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SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN AND THE LIBERAL
IMPERIALISTS: 1899-1903.

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SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN
AND THE LIBERAL IMPERIALISTS:
1899-1903

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
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By
George Austin Klein, B.A., M.A.

The Ohio State University
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Approved by
Philip P. Poirier
Adviser
Department of History
PREFACE

This dissertation is a study of the relationships between Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and the more prominent members of the imperialist faction of the British Liberal party from January 1899 to the summer of 1903.

The Liberal party in these years was torn by personal rivalries and ideological differences. In the minds of many contemporaries it was a moot point if the Liberals would ever surmount these differences.

Campbell-Bannerman was elected leader of the Liberals in the House of Commons early in 1899. The importance of the Liberal imperialists lay in the fact that this group contained some of the most talented men in the party. Should the party lose the services of these men, its future might be very bleak. They included Herbert Henry Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, Richard Burdon Haldane and Henry Hartley Fowler among others. Above all, there was the enigmatic figure of the fifth Earl of Rosebery, a former prime minister and leader of the party. Although retired in 1899, Rosebery was only fifty-two years old and many Liberals found it difficult to believe that a man of such gifts could remain permanently in retirement. The question of Rosebery's future role was a persistent and nagging one throughout these years.
Any study of the Liberals in this period must be placed in the context of the rivalry between Rosebery and Sir William Harcourt which undermined party unity in the eighteen nineties. Harcourt had been Rosebery's rival for the succession to Gladstone. In 1899 he too retired, but his feud with Rosebery remained very much alive and affected Campbell-Bannerman's course after his election.

I have retained the original spelling, capitalization, and abbreviations in all quotations unless otherwise noted. Following customary usage of the time I have referred to the South African Republic by its more common name, the Transvaal.

I wish to thank Lord Harcourt for permission to use the Harcourt Papers at Stanton Harcourt, Oxford and Mr. Mark Bonham-Carter for permission to examine the papers of the first Earl of Oxford and Asquith which are at the Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

iii
VITA

January 19, 1936  Born - Chicago, Illinois

1959.............  B.A. with High Honor, Denison University, Granville, Ohio


1961.............  M.A., University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

1962-65...........  Teaching Assistant, Department of History, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1965.............  Instructor, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

1966-67...........  Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1967-69...........  Instructor, University of Maryland, Baltimore County Campus, Baltimore, Maryland

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: History
Studies in Modern British History. Professor Philip Poirier
Studies in the History of Tudor and Stuart England. Professor R. Clayton Roberts
Studies in British and American Constitutional History. Professor Franklin Pegues, R. Clayton Roberts and Foster Rhea Dulles
Studies in Modern European History. Professor Andreas Dorpelen
Studies in Comparative Government. Professor James Cristoff.
Studies in American Foreign Policy. Professor Foster Rhea Dulles
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VI</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VII</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VIII</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

On December 14, 1898, The Times published an exchange of letters between Sir William Harcourt\(^1\), the leader of the Liberal party in the House of Commons, and John Morley\(^2\), his leading colleague in the party. In his letter Harcourt announced his resignation as party leader. Morley acquiesced in this decision and, indeed, praised it. Harcourt was quite explicit about the reasons for his resignation. "A party rent by sectional disputes and personal interest is one which no man can consent to lead either with credit to himself or advantage to the country . . ." He also mentioned the problem of a "disputed leadership," which had undermined his authority.\(^3\)

The resignation of Harcourt was a surprise to the public and even to his closest colleagues. Harcourt did not inform his political associates until December 12.\(^4\) On that day


\(^3\)The Times (London), December 14, 1898, p. 8.

he wrote similar letters to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman⁵, Herbert Henry Asquith⁶, Henry Hartley Fowler⁷, James Bryce⁸, and Thomas Ellis, the Liberal Chief Whip. He also wrote to the Earl of Kimberley⁹, party leader in the upper house, and to other prominent liberal peers, including the Earl Spencer¹⁰.


the Marquess of Ripon, and Lord Tweedmouth.

In some of these letters, Harcourt all but named the person he believed was at the center of the dispute over the party leadership. This was the Earl of Rosebery, who had succeeded the late W. E. Gladstone as prime minister and party leader in 1894 when the latter resigned. After the fall of the Liberal government in 1895, Rosebery had remained leader of the party only until 1896 when he in turn had resigned and retired from the active councils of the party.

Harcourt and Rosebery had been rival contenders for the succession to Gladstone. Rosebery was only forty-nine when he retired and presumably left the field to Harcourt. Many followers of Rosebery refused to believe that Rosebery's retirement was permanent. This, plus the continued animosity


between the two men, made it impossible in Harcourt's opinion for him to maintain his authority over the party.

In his letters, Harcourt had depicted himself as the injured victim of Rosebery's malice. As his colleagues were aware, this was hardly an accurate picture. In 1894, the members of the Liberal cabinet were almost unanimous in preferring Rosebery to Harcourt as successor to Gladstone. Even Morley had agreed with this. The major reason for this preference was Harcourt himself.14

Harcourt was very popular with party backbenchers and he was a superb parliamentarian. He was also a person of many interests and of considerable charm—when he cared to exercise it. But there were other sides to his nature. He could be overbearing, argumentative, malicious and needlessly rude. In the period before Gladstone's retirement he had exhibited these traits all too often to his cabinet associates. By 1894 he had alienated his colleagues to the point that they acquiesced in Rosebery's accession.

As a peer and member of the house where the Liberals were in a permanent minority, Rosebery's position as prime minister was weak from the start. The real source of party strength and power was in the Commons. And Harcourt had remained as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the Commons in Rosebery's cabinet. It was an ominous division of power.

14Stansky, pp. 41ff.
Harcourt, abetted by his son, Lewis\textsuperscript{15}, had continued his quarrel with Rosebery. Relations between the two leaders deteriorated to the point that they only communicated when necessary or through a third party.\textsuperscript{16} Needless to say, this rivalry had a disastrous effect on party unity and fortunes.

The fault was not entirely Harcourt's. Rosebery lacked Harcourt's skill as a politician. He made several very publicized gaffes in affairs that undermined his position almost as much as did Harcourt's rivalry. Rosebery was a man of vision and intelligence with even wider interests and greater charm than Harcourt. But he had a distaste for those daily maneuverings so necessary for a successful political career. "He would not go through the laborious, vexatious and at times humiliating processes necessary under modern conditions to bring about . . . great ends."\textsuperscript{17} He made no attempt to strengthen his ties and contacts with backbenchers in the Commons. A man of more persistence and determination would have made stronger efforts to conciliate Harcourt. Or at least he could have isolated Harcourt to the point where his animosity was ineffectual. Rosebery's weakness as a


\textsuperscript{16}Stansky, p. 142.

tactician combined with a nervous and mercurial nature prevented this. He lacked staying power and, overly sensitive, he often saw slights where none were intended.

There was a secretive side to Rosebery as well. As prime minister, he maintained such a tight control over foreign affairs that Harcourt and the rest of the cabinet often had no idea what the Foreign Office was doing. Harcourt's complaints about this practice were fully justified. Rosebery refused to recognize this, thus aggravating the animosity between the two men. 18

Their quarrel continued after the fall of the Liberal Government and its defeat in the election of 1895. In August 1895, Rosebery informed his colleagues that he would have no dealings with Harcourt. 19 This was a mistake which probably harmed Rosebery more than it did Harcourt. Finally, in October 1896, Rosebery abruptly resigned.

Rosebery's resignation did not mean the complete triumph of Harcourt. Rosebery's supporters in the party were numerous enough to prevent Harcourt from ever feeling secure in his leadership. Nor did Harcourt become titular leader of the entire party when Rosebery left. He merely remained leader of the party in the Commons, with Kimberley his counterpart.


in the Lords. Of the two, Harcourt was unquestionably the more prominent. But the fact that he had never been formally accepted as leader of the entire party rankled.

