lution, is something more than an immediate

blow. It is a permanent loss. (Hear, hear.) We have all felt, I am certain, particularly

during these last two years, that, while he was

for many reasons and in many ways the object

Asquith on the Government Policy

London, some few days ago, the Liberal party meeting, at the Reform club, was a large and representative gathering. Members of the House of Commons began to assemble at 11 o'clock, and speedily filled up all the available space in the library. Notwithstanding the wet weather, there was a crowd of onlookers who watched the arrival of

the prime minister and his colleagues. There was great enthusiasm when Mr. Asquith appeared, accompanied by Sir Edward

Grey. The speaking began five minutes after the appointed time—at 25 minutes to 12—and the meeting, which was harmonious throughout, closed at a quarter to I.

On the motion of Sir Joseph Leese, Sir John Brunner was voted to the chair, In opening the proceedings Sir John Brun-ner said that their minds naturally went back

to the day early in 1899 when in that club they, the Liberal members of the House of

Commons, met to elect a leader. There was

that day in the chair their very old friend Sir

Wilfrid Lawson (cheers), a genial and a ten-der man, but a sturdy Radical (hear, hear); and he hoped he might without egotism say that day that the presence in that chair of another sturdy Radical meant something at any rate. Since that day in February, 1899, he, in common with the vast majority of the party, had been in absolute sympathy with Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in all his public actions. They had that day a resolution to record, and he did not need to say one word to recommend that resolution to the notice of his fellow-members. Before he passed on to the second resolution might he tell them how, with a peculiar and a sad pleasure, he found a few months ago in a locker in the House of Commons the whip sent by Tom Ellis summoning them to that meeting in 1899. Poor Tom had gone, as Sir Wilfrid had gone, and as their great leader had gone, He had that whip framed and glazed, and had put on it a suitable inscription. He heard afterwards that it was hung up in the room in which the cabinet councils were held, and he had from Sir Henry a characteristic and touching note with regard to it. The second resolution on the paper was a resolution welcoming Mr. Asquith as prime minister. (Loud cheers.) He hoped that Mr. Asquith would be as admirable a leader of the House of Commons as Sir Henry had proved, in this particular, that he would be determined. as Sir Henry was, to maintain the dignity and the power of the House of Commons. (Cheers.) They, as old stagers, realized the difference. A late leader of the House of Commons seemed to him, at any rate, to be throughout his career determined to dominate that House, and he (Sir John) felt that Sir Henry was a contrast to Mr. Balfour in that respect. Those of them who heard Mr. Asquith on Monday last could appreciate, as he appreciated, the deep earnestness and feeling of his reference to their lost and loved leader. and they believed that the work of Mr. Asquith would be carried on in the spirit which animated Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman-the spirit of the great Albert Hall speech. (Cheers.) He (Sir John) did not think he ever read in his life an address which touched the hearts of the best among them as that speech did; and he believed that Mr. Asquith and his government would, equally with the late premier, anpeal to the moral sympathy and earnestness of the peoples of these three kingdoms. (Cheers.) Might he be permitted, as a man of business, to tender one piece of hard, practical advice to the government? He had been all his life a man of business, and he claimed to know something of the business community. He wished to advise the government to give up that part of the policy of the Manchester school which was called the laisser faire policy. (Hear, hear.) The Manchester school of 60 years ago considered that the best thing that could be done for trade was to let it alone. Now of this one thing he was convinced—that the Tory party, whether their efforts were good or bad—he believed them to be bad had absolutely convinced the mercantile community that they meant to make a big effort for the benefit of trade when they came into power. He asked the government and advised them to adopt a liberal trade policy—a sane, a wholesome, and a sound trade policy—for the reason that, knowing his fellows in trade in England, he was convinced that when a bad time came they would accept the offer from the other side if the Liberals made none. (Hear, hear.) They welcomed Mr. Asquitli on account of the declarations that were made at Manchester. He was delighted to believe that Mr. Asquith and his colleagues would carry on what had been called the "rotten sick-ening policy" of conciliation of Ireland, just as he believed their distinguished colleague, Sir Edward Grey, would carry on the policy of conciliation among the nations of the world They believed that Mr. Asquith and his colleagues intended throughout the whole of their career as leaders and governors to appeal to the best that there was in the hearts of their

