

THE NONCONFORMIST VOICE.

THE following is the text of the address which the ministers of the Nonconformist Churches of Ireland presented to Lord Salisbury and Lord Hartington at the Hôtel Métropole, London, on the 14th November, 1888:—

“ To the Most Honourable the Marquis of Salisbury and to the Right Honourable the Marquis of Hartington.

“ We, the undersigned ministers of the Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, and Baptist Churches in Ireland, have seen with great regret the presentation of an address to Mr. Gladstone, signed by a considerable number of Nonconformist ministers in England and Wales in favour of a scheme of Home Rule for Ireland. We hold that the opinion of their brethren living in Ireland is entitled to far more weight than an expression of opinion from men who, however good their intentions, have little or no personal knowledge of the state of things in Ireland.

“ We deprecate in the strongest manner, as disastrous to the best interests of the country, a separate Parliament for Ireland, or any legislation tending to imperil the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland, or to interfere with the unity and the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. We do not believe that any guarantees, moral or material, could be devised which would safeguard the rights of minorities scattered throughout Ireland against the encroachments of a majority vested with legislative and executive functions.

“ While acknowledging that in the past large sections of the Irish people have suffered many wrongs, we believe there are no grievances removable by legislation which cannot be removed by the Imperial Parliament; while the establishment of a separate Parliament for Ireland would most seriously aggravate many existing evils, and would produce other evils greater than any that at present exist.

"We especially claim the aid of our co-religionists in Great Britain in resisting strenuously any such policy, believing that it would deprive us of our rights of citizenship in this great Empire."

Out of a total of 990 Nonconformist ministers of all denominations in Ireland, 864 signed the address. Only eight declared themselves Home Rulers, and the remainder mostly declined on the ground that, being ministers of religion, they wished to have nothing to do with politics.

THE PRESBYTERIANS.

The Rev. R. J. Lynd, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Irish Presbyterian Church, after presenting the Address, said:—

"The significance of their address was emphasized by the fact that until Mr. Gladstone abandoned the Liberalism of the greater part of his political life, at least 95 per cent. of the ministers of his Church were the right hon. gentleman's most ardent and devoted adherents, and he believed the same was true of other churches represented there. Indeed out of the 600 Presbyterian ministers he questioned whether they could have found more than a dozen who were not supporters of Mr. Gladstone's policy. At the present moment their attachment to Liberal principles was as strong as ever. They had not surrendered their Liberalism, but Mr. Gladstone had marched with colours flying into the Parnellite camp and put himself at the head of the Parnellite forces, and they declined to follow him. (Cheers)."

HALF A MILLION OF PEOPLE.

At two successive assemblies, one of them called for the special consideration of this question, a series of resolutions opposing Mr. Gladstone's policy was adopted unanimously. (Cheers). The practical unanimity of their 600 ministers was fairly representative of that of their laity. (Cheers). Their Church numbered within a fraction, half-a-million. In a district, for instance, containing 500

or 600 people they would find one or two farmers who said that they were Home Rulers, but Home Rule with them simply meant cheap land. They had an idea that the Parnellites would give them that, and they would be prepared to accept that under any rule, though it was that of the Czar of all the Russias. ("Hear, hear," and laughter). But the numbers of such were very few indeed. Their Presbyterian Church as a whole were through and through sound on this question. (Cheers.)

PUTTING BACK THE HANDS OF THE CLOCK.

It was from no lack of patriotism that they were opposed to the Nationalist policy. They loved their native land—(cheers)—and felt a profound interest in all that concerned her well-being. Could they be convinced that the Gladstonian policy would regenerate and elevate Ireland they would adopt and support it enthusiastically; but it was just because they were persuaded in their inmost hearts that it would throw back their country 100 years in civilization, and be destructive of her best interests all round, that, with much reluctance, they had made their present stand. (Cheers.)

THE REPRESENTATIVE PARTY.

Mr. Gladstone tried to discount any influence their statements might have by saying that the opinion of 85 representatives was of more weight than theirs could be. Theirs was disinterested at any rate. **They gained nothing by the course they had adopted.** Could the same be said for Mr. Gladstone's Parnellite following? How many of them dare call their minds their own? (Cheers.) Then he had no hesitation in asserting that they possessed much more reliable knowledge of Ireland and Irish affairs than Mr. Gladstone and his whole Parnellite following, and certainly they had both a deeper interest and a fuller acquaintance with Irish affairs than their English Nonconformist brethren who had assumed an attitude of hostility to the cause of Unionism. (Cheers.)