The quarrel between Harcourt and Rosebery was more than a personal rivalry. There were genuine political differences as well. The most important were their attitudes on imperialism.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was the great age of imperialism as the European powers established their control over large parts of the globe. The Conservatives had been committed to imperialism by Disraeli. And it was a program that was popular with large numbers of the British people.

The Gladstonian Liberals disliked imperialism. Generally suspicious of extensive foreign commitments, they saw imperialist adventures as leading to dangerous collisions with the other European states. Such collisions could result in war. At the very least, imperialism would mean increased expenditures for national defences. All this would divert money and attention from domestic problems. "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform" was the slogan that aptly summed up the attitude of these Liberals, often called "Little Englanders" or Radicals. Harcourt was a firm adherent of this school and after the retirement of Gladstone, he and Morley became its leaders.

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Not all Liberals were of this opinion, however. Rosebery was the most conspicuous exception. In the early 1880s he had gone on an extensive world tour and had returned to Britain a convinced imperialist. He became a prominent member of the Imperial Federation League and in a series of speeches over the years made clear his view that the empire was the foundation of British greatness. He once called it "the greatest secular agency for good that the world has seen." There were some differences between the "Liberal imperialism" espoused by Rosebery and other Liberals and the imperialism followed by the Conservative or Unionist groups. But in practice both types involved territorial expansion and active involvement in world affairs with all the expensive commitments that this implied.

There were other Liberal imperialists besides Rosebery. It was almost inevitable that he should become their spokesman and leader. Endowed with intelligence, charm, and a fine physical presence, he was also an excellent speaker. His utterances kindled both the imagination and the critical faculties of his audiences. As a result he gathered around him a number of adherents.

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22 James, p. 158.

23 Semmel, pp. 60-62.
The committed imperialists in the party were never in a numerical majority. But they counted among their ranks some of the more talented members of the party. These included many of the younger Liberals, some of whom seemed destined to play prominent roles in politics. Sir Edward Grey and Richard Burdon Haldane were Roseberyites. The ablest of them all, Asquith, also leaned towards Rosebery's views. But Asquith was mainly concerned with domestic issues in the 1890s and he did not commit himself to Rosebery to the extent that Grey or Haldane did.

During this last decade of the century there had been a number of imperial crises. Of necessity, the Liberals had to take a stand on them. But each crisis revealed with increasing clarity that the party was split. The problem of a protectorate in Uganda, frequent difficulties with the Boers in South Africa, and clashes with the French over Egypt and the Sudan were only the more prominent of a series of issues that divided the party. It was the demand for increased naval estimates in 1894 that finally led to the long-delayed resignation of Gladstone. In 1898 in the Sudan, there had been the Franco-British confrontation at Fashoda. It was this crisis with its implicit threat of war that brought Rosebery back into the public limelight.

25 Stansky, p. 278.
In a series of widely publicized speeches, Rosebery supported the Unionist Government's policy of a firm stand against any challenge to British dominance in that area of northern Africa. The speeches restored Rosebery's reputation which had been somewhat tarnished by his abrupt resignation in 1896 and, in the ensuing period, by his withdrawal from public activity. The speeches rekindled hopes among his followers that he might return to politics.

The speeches also embarrassed Harcourt. His inept response to the Fashoda crisis—for a time he was reluctant to speak out at all on the issue—harmed his reputation as much as Rosebery's stance had improved his. It was the domestic repercussions of the Fashoda crisis which provided the immediate cause of his resignation, although he did not mention it as such in his public explanation. 26

Imperialism was not the only thing that divided the party. There were differences of opinion on how to deal with the problem of Ireland, an issue both domestic and imperial in scope. And occasionally some domestic issue might produce friction in the party. None of the other issues, however, were that important in themselves. The split over imperialism coupled with personal rivalries were the major causes of party disunity.

To lead a party divided over the most prominent issue of the day was perhaps a task beyond the ability of any man.

26 Ibid., p. 267.
But Harcourt's failure had a personal cause as well. He never offered the party an alternative issue around which it might have rallied and made a successful appeal to the nation. And such an alternative issue existed.

During this period there was a growing demand in Britain for a vigorous program of social reform. The country was the wealthiest nation in Europe, but there were great inequities in the distribution of this wealth. Poverty was widespread, the industrial areas were blighted by slums, and conditions of work were still appalling in many instances. The country still lacked an adequate educational system and its program of social welfare was almost non-existent.

During the eighteen nineties, the Liberals were slowly moving away from their traditional laissez-faire approach to social and economic questions towards a more positive approach. Harcourt had given this movement a decisive push with the introduction of his famous "death duties" in 1894. This graduated tax on inherited wealth, with its implicit leveling tendencies, might have formed the basis for a vigorous program of social reform through the use of the power of the state.27

Such a program, if pursued with determination, might have strengthened Harcourt's position in the party, since the support for such a policy transcended the split over imperialism. In 1892, Asquith declared to his constituents

27Ibid., p. 297.
of East Fife, "I am one of those who believe that the collective issue of the community may and ought to be employed positively as well as negatively." F. A. Channing, an anti-imperialist, stated in 1899 that "the real national want was industrial legislation for the benefit of the people." In his autobiography, Haldane, an ardent Roseberyite, remarks that during this period while he and others supported Rosebery in foreign policy, they looked elsewhere for inspiration in domestic affairs. In December 1898, Kimberley wrote to Ripon that Rosebery's speeches on foreign affairs had restored his position in the country, but added:

But what about domestic affairs? He had himself kept absolute silence on them, and I cannot say whether the bulk of our party would feel sufficient confidence in his management of them to place him again at their heads.

Here was an opportunity for Harcourt. He did not take it. While Rosebery combined the vision of a statesman with a fatal distaste for political tactics, Harcourt's abilities and flaws were just the opposite. He was a superb political

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tactician, but he lacked the ability of an inspired statesman leading a great crusade. Too often Harcourt gave the impression of being an opportunist, of being concerned with extracting personal victory from the day to day political maneuverings. Somewhat unfairly to himself, he projected the image of a politician without any statesmanlike qualities. 32

Divided on imperialism, the party thus lacked a strong domestic program which might have redressed the balance. The effect of this on the Liberal party was disastrous. The Liberals seemed to have lost confidence in themselves. The party was split, and its leaders were engrossed in personal quarrels that only aggravated the split.

In 1895, a tired, listless party lacking a cohesive program and rent by rivalries had been defeated at the polls. That election had returned 340 Conservatives or Unionists, along with 71 of their Liberal Unionist allies. The Liberals won only 177 seats. 33 Four years later, the outlook for the party had not significantly improved. The contrast between this weak, divided party at the end of the century and the dynamic and confident Liberal party of a generation earlier could not have been more marked.

The reaction of Harcourt's colleagues to his resignation was, in the words of Asquith, "great surprise, and

32 Stansky, pp. 295-96.

not a little indignation." The members of the Liberal front bench felt that Harcourt and Morley had treated the party and themselves very badly. They sent Harcourt letters expressing regretful acceptance of his decision, but their true feelings were indicated in the letters they exchanged among themselves. An exchange of letters between Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith was typical. Asquith wrote:

This is a pretty kettle of fish! The sum & substance of my reflections upon it all come to this; what a pity it is when big causes and interests get into the hands of grown up children who won't play in the same nursery.

Campbell-Bannerman replied in a similar vein:

Fortunately the comic aspect of it comes to help us out of the pure disgust which it first excited . . . I never knew a more gratuitous bungle than the whole thing.

Harcourt had treated his colleagues badly and it was natural for them to vent their feelings in this way. But this did not solve the main problem created by the resignation. Who was to succeed Harcourt?

A few, such as Haldane, hoped that Harcourt's retirement would open the way for Rosebery's return. Even Lord Ripon,

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34 Bodleian Library, Oxford University, The Asquith Papers, Box 9, Memorandum, Dec. 1898.

35 British Museum, Correspondence and Papers of Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, G.C.B., Add. MS. 41210, Asquith to C.-B., Dec. 19, 1898. (Campbell-Bannerman will be referred to as "C-B" in the footnotes hereafter.)

