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defeated or evaded, I am certain it cannot. The constituencies have now to choose a new House, and depends entirely on their selection among candidates, and on their treatment of candidates with reference to these questions, whether that work shall be done or not. Meantime I desire clearly point out the three cardinal points of the question. First, the congestion of business now notorious and inveterate degrades the House of Commons by placing it at the mercy of those among its members who seek for notoriety by obstructing business instead of pursuing the more honourable road of reputation by useful service, or of those who, with more semblance of warrant, seek to cripple the action of the House of Commons in order to force the acceptance of their own political projects. Secondly, it disappoints, irritates, and injures the country by the suspension of useful legislation. And, lastly, and perhaps worst of all, it defeats the fundamental rule of our Parliamentary system that the majority shall prevail, and puts it in the power of the minority to prevent, by unduly consuming the time of the House, the passing of measures which it dislikes, but of which it is afraid openly to declare its disapproval. This country will not in the full sense be a self-governing country until the machinery of the House of Commons is amended and its procedure reformed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

I am not sure that the views of the country are so clear and its mind so fully ripened on the great subject which I have to mention—that of Local Government. First, it is involved in great intricacy of financial and administrative detail. We are proverbially apt to become careless and remiss about what we have long securely and familiarly held in possession. And, moreover, the position of the question has been seriously damaged by the profuseness of the Tory party in charging local burdens on the Consolidated Fund without making due attempts to improve the organisation of local authority, and by centralising measures of which, when in power, they have procured the adoption. I am glad to see that Lord Salisbury has recently spoken in strong terms of the advantages of Local Government. But the opinions of Lord Salisbury have already been in strong contrast on the great subject of Irish administration with more influential opinions of his colleagues in the House of Commons. Even the limits of this address do not permit me to set out in detail what I think of the weight and moment of this thoroughly unexciting, but as thoroughly vital subject. I believe it to be at the root of all our liberties and of all our aptitudes. It is the instrument of our public education, and it is the guarantee of our political stability. Even in its imperfect development it has been of inestimable value, and it may, and should be made to do yet more for us in the future even than what it has done for us in the past. In the reform of Local Government the first objects to be aimed at, in my judgment, are to rectify the balance of taxation as between real and personal property; to put an end to the gross injustice of charging upon labour, through the medium of the Consolidated Fund, local burdens which our laws have always wisely treated as incident to property; to relieve the local payer, not at the charge of the working population, but wholly or mainly by making over for local purposes carefully-chosen items of taxation; to supply local management with inducements to economy, instead of tempting and almost forcing it into waste; and, finally, and most of all, to reorganise the system thoroughly representative and free. The gentry of this country have, especially in the counties, long and with justice been commended for the upright and intelligent discharge of local duties. I am confident that they will continue to enjoy this honourable distinction none the less when a system shall have been placed throughout under effective popular control. Other questions, as to modes in which Local Government may prudently be applied, and the extent of its attributions, will doubtless arise for consideration when the primary work shall have been accomplished. But I will omit to observe that this subject furnishes the medium through which we may most reasonably look for an effectual adjustment of the laws relating to the sale of alcoholic liquors.

LAND.

The next of the important subjects which I have presumed to name is the reform of the law relating to land. I shall treat it as I have treated local government, without any attempt to embrace all the topics which may be usefully or legitimately raised in regard to it. I shall only touch on the parts of the question which I hope may be found mature for very early handling, by the Liberal party. Belonging to a school which has much faith in economic laws, I disapprove of interference with the law by entails, to which I am still more opposed on social and moral grounds. My desire is both to maintain freedom of bequest, and to establish freedom of possession, as our future system; and to deal freely with the transfer of land, the registration of land, the taxation of land during life, upon death, and the custom of primogeniture as it now exists in cases of intestacy. I shall rejoice to see the means thus to be provided, or other means in themselves commendable, shall lead to a closer connection between the nation and the soil, through a large extension in the number of those directly interested in its possession and its produce, but most of all in the proprietorship of their dwellings. The balance of taxation as between moveable and immoveable property, and still more between property and labour, should be carefully watched, and should be adjusted when occasion offers with a scrupulousness which was unhappily too little observed at the time when property had the absolute command of Parliamentary action. But as to the fundamental principles which must underlie property secure, they will, I believe, be upheld among us, whether in the near or the more distant future, with the same courage and integrity as will our liberties, of which, indeed, they form an essential part.

REGISTRATION.

I shall only say a very few words upon the fourth of the subjects I have named, that of registration. For I have still many topics to touch on. The law has fixed the qualification of voters in the three kingdoms, but the possession of the qualification has to be established in the case of each individual before he can vote. After this has been done his name is placed upon the authenticated list which forms the register. The subsidiary conditions under which he thus comes into practical possession of his title require to be reconsidered, and the whole subject demands review in order that this essential process, the complement of the late Reform Act, may be carried through with certainty and simplicity and the smallest possible expenditure of personal labour and of money.

CONDITION AND STRUCTURE OF THE LIBERAL PARTY.