Mr. J. E. Ellis moved the following resolution:-"That this meeting desires to record its deep and grateful sense of the lasting services rendered to the Liberal party by the brave, true-hearted leader whom an almost unexampled movement of national opinion placed in power two years ago, and whose departure from amongst us we all today deplore." He asked the indulgence of the meeting in the task

fellow-men. (Cheers.) Sir John concluded by announcing letters of apology for non-attend-

that lay before him, for no one stood more in need of it. Sir John Brunner had alluded to the meeting of February 7, 1899. It was held in a much smaller room than that in which they, were now assembled; 143 members of the party met in very difficult times. Two men of great eminence had just laid down the task of leading the Liberal party. There was much searching of hearts, there were many doubts and fears, and there was some criticism on that occasion. He had looked over a precious pile of confidential letters received during ten stormy and strenuous years, and in a letter written two days before that meeting of theirs in February, 1899, Sir Henry reviewed the whole circumstances of the time, and gave his opinion freely of men and things, and then he wrote, speaking of a request that he knew was to come to him in two days' time:—"There is no room for shirking. I have enough of the shorter catechism sticking inside me" (a very characteristic phrase) to make me accept a post when it comes, as this does straight to me, as a duty." (Cheers.) He took up that duty in that spirit, and they knew how well he fulfilled it. Within a few short months of that time there came down upon them what he niight call the blinding hurricane, which was associated for two years with the words "South Africa." They knew what that storm was in the political arena. They knew of its vast consequences. In July, 1901, Sir Henry called them together in that same room, and he remembered well the words used on that occasion. They never went back upon them. In 1901-2-3-4 and 5 they knew how Sir Henry fought. They knew how he displayed those matchless qualities, so splendidly portrayed by Mr. Asquith. They felt

the sincerity and earnestness of *the speaker and the truth of what he was saying He carried conviction to their hearts. Next came, on the resolution referred to, an almost unexampled movement of national opinion. Sir Henry formed his first government, and in the long roll of more than 40 prime ministers he would occupy a very high place indeed. He was very glad to read in a recent newspaper a letter from Mr. Balfour to Mr. Asquith. Mr. Balfour spoke of Sir Henry's courage, earnestness, high ideals, and the kindliness that never fell into weakness-a very great point—and to a shrewdness never edged with malice. These had received their due reward, and so they came down to the moment when they had lost their leader. They were told again on high authority that they had left to them a chevished and a precious memory: Not only so, but he (Mr. Ellis) felt they had the ex-ample of an inspiration. The times before them were difficult. Men's, hearts would fail them when some times they would have criticism Then they would all go back to the memory of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and his great qualities, and they would feel that the words of the old Book were once more fulfilled:-

"He being dead yet speaketh."

Mr. Charles Fenwick, in seconding the resolution, said that, speaking as one of a considerable body of working men, there were few prime ministers of modern times, if any, who had possessed in such a degree the undivided confidence of the working classes as had the late prime minister. In the high eulogium he had passed upon him Mr. Asquith had truly said that the more intimately they became connected with and associated with Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman the more dearly they loved him. The representatives of the Labor members in the House of Commons trusted him with absolute and thorough confidence, and their confidence at times amounted almost to an indication of filial affection. The great amiability of his character and the geniality of his temperament made it at all times easy for even the humblest member of the House to approach him on any subject, and to approach him with absolute confidence. Whenever any doubt seemed to disturb the mind of the Labor members as to what was likely to be the action of the government, it was enough to be able to come forward with the assurance that C.-B. had said that such a thing would be done. That was entirely sufficient to dispel all doubts which might for the moment have prevailed. His pledged word was at all times their sheetanchor, and he (Mr. Fenwick) felt perfectly satisfied that in the present prime minister they had also a man whose word might be absolutely relied upon, and whose courage and determination would be equal to the courage and determination shown by his predecessor in office. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's well-known sympathy with struggling and suffering humanity, the great-courage which he displayed during the troublous times referred to by Mr. Ellis, his broad sympathies, his well known care of and attention to the industrial classes of the country, his genuine love of liberty, his intolerance and hatred of anything in the nature of a sham or a fraud-all these things combined in the mind of the democracy to stamp him as a leader of men, and as one of the vital and moving forces of the country. He dared say they were familiar with incidents where advancing years had had a tendency to weaken a man's faith in the future, and to destroy the optimistic tendencies of his earlier life. That was not so in the case of the late prime minister. His faith in the democ-