36 Asquith Papers, Box 9, C-B to Asquith, December 20, 1898.

not an enthusiastic Roseberyite, considered this possibility. Rosebery gave no encouragement to these hopes. Even if he had, the party would still have faced the problem of a successor to Harcourt in the Commons.

Most speculation centered on the four members of the Front Bench who had been members of the last Liberal Cabinet. They were Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, Fowler and Bryce. Neither Bryce nor Fowler were seriously considered. Bryce's reputation came mainly from his writings rather than his political activities. Fowler was regarded as too imperialistic to be acceptable to the Radical backbenchers.

This left Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith. The senior of the two, Campbell-Bannerman, came from a family of prosperous Glasgow merchants. He was an amiable Scotsman liked by all of his associates. Without exhibiting any outstanding qualities of political leadership, he had been a capable Secretary for War in former Liberal Cabinets. He had never indicated any desire for the leadership. But he did possess the supreme virtue of not being identified with any of the party factions. He was, for instance, on good terms with both Rosebery and Harcourt. His belief in Liberalism was

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40 Stansky, pp. 277-78.
instinctive rather than reflective. A pragmatist by nature, he was willing to adopt Liberal principles to the needs of the moment. Judging from his past record, the party would find him an adequate and safe leader. After years of strife, this might be a desirable solution.41

There was also Asquith. He had been an outstanding Home Secretary in the last Liberal Cabinet. He was universally regarded as one of the most brilliant men in politics and one with a great future. A first-class intellect, an impressively lucid speaker, very interested in social problems, he was respected by all groups. He had leanings towards the right, that is the imperialist wing, but in the past he had been mainly concerned with social problems.42

There is no doubt that Asquith could have had the post if he had wished it. He was the initial choice of a large number of Liberal leaders.43 But Asquith was reluctant for personal reasons—chiefly financial. He was an extremely successful barrister, but had no independent income. The demanding post of leader would mean less time for his profession and he had a large family to support. As he himself put it:

On personal grounds it is impossible for me without a great and unjustifiable sacrifice of the interests of my family to take a position

41Ibid., p. 278.
42Ibid.
43Ibid., p. 279.
which—if it is to be properly filled would cut me off from my profession and would leave me poor and pecuniarily dependent.  

On Friday, December 17, Ellis, the Chief Whip and Haldane, one of Asquith's closest friends, dined with him. They pressed him to take the leadership but all three agreed that as a matter of courtesy the post should first be offered to Campbell-Bannerman. The following Monday, Asquith received a letter from Fowler, who had reached much the same conclusion as Asquith and his two luncheon companions.

According to Asquith's biographer, the luncheon decision on top of his financial worries probably settled the matter for Asquith. He would not try for the leadership if Campbell-Bannerman would take it.

The same day Asquith heard from Fowler, he wrote to Campbell-Bannerman: "My object in writing to you is to say at once, and without any ambiguity, that I earnestly hope you will take the lead . . ." Campbell-Bannerman replied somewhat ambiguously, although it was not a definite refusal: "I am not my own candidate, and will do my best to help another far more merrily than I should ask help for myself."

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45 Jenkins, p. 107.
46 Ibid.
47 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41210, Asquith to C-B, Dec. 19, 1898.
48 Asquith Papers, Box 9, C-B to Asquith, Dec. 20, 1898.
Asquith received this letter on December 21. On that same day he had a discussion with Fowler. As a result Fowler also wrote to Campbell-Bannerman asking him to accept the post.\textsuperscript{49}

Bryce had urged Campbell-Bannerman to take the post even before Asquith.\textsuperscript{50} So had the Scottish Whip, Ronald Munro-Ferguson, who was a devoted Roseberyite.\textsuperscript{51}

This made it practically unanimous. There was another factor favoring Campbell-Bannerman as well. This was the attitude of Harcourt and Morley. They had a great influence with the backbenchers and this could not be ignored. Neither objected to Asquith, both preferred Campbell-Bannerman.\textsuperscript{52}

There were some doubts that he would accept. Although he enjoyed politics, Campbell-Bannerman was not as dedicated to the profession as others were. He was an inveterate traveller and frequently out of London for long periods. Every August he departed to take the "cure" at some central European spa. These trips, with some sightseeing added on, often lasted two months. During the rest of the year he made frequent trips to Belmont, his estate in Scotland. Once he was there it was difficult to dislodge him. There was also

\textsuperscript{49}C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41214, Fowler to C-B, Dec. 15, 1898.
\textsuperscript{50}\textit{Ibid.}, Add. MS. 41211, Bryce to C-B, Dec. 15, 1898.
\textsuperscript{51}\textit{Ibid.}, Add. MS. 41222, Munro-Ferguson to C-B, Dec. 16, 1898.
\textsuperscript{52}Stansky, p. 283.
some question if his health would hold up to the demands of
the post.53

A few days before Christmas, at the request of the other
Liberal peers, Tweedmouth visited Campbell-Bannerman at
Belmont. He formed the impression that Campbell-Bannerman
would accept, subject to the approval of his Viennese phy­sician. That approval arrived on December 26.54 Finally,
on January 2, Campbell-Bannerman wrote to Asquith saying he
would accept the post.55

The next question was one of procedure. How was Campbell­
Bannerman to be formally acknowledged as leader of the party
in the House of Commons? A meeting of the surviving ministers
of the late Cabinet was suggested. Asquith rejected this in
a letter to Campbell-Bannerman:

"Who is entitled to issue such a summons?
Are the three principal members56 to be included
or omitted? And is there any member of it, in
either House, who wishes to see it assembled
again for any purpose under Heaven?57

It was finally decided to hold a meeting of the Liberal
M.P.s at the Reform Club where the nomination of Campbell­
Bannerman would be formally approved. Ellis, the Chief Whip,
summoned the M.P.s for this meeting to be held on February 6,
one day before the parliamentary session began.

53Spender, I, 215.
54Ibid., p. 216.
55Asquith Papers, Box 9, C-B to Asquith, January 2, 1899.
56Rosebery, Harcourt and Morley.
57Quoted in Jankins, p. 108.
In the period before the meeting Ellis tried to insure that the meeting would go smoothly. His fear was that some backbenchers would turn it into a rally for Harcourt. He had some grounds for these fears. Philip Stanhope reflected the opinion of several M.P.s when he wrote to Ellis that he would support Campbell-Bannerman only if he did not become the spokesman for the opponents of Harcourt in the ex-cabinet group.

There was some difficulty at the meeting. An amendment was offered from the floor to the official resolution of regret for Harcourt's retirement. The amendment stated that the party had "continued confidence" in Harcourt. The implication of this remark was that Campbell-Bannerman was only a temporary substitute. The situation was saved by C. P. Scott in his seconding speech. He interpreted the amendment as meaning that the party still regarded Harcourt with respect but did not expect to see him return.

This interpretation was accepted and a split avoided. The rest of the meeting went calmly enough. Campbell-Bannerman was nominated by two English M.P.s, a Welshman and a Scotsman. The election was unanimous.

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58 Stansky, p. 287.
59 Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire, The Harcourt Papers, Stanhope to Thomas Ellis, Feb. 5, 1899.
60 Stansky, pp. 291-92
61 Ibid., p. 292.
CHAPTER II

In the opening months of 1899, the position of the newly elected leader of the Liberals in the House of Commons was an unenviable one. In a front page article on the day of his election, The Westminster Gazette took note of some of the problems facing Campbell-Bannerman:

The theory that independent opinions reduce the authorized leader to a nullity and require him to resign will, we hope, be finally disposed of by the appointment of a leader whose reputation is for breeziness and commonsense and a capacity for dealing with men. Were it otherwise, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's position would indeed be difficult. He has on his flank, and uncommitted to his leadership, the two most eminent and senior of his colleagues in the late Government. In another place also uncommitted to his leadership is the late Prime Minister whose doings and sayings have an extra-ordinary interest for the public. No party leader before has ever found himself in quite so anomalous a position--his colleagues of Cabinet rank reduced to three in the House of Commons, and the men of greatest reputation in the party, almost without exception standing aloof from official responsibility for its proceedings--unknown, inscrutable and possibly disturbing factors.¹

There were other points which might have been mentioned. The party had been surprised and shaken by the resignation of Harcourt. It was the second resignation by a leader in less than three years--in itself a demoralizing factor. Moreover, Harcourt had always been more popular with the

¹Westminster Gazette, February 6, 1899, p. 1.
rank and file of the party than his senior associates.\(^2\) Campbell-Bannerman was a relatively unknown figure to the country and hardly less so to many Liberal M.P.s.\(^3\) His chief lieutenant in the Commons, Asquith, was a man of far greater gifts and had been the first choice of many for successor to Harcourt.

