agrarian crimes for November, and compare them with the corresponding record for the preceding month of October. There was a terrible total of 490 agrarian offences in that one month of October, but in November the total rose to 520 ; and let me observe that it is, unfortunately, in just the class of crimes which most strike terror and add to the authority of the conspiracy that the increase is greatest. The number of offences of firing at the person in October was 7, in November it was 17 ; of firing into dwelling-houses in October, 14, in November, 28 ; of incendiary fires and arson—perhaps the most dreadful of all forms of terrorism as the winter closes in more darkly around the dwellings of the people (hear, hear)—of incendiary fires and arson there were in October, 7, in November no less than 46 ! (Sensation.) It needs no words of mine to make you feel what must be the effect, quite apart from the heinousness of these crimes, of such events upon the minds and imaginations of an excitable people. (Hear, hear, and applause.) But let me bring before you another kind of evidence even more striking and conclusive. During the last week the Winter Assizes have been opened in Ireland. I will quote a few passages from the charges of the learned Judges to the grand jury in each of the three Southern Provinces. In Connaught, Baron Fitzgerald said : “ The most alarming feature of the country is that in the face of the determined efforts of redress which the Legislature afforded, the class of agrarian crimes continued, increased, and was still increasing.” Mr. Justice Barry, speaking last Wednesday to the grand jury in Kilkenny, said, in the course of his most interesting charge : “ It is impossible for any candid man to deny that we are in a worse state this December of 1881 than we were in 1880. . . . It is clear to every man that there is more discontent, disorder, party intimidation, and general lawlessness in the country than there was twelve months ago ; day after day we hear of crimes of violence of every degree—murder, violent assaults, incendiary fires, posting threatening notices, and intimidation which indicate not merely ordinary crime, but a general insubordination and defiance of authority.” And all this in spite of the recent Land Act, which Judge Barry describes as exceeding “ what the most fanatical advocate of the tenant-farmer ever in his wildest moments of imagination had conceived.” (Loud applause.) But the most remarkable of the three is the charge of Mr. Justice Fitzgerald, delivered last Tuesday to the grand jury in Cork. He, like Judge Barry, is in religion a Roman Catholic, and in politics an advanced Liberal. You will remember with what courage and foresight this learned and independent Judge warned the people and the Government in the winter of last year of the anarchy which was then growing apace in Ireland. (Hear, hear.) In his recent charge he refers to that earlier statement, and says that though the observations he then made were subjected to severe criticism, he has

nothing to retract, nothing to alter, nothing to wish unsaid; and then, having carefully analysed the various calendars of offences which were before him for the present time, he says: "The general deduction from the statistics which I have laid before you seems to be that in many and large parts of the four counties which constitute the Munster Winter Assize Commission, life continues to be insecure, or is rendered so miserable as to be worthless; right is disregarded and property is unsafe; the spirit of lawlessness and disorder, marked by an insolent defiance of law and of authority, continue to prevail: it is only by the aid of an overwhelming military force that the process of the law can be executed; the humbler classes continue to be oppressed by an odious tyranny. . . . The list of outrages, after making all deductions for exaggeration and eliminating all cases of ordinary crime, still leave a list of outrages so formidable as to be inconsistent with public peace and security, and which, if suffered to continue unchecked and unrepressed, threaten the very existence of the fabric of society." (Applause.) Judge Fitzgerald also refers to the Land Act, which he, too, says the most sanguine advocate of tenant-right could not have anticipated twelve months before (hear, hear), and he asks, "Has the public obtained the fruits in the restoration of peace and order?" to which question he answers, "Certainly not as yet in Munster. Are we, therefore, to give way to despondency? It is too soon to despair." And then he notes as one element of hope that the intelligent farmers appreciate the great concessions they have received, and are as a class inclined to withdraw from the trammels of illegality. The people at large, too, he adds, "cannot fail to perceive that the results of the present state of the country are that capital has fled the country, there is no industrial enterprise, no employment for the labouring classes, trade does not flourish, and I should fear to estimate the immense depreciation of all Irish securities and Irish properties," and he calls upon all men to join for the restoration of peace and order. (Hear, hear.) Gentlemen, no one can fail to sympathise with the Judge in his eloquent appeal to his fellow-countrymen. (Hear, hear, and applause.) I opposed the Land Act of this year, and I anticipated that it would do great injustice. (Hear, hear.) My worst fears have been realised. The Act seems likely to work even less good and greater evil, and a more immediate and wholesale ruin of the most needed classes in Ireland even than we then predicted (hear, hear); but I would gladly snatch at any ray of light, even from that baleful planet, which seemed to point a way out of the gathering darkness of the present moment. (Applause.) But I ask you how this element of hope, which alone stands between Judge Fitzgerald and total despair, is to be developed. How is that or any other influence to hold its ground on the side of law, or strike a blow in defence of order, if all this crime and terrorism is suffered to continue—nay, steadily to increase? (Hear, hear, and