racy grew with his advancing years, and he

died unshaken in the soundness of that faith. His optimism grew from time to time, and he (Mr. Fenwick) was not sure that Mr. Balfour was not right when he said in his letter that it was perhaps best that Sir Henry should havepassed away when he did. He had gone amid national praise, and the universal testimony of the nation, and he had left behind a name and a record of public service which fostered their regard and entitled him to hold a place among most distinguished statesmen who ever held responsibility or governed the destinies of this country. (Cheers.)

Sir Brampton Gurdon moved:-"That this meeting of representatives of the Liberal party in parliament and the country most warmly welcomes the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith on his accession to the high post of first minister of the crown; expresses its ardent confidence that his strong sense in council, power in debate, and consummate mastery of all the habit and practice of public business are destined to carry triumphantly forward the good causes to which the Liberal party is committed, and the solid principles which it exists to apply and enforce; and it assures him and the government of the unbroken continuance of loyal, steadfast, and zealous support in the many stout battles for the common good that now, as always, confront the Liberal army and its leaders. Sir Brampton Gurdon remarked that within the last few days he had been reading the life of John Delane, and had been reminded that the Liberal party had been at a loss in the choice of a leader and torn by factions. But today, fortunately, they were in no *since. (Heaf, hear.) True they had lost two

HON, B.H. K.C. PRIME MINISTER AND FIRST LORD of the TREASURY

> such position; their leader had been marked out for them; they need not doubt whom they were to choose. They recognized in Mr. Asquith an able administrator, quick in debate, undismayed by opposition, possessing a ready wit and a persuasive tongue, and a man strong and tenacious of purpose. Above all things, they rejoiced that they had a prime minister sitting in the House that was elected of the people. (Loud cheers.) Some time ago he was talking to the late Lord Kimberley, and happened to mention the possibility of his lordship's being called upon to form a government. His reply was, "No, certainly not. The prime minister of the Liberal party should be always in the House of Commons." would remember that those words were echoed by the late Duke of Devonshire when Mr. Balfour succeeded Lord Salisbury. If it was necessary that the prime minister in a Conservative government should sit in the House of Commons, it was doubly necessary that the prime minister of a Liberal government should belong to that House. Mr. Asquith would claim the allegiance of no divided party. There had been times, especially during the days of Palmerston, when the Liberal party was sharply divided into two camps, Moderate Liberals and Radicals, and when the word Radical wasalmost a term of reproach. Those days were gone. They were now all thorough Liberals and were not afraid, as Sir John Brunner had said, of being called even sturdy Radicals. They believed that the Liberal party had never been so knit together, never so ready for battle, never so anxious for work. (Laughter and cheers.) They had hard work before them, and were most anxious to do it, and he believed Mr. Asquith's first session as prime minister would be a session of great deeds. They hoped for a satisfactory settlement of the education question, and, as to the Licensing Bill. it was already in a far stronger position than it was after the tonic administered by Peckham, That almost gave it a new lease of life.

Mr. Thomas Burt, in seconding the resolution, said they had met under the shadow of a great sorrow. Their comrades were falling by their side, their generals were taken away, but the fight must go on. They were fortunate in having such a competent and capable successor to the great leader whom they had lost.

