

## MR. BALFOUR'S REPLY TO PROFESSOR MUNRO.

Last evening Mr. Balfour addressed a largely attended meeting of the electors of East Manchester in Christ Church Schoolrooms, Bradford. Mr. CLEGG LIVESEY presided, and there were also on the platform Miss Balfour and Mrs. Thompson, Mr. S. Chesters Thompson, Mr. A. Waithman, Mr. E. Williams, Rev. Dr. Fletcher, Mr. J. Thewlis Johnson, Mr. T. Elliott, Mr. Alderman ? Shaw, and others.

Mr. BALFOUR, who was enthusiastically applauded, said he supposed that the topic uppermost in the mind of every man who listened to him was the great cause which was now before the electorate of England, the question whether they should of should not have Home Rule for Ireland.—(Cries of “No” ( On that topic he tonight addressed an enthusiastic meeting, and on that topic he should have to address them more than once. He should have to enter into controversy with the great advocates of the measure—with Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Morley, and other gentlemen. That night, however, he meant to deal with what he might perhaps describe as a more domestic antagonist. He meant to say a few words about a pamphlet which, he was given to understand, had been circulated by Professor Munro.—(Hooting.) Professor Munro had a perfect right to circulate it, and he was not complaining on that account. He meant to say a few words about that pamphlet, not so much for the intrinsic interest of the subject or the importance of the arguments which Mr. Munro had thought fit to introduce, but because he thought it hardly respectful either to him or to those who differed from him (Mr. Balfour) in that constituency in politics entirely to ignore the special views laid before them by their representative of Gladstonian and Separatist Liberalism. He was not very anxious to deal with the subject, because he could hardly do so without to a certain extent occupying them with questions personal to himself. He had much rather dealt with the Irish question upon broad principles, apart from individuals or the performances of individuals—(hear, hear),—and excepting so far as that particular attack upon him was concerned he hoped to avoid having to occupy the time of his East Manchester friends by any special discussion upon the results of his own administration of Ireland, or any detailed refutations of the numerous calumnies which, for political purposes, it had been thought expedient by his opponents from time to time to bring forward upon the subject of his Irish administration. However, as Professor Munro seemed to think that the battle in that constituency had best be fought upon the question of Irish government during the last four or five years, Heaven forbid that he should shrink from a contest of that nature.—(Hear, hear.) He at all events had no reason to fear the minutest examination, the closest criticism of the Government during that period. For after all Mr. Munro was but a poor imitator, a feeble copyist of men far more experienced than himself in the arts of political detraction, and it had been his fortune, on the whole he thought, his good fortune, to meet with antagonists far more formidable, carrying very much heavier weight of metal—(laughter and cheers),—than it was given to Professor Munro, at least up to the present time, to bring to bear against his antagonists. A pamphlet had been published by Professor Munro giving an account of his