applause.) No, I will not despair of my country. (Applause.) As long as I have power to act, or voice to utter, I will struggle for the liberty and the happiness and the honour of Ireland (loud applause), which, in the midst of all this misery and shame, has still for me proud traditions and happy associations. (Applause.) But all the more do I appeal to you and to the Government at least to realise the awful gravity of the present moment, and cast away the dangerous doctrines, the mumbling superstitions of some of their followers, which have hitherto hampered and still seem to paralyse their every act. (Loud applause.) Gentlemen, I have as yet said nothing of the effects this reign of terror and the refusal to pay rents have had upon those classes in Ireland whose income is derived from the ownership of land. Time will not permit me, nor indeed do I desire, to harrow your feelings by tales of individual hardship, endured by loyal men of blameless lives ending too often in absolute ruin of themselves and their families. (Hear, hear.) I could tell you of ladies, delicately nurtured, and unused to hardship, sinking day by day into absolute penury (shame), and after enduring all the other humiliations of poverty, driven at last to the door of the poorhouse (shame)—aye, and in one instance of which I myself know, driven within the walls of the lunatic asylum. (Sensation, and cries of "Shame.") But let us now turn to the attitude which the Government has taken up in the presence of the grave crisis which I have sought to realise for you. (Hear, hear.) Gentlemen, some very remarkable speeches have lately been delivered by Cabinet Ministers on this subject. (Hear, hear.) I allude more particularly to those of Lord Hartington and Sir Wm. Harcourt on the one hand, and of Mr. Chamberlain on the other. (Laughter and cheers.) The two former speakers offered apologies for the condition into which Ireland had been brought by their policy, and combined with those excuses very daring attempts to shift some of the blame on to the shoulders of their predecessors in office. (Laughter and applause.) I was rather amused than annoyed by the charge that the Conservative Government were responsible for the present state of Ireland, because they had not sooner inquired into the Land question with the view of redressing the alleged grievance (laughter), for I remembered that, as a matter of fact, they had before leaving office issued a Royal Commission for that purpose (hear, hear), and I could not help smiling when I remembered that only three years before the accession to office of the present Government (in 1877)—on an occasion when it was proposed by an Irish member to issue a Commission of Inquiry into the working of the Land Act of 1870, what was the attitude of Lord Hartington. Why, gentlemen, he was then still so hostile to the policy of the three "F's" afterwards adopted in the Act of 1881 that he said, speaking as leader of the Liberal Party, that, though not opposed to such an inquiry on other grounds, "he should be adverse to it

if it were supposed by the people of Ireland that it was intended to be a prelude to legislation on new principles for the purpose of establishing fixity of tenure and fair rents!" That is funny enough to think of now. (Laughter and applause.) But when I read that these two distinguished but unhappy Whigs (laughter) charged the late Government with not having mastered obstruction in the House of Commons, I could not help laughing outright. I fully agree that unless both parties in the State work cordially together to put down obstruction it cannot be done. (Hear, hear, and applause.) But has Lord Hartington forgotten the kind of aid we got when in office from many who were then his supporters, from some who are now his colleagues? (Applause.) Indeed, I recollect that an Irish member, when charged during the debates of last Session with practising obstruction, reminded the Minister who had thus taunted him that when the Liberal Party were in opposition there were no such friends of Ireland as they. (Applause.) I remember well that Mr. O'Connor distinctly stated that when the members of the Irish party were indulging in obstruction "that the Liberal members came and privately told them how the game was to be played (laughter), that their greatest skill lay in disposing of the good manners of the Irish members, and that their higher prestige came to the assistance of the beleaguered Irish," and so on. (Laughter and applause.) That challenge was openly made in the House of Commons. It was never taken up, and I venture to predict it never will be answered. (Hear, hear, and applause.) But further, these two distinguished statesmen argued that they did not create the Land League, that it was in existence before the general election of 1880, and they added, "your Peace Preservation Bill was too weak for the crisis." This was rather a reason, one would think, in favour of their getting a stronger one instead of their dropping it altogether, as they did. (Laughter and applause.) Whether the Peace Preservation Bill would have proved insufficient if it had been maintained and firmly administered by the late Government, I do not know; but I do know that we were pledged to continue it and to enforce it, and to demand such further measures of precaution as might have been necessary to keep down the agitation and prevent it from spreading and gathering force. (Hear, hear.) I know that the present Ministers, on coming into office, deliberately abandoned it, that after they had left the country twelve months without it they came to Parliament again and begged for its re-enactment, and by the mouth of their Home Secretary they humbly admitted that in trying to get on without it they had made a generous experiment, "but that it was an experiment which had failed." (Laughter.) This curious theory about the mildness of the Peace Preservation Act of the late Government, which I observe has become fashionable with Liberal advocates, is but another weak attempt to shift and share the blame of their own disastrous mismanagement. (Hear, hear, and