AN APPEAL TO ENGLISH BRETHREN.

He wished he could appeal to their Nonconformist brethren who would force Home Rule upon them. They did want Home Rule of a sort—that was, they wanted local government safely guarded, as the people of England and Scotland would have it. They wanted every privilege they could get for themselves; but they still proclaimed their resolve to adhere to the Union. (Cheers.) **If Home Rule came, then they must bid farewell** to the system of united secular and separate religious instruction to which they had been always true. They would then have the Romish Church endowed, not directly, but indirectly, through its educational institutions, which would be virtually teachers of the Romish religion. **They would have the prosperity of the North taxed to support the poverty of the South.** Trade and commerce and capital would be driven from the island, and, worse than all, the alienation and strife of centuries would be re-awakened with what results God alone could tell. (Cheers.)—*Times*, 15th November, 1888.

THE METHODISTS.

The Rev. Henry Evans, D.D. (Chairman of Waterford District), said :—

My Lords,—Strictly speaking, there is neither Conformity nor Nonconformity now in Ireland. **All Churches there are equal in the eye of the law**, and all stand on like voluntary relations to the people of the country. But whilst this is so, the Churches, whose ministers to-night address your Lordships, correspond to Churches in England that are Nonconformist—the **Irish and the English Churches being one in doctrine** and in polity, and one in the unity of an actually subsisting fellowship.

Addressing your Lordships in the name of the Irish Nonconformist ministers, I feel it due to my brethren to remember their sacred office, and in anything I may say about portions of our countrymen, to express it under the influence of charity, and

in such a spirit as befits the pastoral office. (Hear, hear.) We owe one another many things; we owe our brethren in England as well as those from whom we totally differ in Ireland, kindness, charity, forbearance, and courtesy; but, above everything else, we owe one another truth.

THE HOME RULE IMPOSTURE.

There is nothing, seemingly, so hard to get, and there is nothing pertaining to the Irish question so important. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, would shatter to atoms the fabrications, the party inventions, the selfish strategy, the plausible sophistry, the inexhaustible impudence, by which the Home Rule imposture is promoted. It is solely in the interests of truth, and not the interests of party, that the Irish ministers present this address. In so doing, it is not a compliment to parties, but a tribute to patriotism, that we pay. **Face to face, and day by day, we see all that is dear to us as citizens dangerously imperilled;** we see falsehood sapping the foundations of truth; we see the sorceries of selfishness prevailing over honour; we see an organization, begotten in sedition and nursed in blood, extending its baleful influence to your country, and there, as well as in Ireland, fast tending to efface the eternal distinctions between right and wrong. My Lords, in view of such evils we cannot remain silent. It is to witness against them, it is to uphold your patriotic hands in the righteous effort you are making to throttle the impious immorality that menaces at once the civil and religious well-being of England and Ireland, that Christian ministers in Ireland have presented this address. (Cheers.)

OVERWHELMING OPINION.

That the public may appreciate its weight, I may mention on behalf of the Methodist Church, to which I have the honour to belong, that it is signed by the overwhelming majority of the **Methodist Conference.** It is signed by our Vice-President, who is our **highest officer in Ireland,** the

President being an Englishman and resident in England; it is signed by the Secretary of our Conference, and by all the Chairmen of Districts.

For our ecclesiastical purposes Ireland is divided into districts, such as the Dublin District, the Waterford District, the Cork District, the Limerick District and so on. The Chairmen of these Districts have very responsible duties entrusted to them, and every one of these Chairmen has signed this address. We have two colleges in Ireland doing a great educational work in the country—one in Dublin and one in Belfast. The Presidents of these two Colleges have signed the address. Besides, I should mention that of the body known as the Legal Hundred, in whose hands the legal keeping of our interests is placed—of that Legal Hundred a fixed proportion belongs to Ireland, and every member of the Legal Hundred resident in Ireland has signed the address. Vice-president, chairmen of districts, presidents of our colleges, members of the Legal Hundred, and the overwhelming majority of our ministers—signed by these, the address represents the closely knit unity of our body, and the increasingly strong and conscientious conviction with which we abjure 'Home Rule.'

The few ministers who have not signed, for the most part, fully agree with their brethren, hold opinions just as strongly opposed to Home Rule as they, and the proofs of this are in my possession under their own hands, but for reasons partly prudential and partly arising out of the devotion they owe to their sacred office, they prefer to remain in private. **Nor is this the first time the Methodist Church in Ireland has spoken out against the baleful attempts of the agitators and leaguers to usurp the government of Ireland.** (Cheers.)

PREVIOUS PROTESTS.