Harcourt's future role was indeed, as the paper noted, a "possibly disturbing factor." For the most part in these winter months Harcourt remained in seclusion at Malwood, his country residence. He was preparing to leave for an extended vacation on the continent. He was also engaged in a controversy over Romanizing tendencies in the Church of England—firing off a series of letters to The Times on the subject.\(^4\) If this latter activity distracted him from party politics, it also indicated that his combatative instincts were hardly dulled. In a letter to Asquith, Campbell-Bannerman showed that he was aware of the dangers from this direction: "But the big Salmon will always be sulking under his stone, & ready for occasional plunges."\(^5\) According to his biographer, Harcourt's chief aim after his retirement was the prevention of a Rosebery revival in the party.\(^6\)

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\(^2\)Ibid., January 3, 1899, p. 3.

\(^3\)The Daily News (London), February 6, 1899, p. 4.


\(^5\)Asquith Papers, Box 9, C-B to Asquith, Dec. 20, 1898.

\(^6\)Gardiner, II, 495.
Given his disposition and the events of the past, Harcourt's former colleagues could have expected no less.

There was slo Morley. Speaking to his constituents on January 17, Morley had confirmed his own retirement from the inner councils of the party. He also denounced imperialism and cautioned the Liberals against deserting those three slogans which had served the party so well in the past--peace, economy and reform. The whole tenor of the speech implied that imperialists within the ranks were straying from the true paths of Liberal orthodoxy. In a second speech two days later, he touched on another divisive issue by warning the Liberals not to desert the cause of Irish Home Rule.

Coming on top of his behavior of the preceding weeks, these speeches only increased the irritation Morley's colleagues felt for him. Asquith rebutted Morley's view in a speech at Louth on January 20. This followed a sharply worded letter to Campbell-Bannerman in which he repudiated Morley's contention that many Liberals were "wallowing" in Jingoism. As a result of Morley's behavior, his associates did not consult with him about the selection of Campbell-Bannerman or about party tactics in the approaching session.

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7 The Times, January 18, 1899, p. 6.
8 Ibid., January 20, 1899, p. 10.
9 Ibid.
10 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41210, Asquith to C-B, January 18, 1899.
of Parliament. Typically, Morley was offended by this exclusion.

Foreboding as all this might seem for the future, Campbell-Bannerman assumed the leadership in a mood of determined optimism. His views were summed up in a letter he wrote to Lord Rosebery:

It is much more important to look at the future than the past. Now my estimate of prospects...is by no means a dismal one. My belief is that, with the exception of half a dozen intriguers whose vanity, as well as their malice, will lead them to make mischief, and whose interest it is to make out that there irreconcilable differences among us, the party is sound enough, . . . if activity and zeal are shown, and a considerate & encouraging spirit maintained towards individuals, we shall make a very decent show. As an Opposition party I do not believe that any violent or aggressive tactics are required, but reasonable watchfulness.

Exactly one month later, he stressed the same views in his acceptance speech during the party meeting at the Reform Club. There he stated that differences in the party were no greater than those "wholesome differences which must always exist in a body of men who are accustomed to think for themselves." He wound up with an appeal for action and unity, but stressed that he was noted for his tolerance and easy-going disposition and would not insist on rigid discipline,

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12Stansky, p. 283.
13National Library of Scotland, The Papers of the Fifth Earl of Rosebery, Box 1, C-B to Rosebery, Jan. 6, 1899
although there must be some subordination to party interest when necessary.14

His letter to Rosebery and his Reform Club speech indicated the course Campbell-Bannerman, and hopefully the party, would pursue during the coming months. The party needed time to regain its composure and underlying sense of unity. A policy of moderation, avoiding extremist courses, would minimize the factionalism that had so divided and weakened the party in the past. An important asset for pursuing this course would be, as he recognized, his own geniality and tolerance.

His views were perhaps overly optimistic, especially as to the small number of "intriguers." But this did not lessen the wisdom of his course. The party did need a period of comparative calm to recover from the events of the last few years. This would also enable him to establish his leadership in such a way as to win the approval of all groups.

Early in 1899, the outlook for this course seemed favorable. As Grey wrote to Campbell-Bannerman:

Things abroad look more peaceful than they have done for a long time & we may have a quiet session in Foreign Affairs. We shan't go to war or talk of it about Macedonia, & I hope this year will be taken up talking about peace at the Czar's Conference, and next year with the Paris Exhibition.15

14The Liberal Magazine, VII, (1899).

15C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41218, Grey to C-B, Jan. 27, 1899.
Since foreign and imperial questions had the most divisive effects on the party, this forecast from the former Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs must have pleased its recipient. Campbell-Bannerman's first official act in his new role was his response to the Address From The Throne given on February 7, after the opening of Parliament. In his speech, he criticized the Government for lack of warmth in its reply to the Czar's proposal for an international conference on peace and arms limitation. He lamented the lack of proposals for improved working class housing and old age pensions. He also promised Liberal support for an adequate London government bill.16

It was an auspicious start as the speech was widely praised. The Unionist Leader of the House, A. J. Balfour, wrote to Queen Victoria that the speech was "well delivered and full of humorous touches, and eloquent passages: it was a good beginning to his term of leadership."17 Even Morley joined the chorus in a letter to Harcourt, who was still rusticating at Malwood and missed the opening of Parliament. "C.B. was very clever,--essy, amusing--and a success, as we knew he would be."18 Sir Edward Hamilton, one of Rosebery's oldest and closest friends, wrote in his

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16 Great Britain, Parliament, Debates, LXVI (1899), 88-103. Hereafter referred to as Hansard.
18 Harcourt Papers, Morley to Harcourt, Feb. 8, 1899.
diary that Campbell-Bannerman surpassed in his speech even the most optimistic hopes for him as leader.  

During the following weeks and months, Campbell-Bannerman continued to win praise for the way he played his role. Watched as he was by all sides to see which way he would lean, he maintained his moderate center position with skill and determination.

The praise given him was tinged with a certain amount of delighted surprise. He had a reputation for indolence and lack of zeal--"lethargy" as The Daily News called it. The energetic determination and skill he now displayed came as something of a revelation. Even Haldane, who had not been enthusiastic about Campbell-Bannerman becoming leader, felt compelled to pay a grudging tribute. He told Hamilton in March that "on the whole C-B had given satisfaction."

This underestimation of his abilities was partly due to Campbell-Bannerman himself. Aside from the very real streak of indolence that he sometimes gave way to, he delighted in portraying himself as a comrade among comrades. His disarming genial exterior effectively masked a strong mind and will. He had a deeply hidden streak of ambition which, when aroused, compelled him to succeed in tasks that

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19 Hamilton Diaries, Add. MS. 48674, Feb. 11, 1899.
20 The Daily News, February 6, 1899, p. 4.
21 Hamilton Diaries, Add. MS. 48674, March 22, 1899.
proved beyond the capability of others.\textsuperscript{22} Hidden as this trait was, it is not surprising that so many people continually underestimated him—to their shocked dismay on occasion.