applause.) I take the whole bundle of such apologies, and I say that before the general election of 1880, Lord Beaconsfield, (loud and enthusiastic cheering) had recognised the gravity of the crisis (applause) which the Land League was creating, though then the scope of its operations was strictly limited, and the deadly influence of its teachings was almost entirely confined to the narrow area of a famine-stricken district. (Hear, hear.) The old Irish difficulty had entered upon a new and formidable phase. (Hear, hear.) It required the most patient, but at the same time the steadiest and the firmest treatment. (Hear, hear, and applause.) I say that Lord Beaconsfield (loud applause) had the wisdom to foresee and the courage to warn the people of the magnitude of the danger (applause), and staked his reputation as a statesman and the fate of his Administration upon the justice of his apprehensions, and the necessity for a calm but uncompromising hostility to the agitators. (Loud cheers.) And I say to these Whig apologists, "You chose an opposite course, you professed an optimist opinion as to the state of Ireland, you sought and obtained the support of the Land Leaguers at every contest where the Irish vote had power. (Applause.) I know that after you had turned out our Government you were again warned of the danger, and offered every assistance in our power if you would deal resolutely with it (hear, hear); and now, when you have allowed the Land League to grow and spread, till nearly the whole island is enveloped in its deadly embrace, and you have at last been driven to adopt far more stringent measures, it is far too good a joke to turn round and say 'the League was in existence in the time of Lord Beaconsfield, and his Peace Preservation Act was too mild a measure.'" (Loud applause.) I think such poor recriminations seem but sorry stuff in the presence of the great revolution which is being accomplished in Ireland to-day (hear, hear), but I dare say they fairly enough reflect the feebleness and vacillation which have marked the career of these modern Whigs all through this Irish crisis. (Loud applause.) But there is another member of the Cabinet who has spoken lately upon this subject. He makes no excuses for the Government, he palliates nothing, he does not seek to share the responsibility with his predecessors in office. Why should he? He stands over his past policy and its results; he takes no notice of his penitential colleagues—these vague persons and their vain excuses. (Laughter and cheers.) This is Mr. Chamberlain. Consider for a moment and you will see that he is the man whose views and whose will have controlled the Government at the most critical conjunctures of their Irish policy. (Hear, hear.) Believe me, he is the man with whom in the future we shall have to count. (Hear, hear.) He is in the House of Commons and in the country the special leader of a well-defined party. (Hear, hear.) They may not be the ablest or the best statesmen, but they are the most vigorous. (Hear, hear, and applause.) This section of the Liberal Party can break it up at any moment,