(Mr. Balfour's) administration in Ireland. It might be in their recollection that when he was speaking at Belle Vue in May last he made a passing allusion to certain very absurd and misleading statements advanced by Mr. Munro. The pamphlet he held in his hand purported to be an answer to what he then said. It had been stated, quite truly, though not, he thought, much by him individually, that during the last five years the material condition of Ireland had very largely improved.—(Cheers.) He ventured to say that there was not a single man in or out of Ireland who had any practical acquaintance with the condition of the people in the country who would not bear out that statement. Until Professor Munro arose among them he did not think it had occurred to any human being to throw the least doubt on the immense improvements in Ireland. But the improvement in Ireland from 1886 to 1892 was an inconvenient fact, and therefore the Gladstonians set themselves to work to prove that the fact was no fact at all. Exactly in the same way, Mr. Gladstone at Chester, finding that the prosperity of Ulster was either more prosperous or more wealthy than the rest of Ireland. There were certain things which it was no use trying to disprove. There were certain propositions so obvious to every man who knew the facts that it was in vain to parade, he would not say cooked statistics, for that would be offensive, but manipulated statistics, before the eyes of any audience in the country.—(Hear, hear.) Professor Munro reminded him of an old saying which he rather reluctantly proposed, in that company, to repeat. It was to the effect that there were three gradations of inveracity—there were lies, there were d—d lies, and there were statistics.—(Laughter.) He hoped he might be forgiven for the words of the quotation—(laughter):—the quotation did not, he could assure them, represent his own ordinary style. Professor Munro's statistics he dealt with in part at Belle Vue, but Professor Munro returned to the charge with more statistics. He would give a specimen of his statistics—(A voice: "Disprove them")—which he thought would prove that the saying he had respectfully ventured to quote sometimes had considerable foundation in fact. He was driven by something that Mr. Munro had said on a previous occasion to allude to the fact that in Ireland in the last few years railway traffic had increased among other good things that had increased. But what did Professor Munro say about it? He said that he (Mr. Balfour) had recently at Belle Vue endeavoured, misrepresenting his views, to avoid the challenge—that was, that he claimed that the number of live stock had increased, and that there was an improvement in the railway traffic. In that and in other matters relating to Ireland Professor Munro said that he (Mr. Balfour) had discovered half the truth, and that he was correct as to live stock, and so far, at all events, he had brought conviction to his (Mr. Balfour's) mind; but he (Mr. Balfour) was wrong as to railway traffic. The average receipts, said Mr. Munro, from passengers during the years 1881 to 1885, when Mr. Gladstone was in office, were 1,098 per mile, while the average receipts between the years 1886-90, when Mr. Balfour was in office, were only 1,092 per mile, showing a decrease of 6 per mile. That sounded very convincing, and yet when he reflected that Professor Munro was, after all, a professor of political economy, and ought to know the meaning and value of statistics, he could not help saying—though he was reluctant to use strong language—that it

appeared to him to be one of the most disingenuous statements ever put before a public audience, who could not be supposed to have the means of correcting it.—(Cheers.) What were the facts? There had been a great extension of light railways in Ireland, and the result had been undoubtedly to confer an enormous benefit and boon upon the poorer parts of the country. But it had also had the effect, of course, of gradually increasing the mileage of the railways, and therefore the number of miles over which the average traffic receipts had to be calculated. So that from the fact that there had been a great railway extension in Ireland Mr. Munro actually deduced the conclusion that Ireland was worse off, because the receipts per mile had diminished. There was a much better test than the average receipts per mile which Mr. Munro must have deliberately concealed, and which had he in common honesty laid before the constituency would have disproved the whole contention he was endeavouring to make. If they were to take railway statistics as an indication of the prosperity of a country it should be the gross traffic receipts in the country.—(Cheers.) The total traffic receipts in 1885 were 2,759,000: they had been rising steadily every year, and in 1891, the last year upon which he had got the figures, they had reached the total of 3,146,000, the highest figures ever reached in Ireland.—(Cheers.) Was not this, then, an admirable instance of a Gladstonian controversy? Was it not a finished performance in the way of misrepresentation, from a man practised by profession in dealing with such subjects. So far as he could see, Mr. Munro was absolutely and deliberately misleading the persons whom it was his bounden duty to instruct in the true facts of the case. He thought it was a deplorable and melancholy fact, when a man—when a student by profession,—a man who was bound by his very condition in life to devote his reason to sifting and dealing with facts like those he had brought before them, instead of using his gifts and his acquirements for the purpose of spreading the truth, added to the already overwhelming bulk of political falsehood which had poured over the country. The old calumnies had lost a good deal of their interest and value, but Mr. Munro did not shrink from them. He noticed that he made a quotation from a speech of his in that constituency—a quotation which he had not verified, but which he dared say was correct—in which he said that he should deplore, and trusted it would not be necessary, to deprive Ireland of the freedom of the press and the right of public meeting. Then Mr. Munro went on to say, notwithstanding the speech he (Mr. Balfour) delivered to his constituents a few months after he was returned upon becoming Irish Secretary, that he (Mr. Balfour) took part in passing a Coercion Act for Ireland which deprived the Irish not only of the freedom of the press but the right of public meeting, and all the leading rights which Englishmen enjoyed.—(Cheers.) His friend in the crowd would perhaps be surprised to hear that there was nothing whatever in the Act to which he had so strong an objection that either deprived Irishmen of the freedom of the press or of the right of public meeting. There was not a single clause, so far as he knew, which had that effect, and the law at this moment with regard to public meetings and the freedom of the press in Ireland was precisely the same it was in England.—(Cheers, and a voice: “What about Mitchelstown?”) Mitchelstown, he would respectfully inform the gentleman who interrupted, had nothing to