In addition to pursuing a moderate course, designed to smooth over party divisions, Campbell-Bannerman was anxious to strengthen the cohesiveness of the surviving party leaders and to give the impression of a united front.\textsuperscript{23} His task was simplified because of the common irritation they shared over the actions of Harcourt and Morley. In a series of letters written among themselves in December and January, Campbell-Bannerman, Bryce, Fowler and Asquith had agreed that the actions of the other two would have a deplorable effect on the country and party.\textsuperscript{24} There was a deliberate drawing together and all had written to Campbell-Bannerman promising full loyalty and co-operation.\textsuperscript{25} The peers had followed suit, partly due to the actions of Ripon. Once Ripon realized that a return of Rosebery was out of the question he urged the peers to close ranks behind Campbell-Bannerman.\textsuperscript{26}


\textsuperscript{23}Jenkins, p. 109.

\textsuperscript{24}Asquith Papers, Box 9, C-B to Asquith, Dec. 20, 1898; C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41210, Asquith to C-B, Dec. 19, 1898; Ibid., Add. MS. 41214, Fowler to C-B, Dec. 22, 1898; Bodleian Library, Oxford, The Viscount Bryce Papers, C-B to Bryce, Dec. 16, 1898.

\textsuperscript{25}Supra, pp. 16-17.

\textsuperscript{26}Wolf, II, 253.
Of the four surviving members of the late Liberal Cabinet in the Commons, Bryce, in spite of his Radical leanings, could be counted on to support the new leader. Fowler had also hastened to assure Campbell-Bannerman of his co-operation. Fowler's assurances were fortified by his personal belief that Campbell-Bannerman was in "essential" agreement with the imperialist wing of the party.27

Asquith was the crucial figure. Given his standing in the party, his relations with Campbell-Bannerman would be extremely important in determining the success of Campbell-Bannerman's policy.

In the past, Asquith and Campbell-Bannerman had been friendly but not close. It was a friendship of two men who had served in politics together. Asquith was married to the former Margot Tennant, one of the most remarkable women in London society, and moved in different social circles than the more sedate Campbell-Bannerman.28

Both had held somewhat aloof from the rivalry between Harcourt and Rosebery which had rent the party. Asquith was known to have leanings towards Rosebery. But his behavior had been restrained enough to retain the respect of Harcourt who had predicted in the early nineties that Asquith would someday lead the party.29

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27Asquith Papers, Box 9, Fowler to Asquith, Dec. 17, 1898.
28Jenkins, p. 107.
29Gardiner, II, 590.
This prediction, shared by others, might have encouraged a rivalry between the two. It did not. Once he made his decision not to accept the leadership, Asquith seems to have been quite sincere in offering his support and cooperation to Campbell-Bannerman. There was another factor--that of age. Campbell-Bannerman was sixteen years older than Asquith and not in the best of health. In the natural order of things, Asquith could reasonably expect to succeed Campbell-Bannerman in the not too distant future. This assumed of course, that nothing unexpected would happen to prevent this succession and that the Liberal party would not disintegrate because of internecine struggles.

These points shaped Asquith's attitude in 1899. He too was disgusted by the behavior of Harcourt, Morley, and to a lesser extent, Rosebery. He feared the disruptive effect that their actions would have on the party's unity and future.

So it was not surprising that Asquith shared Campbell-Bannerman's hopes that the surviving leaders would be able to cooperate more effectively. When an illness prevented Asquith from attending Campbell-Bannerman's eve of the session dinner, he was concerned lest his absence be misinterpreted. He wrote to Campbell-Bannerman suggesting that his name be

\[30\text{Jenkins, p. 107.}\]
\[31\text{Ibid., p. 110.}\]
\[32\text{Ibid., pp. 109-10.}\]
Their mutual desire for cooperation in the delicate task of nursing a divided party back to health continued during the next few months. In April they were confronted by the sudden death of the Chief Whip, Tom Ellis. Finding a successor in this important position who would be acceptable to all factions was a potentially difficult problem. After close consultation, they decided on Herbert Gladstone, a younger son of the late Liberal leader. They hesitated at first. As Asquith noted, Gladstone was "naturally inclined to a slack, if not lazy existence," and there were doubts that he would be willing to meet the demands of this thankless post.

But this risk, if it was such, would be offset by the value of his name. As Campbell-Bannerman wrote, it "was a power in the country." In a period of change and confusion his appointment would help create a sense of continuity and raise morale by reminding the party of its great heritage. The choice of Gladstone did, in fact, win the approval of all

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33C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41210, Asquith to C-B, Feb. 3, 1899.


35C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41210, Asquith to C-B, April 10, 1899.

36Asquith Papers, Box 9, C-B to Asquith, April 8, 1899.
sections of the party. Morley reflected the general opinion when he wrote Harcourt that Gladstone was a "great prize for C.B. ... especially compared with any other of the persons possible." 

Gladstone himself hesitated to accept the post, but not merely because it was formidable. It would also mean a demotion, since he had been a junior minister in the last Liberal government. Asquith urged Campbell-Bannerman to assure Gladstone that accepting this position would not jeopardize his chances of being appointed to a future Liberal cabinet. Assured of this, he accepted the appointment.

It was a happy selection for Campbell-Bannerman. His appointee would control the vital party machinery. Gladstone had served as his father's secretary for many years and knew the older generation of Liberals, both in parliament and in the national organizations of the party. He was a close friend of the Asquiths, Grey and Haldane, which would strengthen Campbell-Bannerman's connections with the younger Liberals. Grey and Haldane were imperialists, but Gladstone was not. In spite of his friendships he was not identified with any

37 Hamilton Diaries, Add. MS. 48674, April 13, 1899.
38 Harcourt Papers, Morley to Harcourt, April 14, 1899.
40 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41210, Asquith to C-B, April 10, 1899.
41 Mallet, pp. 163, 179.
particular wing of the party. Like Campbell-Bannerman, Gladstone's approach to politics was rather pragmatic. He had little faith in elaborate ideological programs. And, partly because of his own family heritage, he was concerned with restoring the unity of the party.

Campbell-Bannerman was not always successful in pursuing his via media. His response to the Address included a critical comment on the Government's policy in the Sudan. This had encouraged Morley to believe that Campbell-Bannerman would ultimately come down on the side of Harcourt and himself. In this instance, Morley was alone in his interpretation of the comment. A fortnight later, however, Morley had a more tangible cause for rejoicing. On 24 February, he had submitted a motion in the House attacking Government activities in the Sudan, where British forces under Lord Kitchner were establishing British authority. Grey spoke in favor of the Government. Campbell-Bannerman after a rather confusing speech announced he would vote for Morley's resolution.

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42 Ibid., p. 179.
43 Ibid., p. 174-76.
44 Harcourt Papers, Morley to Harcourt, Feb. 8, 1899.
45 Hansard, LXVII (1899).
46 Ibid., 489-98.
Morley was delighted. Conversely, the imperialists such as Haldane and Ronald Munro-Ferguson, the Scottish Whip, were dismayed. Munro-Ferguson had been one of the earliest supporters of Campbell-Bannerman to succeed Harcourt. New he wrote in disgust to Rosebery that Campbell-Bannerman had "dropped into Harcourt's rut." Haldane also informed Rosebery that Campbell-Bannerman's action was a serious blow to the authority of the new leader.

Rosebery refused to share their alarm. He had received a letter from Campbell-Bannerman explaining his action.

You may be surprised tomorrow morning to find out that I voted with J.M. tonight. I did it on a balance of advantages, and as the best way of outwitting the little clique. The truest representation of my opinion would have been to walk out: but this always has a mean effect, and it would have been misread in the country.

This explanation lacks a certain clarity, but it evidently satisfied Rosebery. He warned Munro-Ferguson not to be overly hasty in his condemnation. "Remember too that he is thoroughly straight, a gentleman, a friend of yours, a Scot, and do not be hasty to despair of him or even criticize him."

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48 Rosebery Papers, Box 15, Munro-Ferguson to Rosebery, Feb. 25, 1899.
49 Ibid., Box 2, Haldane to Rosebery, Feb. 24, 1899.
50 Ibid., Box 2, C-B to Rosebery, Feb. 24, 1899.
51 Quoted in Stansky, p. 294.
This rather prompt explanation by Campbell-Bannerman to Rosebery—it was written on the night of the vote itself—has some significance. It illustrates Campbell-Bannerman's relations with the imperialist wing, particularly with Rosebery, during these months. In spite of his desire to pursue a middle course between the factions, during these months Campbell-Bannerman leaned towards the imperialists.