In January of 1886, the Committee of Privileges which represents the Conference on all public questions affecting the interests of the Body said this:

“That in our deliberate and solemn conviction there is nothing

in the history or necessities of this country which requires the establishment of a separate Legislature; that any measure which would even tend towards a dissolution of the Legislative Union of Great Britain would be highly prejudicial both to the moral and material interests of Ireland; and that its immediate effect would be to increase rather than to diminish the animosities that unhappily distract the country. That, in common with all lovers of social order, we deplore and deprecate the spirit of lawlessness which has been fostered by unscrupulous agitation, leading to intimidation and violence, detrimental both to the secular weal and demoralising to the national character, and most of all, injurious to the maintenance and spread of the great work of the Churches of Christ in the land."

REPLYING TO MR. GLADSTONE'S MEASURE.

Again, in a petition to Parliament against the Bill of Mr. Gladstone, the Committee said:

"These provisions are also, in the judgment of petitioners, utterly unjust to the loyal minority, who are thereby, without any cause shown, forcibly thrust out from relations to Great Britain, which they valued, and placed under the control of the **disloyal majority**, without any adequate security for property, liberty, or life. And inasmuch as this Bill will be regarded as an encouragement to the coercion which enforces lawlessness, and a discouragement to the coercion which enforces Constitutional Law, your petitioners are persuaded that it must prove misleading and delusive to those who expect from it a settlement of the Irish Question; that it must fail

to satisfy the disaffected ; tend to increase instead of to heal the unhappy animosities which distract this country ; and must imperil the future strength and integrity of the Empire."

RECENT ADDRESSES TO LORD LIEUTENANTS.

When Lord Carnarvon became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland the Methodist Church addressed his Excellency, and among other things spoke of "the disregard for law and order which so largely prevailed in this unhappy country for years past, paralysing industry and rendering exceptional legislation necessary for the protection of life and property." They also begged "to assure your Excellency that, to the utmost of its power you may calculate on the sympathy and support of this Church in promoting the welfare of the country which you have been appointed to govern, and carrying out the wishes of one of the best of Sovereigns. (Cheers.)

Then again, when Lord Aberdeen was appointed Viceroy, the Methodist Church, in an address to him as the representative of the Queen, used these words :

"As a Church we have always inculcated and exemplified the duty of obedience to the laws of our country, and respect for the Constitution under which it is our glory to live. We would deplore any steps which might be taken, either by the Government or the Legislature, which would weaken the bonds that unite this country with Great Britain, and which would tend to the legislative independence of Ireland—a measure which, in our judgment, would be fraught with evil to the best interests of the United Kingdom."

RECENT APPEAL TO ENGLAND.

And my Lords, still further: A year ago the Irish Methodist Conference in its annual address to the English Conference, said:

"In the present crisis through which our country and yours is passing, affecting, as it must of necessity, our religious as well as temporal wellbeing, **we claim your sympathy and prayers.** Public feeling is, with us, in a state of extreme tension and suspense. If we could do so with a good conscience, we would fain leave all such affairs of State to work out their own issues. But in a cause in which morality, liberty, and the social as well as religious welfare of the people are so deeply and hazardously involved, it was not possible for us to stand by as idle spectators and be blameless. In similar times our fathers did not do so. In common with all the Evangelical Churches of this land, and in pursuance of similar official and public declarations made again and again by our Conference, our Committee of Privileges has, during the past year, in addresses to the Executive and in petitions to Parliament, stated that in their judgment nothing should be done to weaken or invalidate the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland. **In 1802 your fathers challenged our loyalty** to a united Methodism by referring to 'the new and glorious compact' by which the British Isles had just been united. We hold you to that challenge. And we submit that, in the light of the past history of our work in Ireland, our claim both to know truly, and to love well our country, should not go for nought.

EIGHTY YEARS OF TRUE FIDELITY.

What the English Conference of 1802 asked us to do, we have faithfully done. (Cheers.) **They called upon us in Ireland to be faithful to the Union, and faithful we have been;** and now in our turn, after 80 years of spotless unflinching fidelity, we appeal to our brethren in England to be faithful, and call upon them in the name of all that binds us together to be true to their oft-asserted principles; **to be true to the history of our Church; to be true to its loyal**

genius and law-abiding traditions ; to be true to the words of their own annual addresses to the Irish Conference for 80 years ; to be true to the Empire of England ; and, above all, and as embracing all, to be true to the trust they have received at the hands of our blessed Lord, and stand up in support of the Irish Connexion, which now in common with all the Christianity of Ireland conjures England to set its heart as adamant against the attempt to put us and the other loyal inhabitants of the country—amounting to two millions—under a legislature which would simply be the National League in quintessence. (Loud cheers.)

THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND.

My Lords and Gentlemen,—Mr. Gladstone, at Bingley Hall, discourteously sneered at the signatories of this address, calling them “a handful of men in the North.” He did not sneer at the address of English Nonconformists to himself. That was sweet to him as angel’s music ; and but for the blind partisan character of that address I do not think the Irish ministers would have so strongly felt the need of their present action. They saw Mr. Gladstone and their English brethren as “the blind leading the blind,” with the inevitable result, if they succeeded, that they should “fall into the ditch,” dragging us with them, and that “ditch” in Ireland would be the dirtiest into which religion and loyalty were ever dragged. Mr. Gladstone calls us “a handful of men in the North”—such is his knowledge of Ireland ! The signatories to this address live all over Ireland, and I am here to testify that the feeling of opposition to his insane policy of putting Ireland under a cabinet of rebels, is much deeper, much stronger, is resented with a far keener intuition of realities, and far more sensitive apprehension of consequences than I ever found to obtain in Ulster. (Cheers.) No ! Our opposition to the proposed factory of thralldom is not what those who do not know better nickname “Orange bigotry.” It is the resistance of Christian men to the proposed imposition of a yoke, such as neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear ; and that resistance, if more silent, is, I repeat, deeper, and inwardly burns with a more ardent indignation, in the other

Provinces than it does in Ulster. We, "a handful of men in the North," what right have we to speak?

A BODY THAT CANNOT BE OVER-LOOKED.

As regards my own Church, my lords, its right is that of a Body across whose shield the bar sinister has never been drawn—a Body on whose escutcheon there is not a blot—a Body whose Christian services and honourable citizenship history dares not challenge. Our right to be heard on behalf of our country is that of a Church among whose members there is the smallest percentage of illiteracy—is that of a Church of whose members, I believe, there is not one in jail in all Ireland—is that of a Church whose people are not in the "Workhouse" or a burden to the rates. (Cheers). We neither manufacture criminals, nor paupers, nor have we ever obliged the State to expend a sixpence to make us loyal. Our "local knowledge" tells us that Mr. Gladstone cannot say the same of his Fenian *proteges*, and Parnellite allies, out of whose "circles" and "branches" his proposed government of Ireland would be framed.

WHY THEY SUPPORT THE UNION.

Nor is our support of the Union due to any financial interest which we draw from it. We have no endowments and never had. There is nothing in the way of office to purchase our allegiance. Christianity and patriotism alone inspire and dictate our loyalty to the Union, for under imperial administration alone can the equilibrium and tranquil equipoise of rival interests be secured to Ireland. (Hear, hear). My Lords, I have been asked to indicate the hurt which a Parnellite Government would do to Ireland. It would inevitably put education under the priesthood; and I ask English Nonconformists how they would like that for themselves in England? **English Nonconformists are making an outcry at this moment against proposed denominational education.** How consistent they are! Would it be believed that Nonconformists in England bless Mr. Gladstone with aid to inflict a curse

on Ireland which they declare against being put upon themselves in England? Surely those who can act thus "put themselves out of court" on the question of Irish Government.

IN THE EVENT OF SEPARATION.

No wonder the Parnellite Press in Ireland makes much of the English Nonconformists. The subjection of Ireland to a government such as is proposed **would banish capital and warn off capital from the country.** The harm in this respect would simply be incalculable. It would also drive away the Protestant people from a vast number of places, and would be the speedy extinction of our existence over vast areas. **Merchants, traders, shopkeepers, and farmers have told me they could not live, and must inevitably leave the country in the event of separation.** We cannot consent to a measure which would thus depopulate Ireland of its best citizens, and leave our churches vacant, monuments of the past, by bereaving us of our people and banishing them to other countries. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Balfour has done more for true freedom in Ireland than any of his predecessors. The wrong doers bespatter him as wrong doers are wont; but **thousands and tens of thousands of crushed and terrified children of Ireland bless him in the inmost sanctuary of their heart.** Let the same policy of fairness and firmness go on unchecked; let such measures as may yet remain to be provided for Ireland's weal be diligently taken in hand, and the day is happily near when Ireland will be as loyal as Scotland, and the merits of her people be among the brightest jewels in the diadem of our United Empire. (Cheers.)

Rev. H. E. Bennett, of the Congregationalists, and Rev. A. McCaig, of the Baptists, also supported the address.

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