

radical members (a), or merely foolishly (that is without sufficiently considering the state of public feeling) Mr. McKenna (First Lord of the Admiralty) gave ground for the impression that, by concealing its activities, Germany had almost reached equality in naval power with the United Kingdom. Mr. Balfour followed, skillfully emphasizing what he termed the

"alarming crisis in which this country finds itself. . . . I say that the programme as presented by the government is utterly insufficient" (b).

The scare had commenced. Mr. Asquith replied that the programme gave ample protection:

"I can assure the House that it is with the most serious sense of responsibility, and after the most careful consideration of the facts and figures which are at our disposal, that we put forward this programme which we believe to be adequate, and which we hope the House of Commons will accept" (c).

On a subsequent day (22 March) Mr. Asquith again spoke. He said that he hoped:

"that grave as, in one of its aspects, the situation undoubtedly was; necessary, as it seemed to us, as it was to make provision for events, for the new state of things which a year ago was not in existence, yet that there would be a universal feeling in this country that there was no occasion for anything in the nature, I will not say of panic but of alarm or even disquiet."

He said that his hope had not been realized, and he proceeded:

"to dissipate, so far as I can—and I think I shall be able to do so completely—the absurd and mischievous legends to which currency is being given at this moment as to the supposed naval unpreparedness of this country. A more unpatriotic, a more unscrupulous misrepresentation of the actual situation than that which is now being represented in some quarters I have never experienced" (d).

Mr. Balfour followed. He denied the charge of party motives. He admitted that there was no present danger—

" no person has yet disputed that we are safe now" (e).

but he declared his anxiety for the future, and demanded that

(a) Color for this suggestion can be found in the Minister's speech on pages 931 of Hansard.
 (b) Hans., p. 954.
 (c) Hans., p. 963.
 (d) Hans., p. 1504.
 (e) Hans., p. 1512.