and I daresay they don't much care how soon. (Laughter.) They are, therefore, always masters of the situation. (Applause.) Perhaps this is not likely to come to pass so long as Mr. Gladstone chooses to remain Prime Minister. Mr. Gladstone still holds together the heterogeneous majority which he snatched at the last general election as an old eagle grasps his prey in his talons. (Laughter and applause.) But Mr. Gladstone has lately made his political will and named his political executors, and eminent Liberals have been bewailing the hopeless confusion which will follow in the Liberal Party when Mr. Gladstone retires from the stage (laughter), and leaves the Whigs and Radicals to their own devices. I venture to predict that when that time comes Mr. Chamberlain will not long fail his followers for a leader. (Applause.) But be that as it may, so far as this Irish question is concerned, Mr. Chamberlain alone claims credit for absolute consistency. If you sum up his policy as he revealed it the other day at Liverpool, it will appear that he did not approve, and indeed he was willing to punish the crimes that accompanied the Land League, but he was not willing on any account seriously to interfere with the agitation. He desired a strong Land Bill for Ireland, and in order to carry it over the heads of those who might differ from him in Parliament (hear, hear), this agitation was necessary. (Loud applause.) That is the impression which the most important part of his speech left on my mind. (Hear, hear.) He seems to think that he has no reason to regret it; he says if it had to be done he would do it again; in fact, he wanted a certain article, namely, the Land Act, and he considered that the continuance of Mr. Parnell's agitation was not too high a price to pay for it. That is a fair issue. Let us consider now briefly what was the article which the nation, under Mr. Chamberlain's influence, has purchased in the shape of this Land Act, and what is the price which the nation has paid, is paying, and is likely still to pay for the bargain. (Hear, hear.) I shall not now attempt to weigh the abstract merits of the Land Act. Everybody knows that it was a retrograde measure, not defended on grounds of sound principle, but of alleged expediency. (Hear, hear.) I desire only to consider what have been the actual results of its working so far. Neither shall I now attempt to peer into the future, nor ask how far it will satisfy the hopes which were raised while Mr. Parnell's agitation was tolerated for its sake; I will not venture to forecast whether the tenantry who have so long enjoyed their lands practically rent free will willingly pay the rents adjudicated by the Land Commission. (Hear, hear.) I wish at present only to call your attention to this article that was purchased by those twelve months of bloody agitation, and inquire how the Land Act of 1881 has so far been working. No one is more opposed to the so-called principles of this Land Act than I am. (Hear, hear.) But once it passed, my desire was that it should work not only the least possible harm to the landlord, but also the

speediest reconciliation between the various classes of society in Ireland. (Hear, hear, and applause.) I am sorry to say that, so far, all such hopes have been disappointed. It ought to have been administered from the first on broad principles. (Hear, hear.) For instance, rents long ago fixed, and always hitherto paid, ought to have been respected (hear, hear); ample justice should have been done where real wrong was proved, but there should not have been petty interferences. (Hear, hear, and applause.) But it is one of the most mischievous consequences of the long triumph of Mr. Parnell's teaching that the enormous concessions made by the Land Act to the tenant were discounted beforehand (hear, hear, and applause), and the great object of securing for the Bill a hearty reception from the Irish peasantry was exactly defeated by this policy of "masterly inactivity." (Applause.) And so in order to win away the peasantry from the standard of "No Rent," it must have seemed to those who had to administer the Act a temptation amounting almost to a political necessity to hold out the expectation of interference with existing contracts in every case. (Applause.) The result seems to be, as far as we can yet judge, that, with scarcely an exception, the rents brought into Court have been lowered all round. (Hear, hear.) This is exactly the opposite of what was professed by the Government who passed the Bill. (Applause.) The procedure by which the Act is enforced would be most comical, if the results were not so serious. You know that the duty of fixing fair rents has been delegated to sub-commissions. How are these sub-commissions composed? In each case there is one barrister who, with scarcely an exception, has such little standing at his profession that his appointment to any other judicial office would be treated with derision. (Laughter and applause.) The lay members are in many instances farmers, who, even if their sympathies permitted them occasionally to decide for the landlord, would run the risk of having their cattle houghed and their hay ricks burned. (Hear, hear.) I have heard of one case, for instance, in which such a Commissioner sat within ten miles of his own farm, and the disturbed state of the district may be judged from the fact that there were two extra police barracks in the village, and a land agent, coming into court to give evidence, was protected by six constables. I am told that the applause of farmers in the court-house follows every popular decision, and a deep angry hum, like the sound of the sea, marks any disappointment of their hopes. Lay Commissioners sit as co-ordinate members of the Court, with lawyers to hear legal arguments they don't understand (hear, hear), and the unhappy lawyer is taken steplechasing over the country to examine soils and improvements of farms of which he has no knowledge. (Laughter and applause.) The time available is necessarily very short, and so they value large farms in an hour and a half which would take at least two days to inspect seriously! But the result of all this absurdity is that