I have already named four legislative subjects of moment which have reached a state of maturity. Upon each and all of them, with a reasonable freedom as to details, I believe that the Liberal party generally and firmly united. They are in basis and spirit truly Liberal, yet they ought not to be Conservative alarms. The work is ready, and the workmen, the Liberal candidates, await the commission to proceed which the constituencies alone can give. But Tories and Irish Nationalists, who have acted in such unprecedented harmony for some years, are united in reproaching and even in mocking the Liberal party on account of its divisions. Both the oppositions which overthrew the late Administration have rested more or less on the enforced silence of dissentients among themselves, which increases Parliamentary operations. But Liberalism has ever sought to unite freedom of individual thought and action, to which it so largely owes its health, with concrete efficiency. This aim is noble, but it is not to be achieved by the mere union of men with common interests.

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be under the new system an increased jealousy of the introduction into the schools strictly rudimentary! There remains the religious difficulty. The nation does not appear to be disposed to confine the public teaching in the primary schools to matter purely secular and the same scheme of religious instruction in Nonconformists, and Roman Catholics, all a scheme prescribed and limited by the authority of the State in a country and large mass of opinion has grown up which is totally adverse to the use by the State and limiting authority at all in religious matters? There may be modes of meeting difficulties, but until such modes have been carefully weighed and not found premature in me to endeavour to press forward generally the subject of gratuitous I have always preferred the provision of the Scottish Education Act, which entrusts the community with a large discretion respecting religious teaching, to the more confined English Act; and as a Scottish representative I should be inclined to watch maintenance in full of the liberty which Scotland now enjoys.

IRELAND.
I have reserved until the close the mention of Ireland. The change in the representative system is felt to have been a large one, even in Great Britain, but is of Ireland, where the mass of the people in boroughs, as well as counties, have for free and almost unsolicited gift of the Legislature, been called upon to exercise franchise. They will thus in the coming Parliament have important means of making the Irish members, their views and wishes on public affairs. Without doubt we have an important epoch in her history which it behoves us to meet in a temper of very serious reflection. Those grievances of Ireland with which we have been historically too far since the Union have at length been happily removed. The poison of religious various forms has been expelled from the country, and the condition of the cultivators constituting the majority of the people, which had been a scandal and a danger to the country, has been fundamentally improved, at a cost of no small effort by the action of Parliament. Down to this time the wants of Ireland have to be considered as well as her grievances. Continued greatly in arrears both of England and of Scotland with respect to the self-government which associate the people in act and feeling with the law at the root, as I believe, of political stability, of the harmony of classes, and of the geographical position of Ireland may appear to invest her as a portion of the world with special claims to a liberal interpretation and application of the principles of the people of Great Britain have traditionally held so dear. Whatever be the objection now in power to those known in the existing Parliament as Irish Nationalists, England and Scotland will have to draw the inspirations of their future policy from and to cast aside the recollections of party action during the last few years, which prejudice in any way any just claim of the Irish people. Neither should those claims account of any premature and prejudicial words which may have been spoken in the electioneering—stage of a long and too bitter controversy. Nothing can be easier which cannot be satisfactorily handled unless it be approached on the one side and the spirit of enlightened moderation. Should such a spirit happily prevail, I cannot but political genius of these nations, illustrious in the history of the world, will prove in solution of the problem, without the heavy drawback of embittered civil strife. If such now unhappily arise between Ireland and Great Britain, the one may readily reproach the other; but the broader opinion of the civilised world will, I conceive, alike censure opinion, not now for the first time delivered, the limit is clear within which any des constitutionally ascertained, may, and beyond which they cannot, receive the assent necessary for the conservation of that unity, is the first duty of every representative Subject to this governing principle every grant to portions of the country of enlarged management of their own affairs is, in my view, not a source of danger, but a means and is in the nature of a new guarantee for increased cohesion, happiness, and strength right to expect that the remedial process in human affairs shall always be greatly shortened period of mistakes and misgovernment, and if in the case of Ireland half a century at redress, not always consistent or sustained, and following upon long ages for which until every claim which justice may be found to urge shall have been satisfied. The man has now been long established, but only after centuries of manifold strife, between England and should include Ireland also. My personal answer to the question is this. I believe posterity will consign to disgrace the name and memory of every man, be he who holds whichever side of the channel he may dwell, that, having the power to aid in an equitable between Ireland and Great Britain, shall use that power, not to aid, but to prevent or to the duty of working for this end cannot be doubted, then I trust that on the one hand remember that she, too, is subject to the authority of reason and justice, and cannot allow wrongs of other days in bar of submission to them; and that the two sister kingdoms, by overwhelming strength, will dismiss every fear except that of doing wrong, and will make effort to complete a reconciling work which has already done so much to redeem the past when completed, will yet more redound to the honour of our legislation and our race.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, it may be observed that much of what I have written refers to a future according to all expectation, lies beyond my reach. Nevertheless, as it appears to me occasion of choosing a Parliament entails the duty of preparation for contingencies which long to develop; and it is to aid, so far as I may, in the fulfilment of this duty, that I have committed my views to your consideration. Trusting that the constituencies of the country may devotion to the public good, prove themselves worthy of the great and noble stewardship which remain, gentlemen, your obliged and obedient servant,

Hawarden Castle, September 17, 1885.

W. E. GLADSTONE

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RETURN A LIBERAL GOVERNMENT
POWER!!**

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