Part of the explanation for this was his very genuine irritation with Harcourt and Morley on the manner of their resignations. He did not hesitate to criticize their behavior to leading imperialists. In February, he lunched with E. T. Cook, a prominent Liberal imperialist and editor of the *Daily News*. He was extremely frank with Cook in his comments on the two men.\(^{52}\) Although Campbell-Bannerman maintained friendly personal relations with both men, his contacts with them were minimal.

Harcourt, it is true, was out of the country in the late winter and early spring. But even after his return, things did not change. Harcourt was only informed of Gladstone's appointment by Morley and then Gladstone himself.\(^{53}\) Harcourt had written to Campbell-Bannerman indicating his desire to sit on the Front Bench when he returned to the Commons after the Easter recess.\(^{54}\) No objection seems to have been raised

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\(^{53}\) C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41218, Harcourt to C-B, April 19, 1899.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., April 9, 1899.
to this request. Yet Harcourt was not consulted by the party leaders during the debates on the budget. And he was the chief financial expert in the party. It was Fowler, an imperialist, who was chief spokesman for the party in the financial debates. Harcourt was hurt by this silence and vented his irritation by criticizing Fowler's speeches in a letter to Morley. Harcourt did speak during the debates, but his remarks, as he admitted, had an anti-imperialist bias. This probably did nothing to improve his relations with the party leaders.

If one reason for Campbell-Bannerman's bias towards the imperialists was his irritation with Harcourt and Morley, there was another as well. The resignation of Harcourt and Morley left the shrunken Front Bench weighted in favor of the imperialists. Fowler and, to a lesser degree, Asquith were imperialists. Just behind them in the party ranks was Grey, also an imperialist. As Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs in the last Liberal Government, he was a leading party spokesman on the important topic of foreign affairs. Almost as prominent as Grey was Haldane. He had not held office as yet, but his abilities and his close friendships with leading members of the party made him a prominent figure. Then there was Munro-Ferguson, the Scottish Whip and a dedicated Roseberyite.

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55 Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Morley, April 26, 1899.
56 Gardiner, II, 494.
The necessities of day to day politics, coupled with the widespread desire for unity, meant that Campbell-Bannerman would work closely with these men. His cooperation with Asquith has already been noted. In February, Fowler and Haldane supported Campbell-Bannerman in a confrontation with the Irish Nationalists. The Irish had been alarmed by the resignation of Morley, the chief advocate for Home Rule on the Liberal Front Bench. One of the Irish M.P.s, John Redmond, sponsored a motion designed to elicit from the new Liberal leader a statement on his future policy towards Ireland. Campbell-Bannerman's statement was rather guarded. He expressed his sympathies with Irish aspirations and a desire to cooperate, but he refused to make a definite promise that the Liberals would deal with Home Rule "immediately after their return to power." The party retained the right to say when and how the principle of self-government for Ireland should be applied.\(^{57}\)

Occasionally this cooperation went further and Campbell-Bannerman sided with the imperialists against the Little Englanders within the party. In June, the Commons was debating a grant to Kitchner as a reward for his services in the Sudan. Morley used this opportunity for his own purposes. Beginning with a criticism of Kitchner for disinterring the body of the Mahdi and scattering the remains, he went on to criticize British activities in the Sudan. Campbell-Bannerman

\(^{57}\textit{Hansard},$ LXVII (1899), 1178-1222.
opposed Morley. While objecting to the dispersal of the Mahdi's remains, he refused to make a political issue of it. He felt that this isolated action was comparatively unimportant when compared to the rest of Kitchner's splendid services for Britain in that land.\textsuperscript{58}

As a former War Secretary, Campbell-Bannerman was always very sensitive to attacks on the reputation of British soldiers.\textsuperscript{59} But this was not the only reason for his opposition to Morley on this issue. While Campbell-Bannerman criticized aspects of British policy in the Sudan, he accepted the basic policy itself. During the Fashoda crisis of the previous year, he had sided with the imperialists who supported the Government's stand against the French.\textsuperscript{60}

For the most part then Campbell-Bannerman did not find it difficult to work with the imperialists in the Commons. But the most important imperialist was not in the Commons. This was Lord Rosebery.

In the past Campbell-Bannerman had been on friendly if not close terms with Rosebery. No personal rivalries bedeviled their relationship as in the case of Harcourt and Rosebery. Campbell-Bannerman accepted the accession of Rosebery to the premiership in 1894. He remained as aloof as possible from the quarrels that divided Rosebery's

\textsuperscript{58}\textit{Ibid.}, 72, 331-45.

\textsuperscript{59}\textit{Spender, C-B, I}, 144.

\textsuperscript{60}\textit{Ibid.}, I, 186.
Cabinet. But his personal sympathies were with Rosebery. On the merits of the issues themselves, he often shared Harcourt's views. But he disliked Harcourt's behavior towards the acknowledged leader of the party. He believed that Harcourt should have resigned when he found he could not maintain amicable relations with the party chieftain.\(^61\)

Presumably Rosebery was aware of this personal sympathy that Campbell-Bannerman had for him. At any rate, their correspondence in the late nineties, while sparse, shows that they were on friendly terms.

Shortly after Campbell-Bannerman had been selected by his associates to succeed Harcourt, the new leader wrote a long letter to Rosebery, part of which was quoted previously, giving his comments on the situation. Aside from his belief that the party divisions were less serious than made out, the notable aspect of this letter was Campbell-Bannerman's frankness on Harcourt and Morley.

I say this, disregarding the fact that ordinary difficulties will be mightily increased by the existence of a pair of intellectuals sitting around the corner, always on the pounce. I know this well, but I think that it will be at once safest & most selfrespecting for us who are to be responsible for the party to disregard them & presume on their good behavior until they shew [sic] that our confidence is misplaced.\(^62\)

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\(^62\) Rosebery Papers, Box 1, C-B to Rosebery, Jan. 6, 1899.
This excerpt provides a good illustration of Campbell-Bannerman's attitude towards his two predecessors at the time—irritation with Harcourt which he felt free to express to Harcourt's rival.

To the annoyance of some of his followers, Rosebery deliberately had remained aloof from the problem of choosing a successor to Harcourt. But he replied promptly and with considerable warmth to Campbell-Bannerman's letter.

I was delighted to hear what you said about the leadership and the future. I have no doubt that there will be a universal wish that you accept, and universal pleasure that you face the matter in so manly a spirit. . .

You will be few, but you will be absolutely united, cordial and loyal—I mean the four leaders. You will in your different lines be most formidable in debate. And if unfair flank attacks are made they will help you, and recoil on their authors. But the real strength will lie in this—that for the first time in years there will be a handful on the front bench working like a good team, unjealous, with a real & friendly and eager cooperation. The Liberal Party have not had such a chance for a long time. And the Liberal Party itself should now be ready for some sort of discipline, and able to discriminate between the true prophets and the false. Good luck to you—and I think you will have good luck.

In the following months, Campbell-Bannerman and Rosebery exchanged letters in a desultory but friendly fashion. The letters imply that the two also met several times to discuss politics.

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63 Hamilton Diaries, Add. MS. 48674, Jan. 15, 1899.
64 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41226, Rosebery to C-B, Jan. 8, 1899.
Campbell-Bannerman had been in broad agreement with Rosebery on Fashoda and the Sudan. In March 1899, Campbell-Bannerman delivered a speech which can also be seen as an attempt to reach an accommodation with Rosebery on an even more important issue— Ireland.

In that month, the National Liberal Federation held its annual meeting at Hull. It was an important event for Campbell-Bannerman. This was his first appearance since his election before the representatives of the national party—as opposed to the parliamentary group—and his speech on March 8 was the main event of the four day session. Campbell-Bannerman was never noted for his platform oratory, but he evidently took great pains with this speech. The Westminster Gazette praised him for a very successful appearance and address.\(^5\)

Again his speech stressed his views on party differences.