the rents of the landlord are being reduced all round, I am told so far on an average of at least 25 per cent. The Act was asked for to redress exceptional injustice. It seems to be used to wean away the people from the Land League, by the sacrifice of all landlords, good and bad. (Hear, hear.) The delays of an over-worked Court, combined with non-payment of rent, will starve many landlords into submission—not because they doubt the justice of their cause, but because they cannot afford to wait. (Hear, hear.) If this goes on, the result will be that while some of the greater landlords, even now usually absentees, may weather the storm, the smaller men, who form a most useful element of country life, will disappear. (Shame.) These men, who are friends of British connection, and local centres of civilization, will vanish; and with them the light of Protestantism will go out in the outlying parishes of the south and west. (Shame.) I cannot now enter on the large question of compensation, but it seems clear as daylight that if these proceedings be sanctioned and confirmed, compensation must be made to the landlords, or else in the name of justice to one class of the people the greatest wrong will have been done to another. (Applause.) I say that if you regard these proceedings as a real valuation of rent, it is a farce (hear, hear); if you regard it as a Court of Justice or arbitration, it is a trap in which a vast number of the landlords of Ireland will be ruined and nearly all of them robbed (hear, hear); but if it is to be regarded as a last resource to conciliate the peasantry by sacrifice of landlords' property, then the only parallel I can find for this wholesale abatement of legal obligations is in the old parable of the unjust steward, who, when he wanted to make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, called to him the debtors, and said, "How much owest thou to my lord?" "A hundred measures of oil." "Take thy bill, sit down quickly, and write fifty." (Laughter and applause.) Let us now turn again for a moment to the price which this nation has to pay for this measure. Did the Government realise what that delay of twelve months meant in its influence upon the minds and habits of the Irish people? I have spoken of outrage, I have quoted the Judges as to the open defiance of the law which is still increasing in Ireland. These are but the outward signs of an inward disease, which is far more terrible. (Applause.) That is what is meant by the demoralisation of a people. (Applause.) For twelve long months they have been combined in an organisation in defiance of the law, and in defiance of the teachings of the most respected ministers of their religion. (Hear, hear.) They were also drilled so well during that time in the partial non-payment of rent that, as Mr. Parnell said to his interviewer at Kilmainham, they have found it much easier to continue in refusing to pay rent at all. (Hear, hear.) Every day, aye, every hour, the poison was creeping further into every vein of the social system. (Hear, hear.) In such times of revolution moments are more precious than months in

times of tranquillity (hear, hear), but the mischief was allowed to work and burrow into the hearts of the Irish people, and at last they are openly told that by their conspiracy they have achieved the greatest concession that was ever conferred on the peasantry of any country, and that their agitation was suffered to go on because without it that concession could not have been obtained. (Applause.) But let us now suppose for a moment that law and order is at last restored in Ireland. Suppose that some landlords are left to struggle on with what remains of their property, and that in good times the new Land Act is given a full trial, what think you will happen when next a bad harvest comes, and there is a difficulty in paying the adjudicated rent? Will not the generation of men who have passed through the last twelve months remember the halcyon days when Jack Cade was king, when no rents were paid, and when money poured in from America to support them; and when their combined resistance to the law was at last crowned with such amazing advantages? (Loud applause.) How think you the experiences of this last twelve months will encourage or defeat another agitation, should it also be hereafter preached from the Irish in America, and supported by their dollars—an agitation which shall have, perhaps under the fair-sounding name of Home Rule, no less a purpose than the dismemberment of your empire? (Hear, hear, and applause.) Gentlemen, a multitude of other topics suggest themselves to me, but time will not now permit me to enter upon them; but there is one important point that I wish to raise before I conclude these observations. The friends of the Government on all sides assure us that they will not propose any change in the Jury Laws of Ireland, founded upon the report of the Lords' Committee of last year. Will they ask next Session for a renewal of the Protection of Life and Property Act under which Mr. Parnell and some 333 other prisoners are now detained without trial in prison? (Hear, hear.) I ask this question because I see that amongst that number fourteen are so imprisoned because, as this official return, which I hold in my hand, states, they are by the Government reasonably suspected of the crime of murder; eight others with the crime of shooting with intent to murder, and eight more for treason. I ask whether, when the Protection of Life and Property Act expires next autumn, these men are simply to be let loose on society? (Hear, hear, and applause.) Gentlemen, I thank you again for the opportunity you have now given me of laying before you a terrible, but, I am sorry to say, not an exaggerated picture of the present state of Ireland. I do not forget or wish to underrate the immense difficulties of the task which it seems that Mr. Forster is left alone to confront. But I would warn the Government that all their acts of vigour have failed hitherto because they have been too long delayed; "too late, too late," is the hopeless burden of their song. (Hear, hear, and applause.) I am certain that it is with no feeling of hostility to my countrymen, but, on the contrary, with the strongest desire that

they should be brought again into amity and peace with England, that we join to-night in urging the Government to take effectual measures for the re-establishment of law and order in unhappy Ireland. (Loud applause.) But if they are to succeed in that there must be firmness and constancy as well as vigour shown by our present rulers, or Ireland will continue to drift, day by day, deeper and deeper into lawlessness, crime, and anarchy, and further away from the union with free and happy England. (Loud and prolonged cheering.)

The resolution was carried with acclamation.