do with the freedom of the press; and as far as public meeting was concerned, the riot at Mitchelstown arose out of the determined and brutal assault of the mob on the police and not out of any attempt to suppress public meeting under the Crimes Act.—(Cheers.) He could not help thinking that his friend in the crowd was thinking of another Act passed by another Government—(hear, hear)—which did interfere with the liberty of the press and the rights of public meeting,—an Act passed in 1882, when the Prime Minister has the Right Hon. William Gladstone.—(Hooting and cheers.) He did pass a Crimes Act which, unlike the Crimes Act to which his friend in the meeting referred, did interfere with the liberty of the press and the right of public meeting. It was a matter of small surprise that Mr. Munro, who had blundered about his statistics and blundered about the Crimes Act, should also blunder in specific accusations which he had made about the conduct of the Irish administration. He had a very large selection of calumnious fictions to choose from, and why he had chosen was past ones understanding. He said boys were arrested in the streets for trying to earn a living by selling newspapers favourable to the Irish cause. Probably they had all herd that fiction before; it was one of the oldest lies current on the subject of Irish administration. (Cheers.) Three of the boys were convicted of street obstruction, a fourth for throwing stones at the police, and of the fifth there was no ground for thinking he ever existed except in the fertile imagination of the original inventor of the story.—(Cheers.) This was the kind of thing, when were all sick and tired to death with these fictions about the administration of the Crimes Act, that Professor Munro dragged out of some dusty old drawer, without examining its truth, without apparently giving the slightest thought of whether he was propagating the truth or spreading falsehood.—(Cheers.) If it were worth while, Mr. Balfour proceeded, he could go on talking for half-an-hour about the mistakes in Professor Munro's pamphlet. For example, there was a statement that under the Crimes Act crime did not diminish; or rather that crime began to diminish long before the Crimes Act was passed, and therefore it was not due to the Crimes Act,. Let them not believe it.—(A voice: "We will have to believe it.") His friend in the audience uttered a great truth., He said, "We will have to believe it."—(Laughter and cheers.) They allowed him no choice.—(Renewed laughter.) Home Rulers had a great deal to swallow in those days, and like his friend in the meeting they did not like the operation, but they had to do it. He would advise those who were still open to conviction on this important subject to take heed of the conclusive evidence of official statistics. Crime rose steadily when the pressure of the Crimes Act was taken off, and steadily diminished when the pressure of the Crimes Act was renewed, and so far as they could tell from the figures the union of hearts, which was pompous phrase and Gladstonian bid for the Irish vote, had no effect whatever in preventing the increase of agrarian outrage. The more serious agrarian offences in 1884 were about 380. The Crimes Act was then in force. In 1885 it was taken off, and the crimes increased to 506. In 1886 Mr. Gladstone brought in the Home Rule Bill, and the union o hearts began. In that year the agrarian crimes, exclusive of threatening letters, were 632. In the next year, 1887, the Crimes Act was in force. Serious agrarian crime fell to 591; in 1888 they sank to 411, in

1889 to 341, in 1890 to 320, and in 1891 to a little over 250.—(Crimes.) Now, unless in Ireland facts had the curious property of preceding their causes, he did not see how it was possible to conclude, from those figures, that diminution of agrarian crime as due to the union of hearts; it was evidently due,—largely, at all events, he did not claim it to be solely due—to the firm administration of the Crimes Act. If Mr. Munro would only consent to look at those figures with the eye of a political economist, and not as a party politician, he was sure he would be forced to come to the conclusion which every impartial student must come to on the facts.—(Hear, hear.) He (Mr. Balfour) had troubled the meeting with a few of the salient points from the document, but he thought he had done enough to show his respect for Professor Munro and his supporters. He hoped to be permitted in future occasions to deal with the broader aspects of the Home Rule problem, without having to go back upon those petty, sordid, and worn-out calumnies which had occupied so much of his time and their time in the past. He desired in future to discuss the question in its broader aspects, as it related to the safety of the Empire, the welfare of the population, and their duty to the minority in Ireland, and especially the minority in Ulster; and last, but not least, in its relation to the constitution of the country.—(Cheers.) It was not sufficient to claim—as they did claim—that Ireland could be governed by the laws as they now existed; it was not sufficient to show, as he had shown and should show again—(cheers)—that the Home Rule Bill, as far as it had been presented to them, carried with it not promise of settlement of the Irish question—(a voice: “Nonsense”),—no hope for the pacification of Ireland, no probability of freeing the Imperial Parliament from the incubus of Irish discussion. On the other hand, it was grossly unjust to the minority in Ireland and grossly inexpedient from the point of view of the interests of the majority in Ireland, while so far as England, Scotland, and Wales were concerned it was most inequitable and unjust, and would be the most absurd measure, in its present shape, which had ever issued from the brains of politicians in search of a majority.—(Cheers.)