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\text{Differences there are, and always will be, but they are differences as to methods and opportunities— they rarely touch principles—and such as they are they can be easily exaggerated.} \quad 66
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But the most interesting part of his speech concerned Ireland. In a passage that must have encouraged the old Gladstonians, he stated that the party could never abandon its commitment to Home Rule. Having made this commitment,\(^6\)

\(^{5}\text{Westminster Gazette, March 9, 1899, p. 5.}\)

\(^{6}\text{The Liberal Party Pamphlets and Leaflets: 1899 (London: Liberal Publications Dept.), p. 3.}\)
he immediately proceeded to qualify it by refusing to commit the party to immediate implementation.

It would be impossible for us to lay down any fixed programme for our action at the time when it became again in our power to act. Priority must depend upon the circumstances of the day, upon the feelings of the nation, upon the temper of the party, and, above all upon the amount and quality of the party majority.67

This was in line with his earlier statement to Redmond in the Commons. He was now repeating it to the national party. To his listeners, it was quite clear that he was refusing to repeat the experience of the last Liberal Government during the years 1892-95. In those years, the Government, dependent on the Irish votes for their majority, had devoted considerable time and effort to passing Gladstone's second Home Rule bill. All this time and effort had been wasted when the Lords vetoed the bill and the result had been a relatively barren legislative record on other urgent problems.

Rosebery told Hamilton that he thought Campbell-Bannerman's speech "quite excellent."68 Well he might have. At least one acute observer recognized that the speech was an attempt by Campbell-Bannerman to accommodate himself publically as far as possible to Rosebery's wellknown doubts about the party commitment to Home Rule.69 To abandon this commitment was

67Ibid., pp. 4-6.
68Hamilton Diaries, Add. Ms. 48611, Rosebery to Hamilton, March 24, 1899.
69Wolf, II, 253.
impossible. Home Rule was one of Gladstone's most important legacies to the Liberal party. But Campbell-Bannerman deliberately made this commitment as imprecise and as indefinite as possible.

It was not until two months later in a speech delivered at a dinner of the City Liberal Club in London that Rosebery made a public reply to this gesture by Campbell-Bannerman. First he praised Campbell-Bannerman's efforts as leader. Then speaking in a "disembodied way" he went on to urge a reconstruction of the party by combining "the old Liberal Spirit with the new imperial spirit." He believed that a reconstruction of the party ranks on the lines of 1885 was the most desirable point of departure for this effort. 70

This implied a virtual abandonment of Home Rule and a reconciliation with the Liberal Unionists who had left the party during the split over Home Rule and were now the partners of the Conservatives in the Unionist Government. The whole tone of this provocative utterance ran counter to the efforts of Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith and others to play down dissensions and recreate a sense of unity among the faithful. It did not pass unchallenged. At a dinner for the Welsh M.P.s the following night, Harcourt angrily stated that Rosebery seemed intent on repudiating the entire Liberal program. 71

70 The Times, May 6, 1899, p. 15.
71 Ibid., May 9, 1899, p. 13.
The reaction of Rosebery's friends was not too different. Laby Tweedmouth told Hamilton that her husband and others were very disappointed in the speech. It had created the impression that Rosebery was not a genuine Liberal and that he did not wish to assume the lead again.\textsuperscript{72}

The reactions that Hamilton noted were born out by a letter that Asquith wrote, but did not send, to Rosebery.\textsuperscript{73}

I have read, and re-read, your speech of last night, and the effect upon me ... is very depressing.

This ... to the ordinary intelligence means (1) a repudiation of \textit{Home Rule}, either as an immediate or as an ultimate aim ... and (2) a condonation of the constant and malignant activity of the small faction ... of ex-Liberal forces which from '86 to '99 have been in Parliament our most formidable and relentless foes ... .

What new principle of reconstruction do you offer to our own party--the men who in bad times and under discouraging conditions, ... have stuck to the ship and supported the party? They are to surrender at discretion in order that, perchance, the spectacle of their compliance may--through pity or contempt--reconvert the apostates.

I am--I believe--an Imperialist in your sense ... But what will be said--and not without plausible argument--is that you are seeking to reconstruct the Liberal Party--or to create its successor--on the basis of an amalgam of Unionism and jingoism. This seems to me to offer to the doubting middle voters the maximum of inducement to remain or become Tory and the minimum of motives to join our ranks.

I have spoken frankly, and I know that you won't mis-interpret my motives, or question my real friendship and affection.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{72}Hamilton Diaries, Add. MS. 43674, May 8, 1899.

\textsuperscript{73}Jenkins, p. 111.

\textsuperscript{74}Jenkins, p. 111-12.
On May 9, Hamilton sat next to Margot Asquith at a dinner party. She told him that Asquith was irked with Rosebery and complained that Rosebery never saw anyone, which was very frustrating for his supporters. Episodes such as this made Rosebery an unpredictable element in the calculations of both friend and foe.

Dismayed as he must have been by this speech, Campbell-Bannerman did not let it deter him from maintaining good relations with Rosebery. Early in July, he wrote to Rosebery that he would like to meet him and give Rosebery a "report." Rosebery replied in a friendly but chiding fashion: "I am always delighted to see you, and will let you know if I come to town. But don't talk of reporting to me! Generals don't report to Chelsea Pensioners!"

Campbell-Bannerman's attempts to promote party unity partly explain his determination to maintain good relations with Rosebery. Although retired, Rosebery retained the allegiance of a number of active Liberals. His good will would be an important asset to Campbell-Bannerman. But this is not the whole explanation. Harcourt also had his loyal adherents and Campbell-Bannerman did not woo him so persistently in this period.

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75 Hamilton Diaries, Add. MS. 48674, May 9, 1899.
76 Rosebery Papers, Box 2, C-B to Rosebery, July 8, 1899.
77 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41226, Rosebery to C-B, July 8, 1899.
It is difficult to believe that Campbell-Bannerman used the word "report" unthinkingly. There was probably an element of farsighted calculation as well as an element of flattery in its use. Most Liberals at this period found it difficult to believe that Rosebery's retirement was permanent. It seemed unthinkable that a man of his gifts and comparative youth would not return to active politics one day. Should this occur, he would automatically assume a prominent role, if not the leadership, in the party.

Speculation about Rosebery's future was a constant preoccupation with the Liberals. Later that July, Herbert Gladstone paid a visit to Rosebery to try and divine his intentions. The Chief Whip held two long conversations with Rosebery on this topic. Immediately the conversations were over, Gladstone wrote them down in a memorandum. In the first conversation, held during a carriage drive the evening of July 26, Rosebery had nothing but the highest praise for Campbell-Bannerman's skill in his new role. When Gladstone urged Rosebery's return to politics, Rosebery replied that he saw no need for it. Gladstone formed the impression during the talk that Rosebery was concerned about the reaction of Harcourt and Morley should he decide to return.

Summing up this first discussion, Gladstone felt that Rosebery was hoping to keep out for the present, but that three things might bring him back: a national crisis; a disagreement with

78 Wolf, II, 253.
the party's foreign policy; or the final disappearance of Harcourt.79

The next morning the two men had a further conversation. Afterwards Gladstone repeated his belief that Rosebery would not make any move while Harcourt was still active. Rosebery had also told him that a return now, while campbell-Bannerman was so successful, might expose him to the charge of taking advantage of Campbell-Bannerman.80

These conversations pointed up Campbell-Bannerman's problem. Not knowing the future, Campbell-Bannerman always had to keep the possibility of Rosebery's return in mind. At this stage he probably would have welcomed it. His personal relations with Rosebery had been as harmonious as Harcourt's were acrimonious. Campbell-Bannerman was not a dedicated imperialist, but neither was he a staunch anti-imperialist. With a certain amount of accommodation there seemed to be no reason why there could not be cooperation. Nor would Rosebery's return necessarily involve the replacement of Campbell-Bannerman, since he had only been elected leader of the party in the Commons. He still lacked the standing of Harcourt or Rosebery in the party, and there had been no implication that his post meant the leadership of

79British Museum, The Viscount (Herbert) Gladstone Papers, Add. MS. 45986. Memorandum written from notes made on July 25, 1899. (Herbert Gladstone will be referred to as "HG" in the footnotes hereafter.)