The resolution which he had been called upon to second referred in no exaggerated terms to the qualifications and the gifts of Mr. Asquith. It spoke of his wisdom in counsel, and it referred to his powers as a debater. They knew the great gifts of cogent argument, of forcible, concise, and eloquent speech with which he was endowed. It was not always, as some of them unfortunately knew, that an eloquent speaker was concise (laughter), and he (Mr. Burt) was not sure that an eloquent speaker always tried to be. (More laughter.) Mr. Asquith was richly endowed with the gifts of leadership. Nature had been kind to him. He was not an untried man; he had gone through the storm of adversity without swerving, and he (Mr. Burt) associated himself with all that had been said by Sir Brampton Gurdon with regard to him. A few years ago they were greatly pitied by their political opponents up-on the assumption that they were disunited and so bankrupt in intellect and ability that a Liberal government could not be formed. Well, he himself did not always appreciate pity, and when it came from political opponents it was sometimes hardly distinguishable from a blow. (Laughter and "Hear, hear.") They needed no pity, and he was not going to insult the Conservative party, if he was capable of insulting it, by recapitulating the pity expressed on a former occasion for them as iberals. He felt thoroughly confident, like the previous speaker, that they had never known so strong and coherent a Liberal party. They got a big majority at the last general election, and it had not been much diminished

> or three seats, but there was nothing in that fact to discourage them or to make them despondent. The chief thing that was required in the country-not so much in the House of Commons, but in the country—was unity on the part of the Progressive forces. He was sorry to see that they had had in by-elections Liberal and Labor candidates in antagonism. Liberalism and Labor were natural allies, and he knew of no question during his somewhat long parlia-mentary experience in which the Liberal party had been antagonistic to anything that was for the improvement of the cause of Labor. He did namely, the common good. They had a great cause, a distinguished leader, and a united party. Let them heart and soul, aye, and body too in the division lobbies (hear, hear)—let them in every fibre of their being resolutely stand by their new and distinguished leader, Mr. Asquith.

(Cheers.) Mr. Éugene Wason, in supporting the resolution, desired to associate himself with everything that had been said by Sir Brampton Gurdon and Mr. Burt in the eloquent speeches they had delivered. He stood there to support the resolution as the chairman of the unofficial

Scottish Liberal members. (Cheers.) Mr. Asquith, who on rising was greeted with loud and long continued cheers, the whole assembly standing, said:—Sir John Brunner and gentlemen,—No man's ambition in this country can aspire to more than that, after being entrusted by the favor of the crown with the duty of forming a government, he should receive what you have given me today, the assurance of the sympathy and of the confidence of those among whom and with whom the whole of his political life has been spent. (Cheers.) It has for many years past been the custom of our party when through death or through retirement a change of leadership took place that the Liberal members in the House of Commons should meet together to declare their intention as to the succession. Gentlemen, I think that is an excellent and a laudible custom because, as one of my friends has already said, it does not rest with any one in this country, not even with the sovereign himself, it rests with nobody but the members of the Liberal party, through their representatives in the House of Commons, to determine who the Liberal leader shall be. (Cheers.) Well, you have today within these historic walls, which have seen so many similar meetings in the past, you have declared your opinion by a resolution, the terms of which will always be remembered by me with grateful pride, in speeches which plainly came straight from the hearts of old and valued colleagues and friends, and on your part with a unanimity and, I believe I may say, with a sincerity more eloquent than any words. (Cheers.) Gentlemen, I can only say in the simplest possible words I thank you (loud cheers); and I assure you—if, indeed, you need be assured of it—that this generous confidence which you have expressed to me today imposes upon me obligations which it will be the aim and effort of my life worthily to fulfil. Gentlemen, encouraging in many ways as the conditions are which we meet, neither you nor I can ignore, or ought to ignore, that we have before us a hard task. First and foremost, the death of our much loved and much trusted leader, to which such graceful and touching allusion was made in the speeches supporting the first reso-