An elector asked if the minority in Ireland owed any duty to them majority.

Mr. BALFOUR, in reply, said every citizen in Great Britain and Ireland owed it to the community at large to do his best for the common interest.—(Cheers, and a voice: “That’s no answer.”)

Proceeding, Mr. Balfour answered a number of written questions. The first referred to the Eight Hours Bill for miners. The right hon. gentleman said he knew from experience that there was in this constituency a considerable mining population. He recollected that he had the pleasure some few years ago of going down a coal mine and seeing them for himself. His view was this. He was in heartiest sympathy and agreement with those who desired to see a diminution in the hours of labour and especially in the hours of labour of such arduous toilers as those who followed their occupations in coal mines. If there was a difference between them it was simply as to whether there or not the diminution of the number of hours should be made by a fixed rule, imposed upon all men, irrespective of the conditions under which they carried out their industry. So far as general knowledge was concerned he thought it would be

admitted—it was admitted by the great bulk of responsible politicians—that a universal Eight Hour Bill would probably do more to destroy British industry, and thereby injure the working classes of the country, than any other single measure that could be conceived. He thought most of those who had thought over the question in all its bearings would agree that should be admitted. Then it would be granted that it would be a serious step to make an Eight Hour Bill in favour of one particular industry. He admitted that that was not a conclusive argument, and he did not stand there bound by any rigid orthodoxy on this question. He would not pronounce a final and conclusive opinion on this or any other question into which the Labour Commission had reported and he had read its evidence. Therefore the answer he now gave was provisional. He had voted against the Miners' Eight Hours Bill as he understood it at the present moment, and so far as he was able to grasp the very complex social problem with which they were dealing, if that bill were brought forward again he should give the same vote; but he freely and frankly acknowledged that on this subject he could not profess to speak as an expert. Anything he could do to ameliorate the conditions of the workers, and especially of those engaged in the difficult and sometimes dangerous occupation of coal mining, should certainly be done.

In answer to the question as to whether he has in favour of one man, one vote, Mr. Balfour said he did not think that, except so far as registration was concerned, they need again occupy the time of Parliament, which might be better spent in dealing with questions of reform. He thought it far more important that there should be one vote one value than that there should be one man one vote. To further questions submitted to him Mr. Balfour said land was already taxed, and ought to be taxed. He saw no objection to making either ground rents or any other form of property bear its full share of the burdens of taxation. Existing contracts, however, must not be interfered with. He had voted for woman suffrage. He was in favour in every respect of placing personal property and real property as it was called upon an equal footing. As to local self-government for Ireland, he had the honour not only of voting for a bill providing for self-government for Ireland, but of bringing one in and speaking upon it.—(Hear, hear, and a voice: “Where is it?”) He was in favour of everything which rendered it way to transfer parcels of land from those who desired to sell to those who desired to buy, and he belonged to the only party in the State which, so far as he knew, had ever done anything practical to attain that object.—(Cheers.)

On the motion of Mr. E. WILLIAMS, seconded by Mr. A. WAITHMAN, the following resolution was passed:—

That this meeting of the electors of the Bradford Ward of the East Manchester Parliamentary division expresses its entire approval of the policy pursued by the later Government, both at home and abroad; and also its unqualified satisfaction with the programme for future legislation as set forth in the address of our esteemed candidate; and pledges itself to use every legitimate means to secure his triumphant return.

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Arthur James Balfour, 1st Earl of Balfour (1848–1930).