of growing trust and affection, he was in a preeminent degree in our party a cementing and a unifying force. (Cheers.) Gentlemen, I do not know that we could pay a more significant or a juster tribute to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman than to say that he has made the place, if not impossible, at least difficult for any successor to fill. But, apart from all personal matters, there are other conditions which we cannot leave out of sight. I set very little store by two or three electoral rebuffs which we have sustained in the country during the last few months. (Hear, hear.) With the exception, I think, of Mid Devon, where local and personal causes were at work, with that exception I think I am right in saying that all the seats we have lost have for the last 20 years been regarded as among the unassailable possessions of the Tory party, with the single exception of the election of 1900, when they were for the moment submerged by the high-water mark of the great tide which then swept from one end of the land to the other. (Hear, hear.) But, gentlemen, when I say that we have reached, as I think I may say, a critical time in the fortunes of our party, I refer not to the electoral, but to the parliamentary situation. It is true that during the last two and a half years we have added to the statute book a number, unexampled in the same time, of useful and beneficent measures, and that in the sphere of administration I believe, without undue self-complacency, we may claim comparison both for activity and I will add, even for prudence with any of our predecessors. But, gentlemen, we are still a long way from the completion of the task which the country entrusted to us, and which we came to Westminster to discharge. There is a lot of country still to traverse, steep hills to climb, stiff fences to take, deep and even turbulent streams to cross before we come to the end of our journey; but we know where we are going (cheers), and we shall not lose our way. (More cheers). I will venture to remind you of two general conditions which affect political life in this country and the fortunes of the Liberal party in particular. In the first place, remember that in Buitsh politics no victory ment of the cause of Labor. He did not expect anything of the kind in future, and he hoped that they would be united and that the Progressives throughout the country would remain a steadily united party. They had a great cause, and it could not be better summed up than in the designation which was to his hind the fundamental principle of Liberalism—namely the common mod. They men, I am not going to detain you more than a few minutes. I have not come here to propound, and you have not come here to accept, a programme. There has come, in a change of leadership which we all lament, no change of policy (loud cheers), no change either of policy or of purpose. (Renewed cheers). We have still got to defend—sometimes I am disposed to think we are apt to forget it—we have still got to defend the citadel of free trade. There can be no greater mistake for free-traders to make than to lay aside their armour and let it rust upon the shelf. The fallacies of the protectionists have this quality -like some other peculiarly noxious thingsthey plant and propagate themselves, and unless you keep the garden steadily weeded, before you know what has happened you will find it has been overrun. (Hear, hear). So again with education. I entirely agree with what fell from my right hon. friends that in this matter the controversy itself is a standing reproach both to the religious conditions and to the political sagacity of the English people. In this matter we must hope and work as we all wish for a concordat and for peace. While I say that, I say also we must keep our powder dry, we must not, and we cannot, abandon either our principles or our friends. (Loud cheers.) Nor can we leave things in that intolerable condition in which they are at the present time. In regard to licensing, that was a bill which, I think, as every man in this room will realize, not even the most malignant —if there be such—among our opponents suggests was introduced for vote-catching purposes. (Laughter and cheers). It was met, as you know, with an almost unprecedented storm of misrepresentation and vituperation. I do not think that anything the Liberal party has done for years has done more

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icy, but merely as samples. Mr. Massie moved a vote of thanks to the committee and members of the Reform club for the use of the club premises. This was seconded by Mr. J. Stuart and adopted.

to give it a real foothold among the intelligent

electors of this country. (Cheers). In the

long run the British people recognize and

appreciate courage, not the vain-glorious courage which exhibits itself as a mere matter of

histrionic display, but the courage which can face all costs—and no one knows better than

you and I do the cost which we are hazarding

here—a great social problem, determined rather to sink in the attempt to solve it than

not attempt to solve it at all. (Cheers). When

I say we are determined to sink rather than

not launch our vessel upon the voyage at all,

I say with the greatest confidence that I hope

to celebrate with you before long its safe ar-

rival in port. (Cheers.) I have mentioned these

things not as in any way exhausting our pol-

The concluding motion was one of thanks to Sir J. Brunner, moved by Mr. Brigg and seconded by Mr. McCrae.