80Ibid., Memorandum written from notes made on July 27, 1899.
the party as a whole. The possibility of the party coming to power in the near future, which would raise the problem of the premiership, was a remote one.

All this lay in the realm of speculation about an unknown future. The reality in those summer months of 1899 was that Campbell-Bannerman's relations with the imperialist wing of the party were for the most part harmonious. Rosebery was expressing admiration for his leadership and he and Asquith were working together without difficulty in the Commons. If some of the others, such as Haldane and Munro-Ferguson had their doubts, they were only occasional ones.
CHAPTER III

From his interview with Rosebery, Gladstone formed the impression that Rosebery hoped to remain in retirement but that a national crisis might alter this resolve. Such a crisis was already in the making during that July interview, and in the autumn of 1899 the crisis exploded. This was the outbreak of the Boer War in South Africa.

Relations between the British and the Boers in southern Africa had been deteriorating since the disastrous Jameson Raid of 1895 when a group of British guerrillas had invaded the Transvaal and attempted to overthrow this South African Republic. The raid was a fiasco, but it gravely undermined efforts for a Boer-British reapproachment. The failure of British authorities to deal effectively with the leading perpetrators of the Raid, Dr. Jameson and Cecil Rhodes, only antagonized the Boers more. There was also some suspicion that the British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, was in some way implicated in the plot. A parliamentary committee of investigation failed to allay suspicions of this latter belief. Thus relations between the two peoples worsened.

By 1899 this deterioration was extremely serious. In April of that year, the Uitlanders, British residents in the
Transvaal, sent to London a petition containing over 22,000 signatures. Describing the unfair and harsh treatment they received from Boer officials, the Uitlanders demanded that the British authorities help them win redress for their grievances. The major Uitlander grievances centered on the restrictive franchise. Could they gain the right to vote and other rights of citizenship in the republic, the Uitlanders hoped to use this power to end the discrimination against them.

The petition was followed by a dispatch from Sir Alfred Milner, British High Commissioner in South Africa:

The spectacle of thousands of British subjects permanently in the position of helots, constantly chafing under undoubted grievances and calling vainly to her Majesty's government for redress, does steadily undermine the influence and reputation of Great Britain . . . within the Queen's Dominions.

After some hesitation, the British Government decided to take up the petition of the Uitlanders. In order to acquaint the British public with the problem, the petition, Milner's dispatch and the Government's reply to Milner were published on June 14.

On June 26, the Colonial Secretary, Chamberlain, spoke at the Town Hall in Birmingham and in a rather menacing

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1Halevy, V, 72-73.
3Ibid., p. 196: Milner to Chamberlain, May 4, 1899.
phrase stated that "having undertaken this business we will see it through." 4

This decision increased the danger of war in South Africa. Milner had written to Chamberlain in 1898:

There is no way out of the political troubles of S. Africa except reform in the Transvaal or war. And at present the chances of reform . . . are worse than ever." 5

If this view was correct, the possibility of a peaceful solution to the problem the British Government had determined to settle was not very strong.

On June 17, three days after the publication of the dispatches, Campbell-Bannerman spoke on the Transvaal problem at Ilford. In a reference to the belligerent tone taken by Chamberlain and some other ministers, Campbell-Bannerman said flatly that he could discern "nothing in what happened to justify warlike action or even military preparations." He recognized the grievances of the Uitlanders as legitimate, but noted the irony of the situation. The Government was demanding that the Transvaal make it easier for the Uitlanders to give up their British citizenship. He added that he did not think all possibilities for negotiation had been exhausted. 6 Neither did the British Government at this

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stage, but this speech shattered the unanimous support for their policy that the Government wanted. Chamberlain at once met with Campbell-Bannerman to explain the official policy and to ask for the Opposition's support.7

The two men met in Chamberlain's room in the House of Commons. Chamberlain explained that a firm attitude was the only way to win concessions from the Boer Government of President Kruger. If necessary this would include strengthening the British military forces in South Africa to help convince Kruger that the British were serious.8

In actuality, during the negotiations Chamberlain was far more flexible and conciliatory than either Milner or Kruger.9 But this was not known at the time and publically his policy seemed bellicose and aggressive. It was this aspect that Campbell-Bannerman disliked. He thought the situation an extremely delicate one that called for tact and caution.10

Campbell-Bannerman consulted his colleagues in both Houses before replying to Chamberlain. On June 22, he wrote that the Liberals could not agree to a show of force in

7Garvin, p. 412: Spender, C-B, I, 230-37. Garvin merely cites Spender's account of the episode. Presumably this indicates he accepts it.

8Ibid.


South Africa. He added that undivided responsibility for this problem must remain with the Government. "In the interest of the country it is desirable that the hands of the Opposition should be entirely free."\(^{11}\)

It was natural for the Opposition to leave all responsibility for the handling of this affair with the Government. Aside from the fact that they had no voice in the decision making, there were many aspects of the affair that Liberals disliked. Some Radicals were sympathetic to the Boers. They saw the Transvaal as a small nation trying to preserve its independence from an imperialist power.\(^{12}\) Others who found it difficult to sympathize with the obstinate and dour Kruger were suspicious of Chamberlain or the influence of British capitalists concerned about the gold deposits in the Transvaal.\(^{13}\) Many Liberals regarded Chamberlain--the Liberal renegade of 1886--with "unfathomable distrust."\(^{14}\) Even his more moderate opponents like Asquith disliked the style of Chamberlain's "new diplomacy."\(^{15}\) There were some suspicions of Milner's fitness for his role. Even Chamberlain was

\(^{11}\)Ibid., 234-35.


\(^{13}\)Augustine Birrell, Things Past Redress, (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), p. 149.


\(^{15}\)The Liberal Magazine: 1899, VII, 487.
occasionally dismayed by his actions. As Ensor notes, Milner "had the gifts and temperament of a first class administrator. But he lacked those of a diplomatist."^17

Looming above all this was the danger that this major imperial crisis, if it worsened, might threaten whatever fragile unity the Liberal party had found during the last few months. As one Liberal summed it up, "It was a nasty, troublesome, soul searching business."^18

Negotiations between the Boers and the British continued during the summer months. This led some Liberals, including Campbell-Bannerman, to believe that the danger of war was really rather small. The Liberal leaders did discuss South Africa at a meeting on July 14.^19 Already it was apparent that there were some differences among them on the merits of the Government's policy. But it was decided to maintain the view taken by Campbell-Bannerman in his Ilford speech. He repeated this view a few days later in the Commons.\(^21\)

\[^{16}\text{Garvin, p. 408.}}\]
\[^{17}\text{Ensor, p. 245.}}\]
\[^{18}\text{Birrell, p. 149.}}\]
\[^{19}\text{Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43517, C-B to Ripon, July 13, 1899.}}\]
\[^{20}\text{Spender, C-B, I, 239.}}\]
\[^{21}\text{Hansard, LXXV, (1899), 686-97.}}\]
Shortly after his Commons speech, still convinced that the danger of war was slight, Campbell-Bannerman left for the continent to take the cure at Marienbad. There he remained during August and much of September, almost incommunicado to his associates.\(^\text{22}\)

Contrary to Campbell-Bannerman's hopes, the negotiations were not really progressing towards a settlement. On August 26, Chamberlain delivered another warning to the Boers. The warning reflected the growing impatience of the Government and some of the British people. "The issues of peace and war are in the hands of President Kruger . . . Will he speak the necessary words? The sands are running down in the glass."\(^\text{23}\)

By this time, Liberals were becoming alarmed at the turn of events. On September 2, Asquith informed his constituents at Leven that he disapproved of "irresponsible clamours which we hear from familiar quarters for war." He still believed that "firm and prudent diplomacy" could solve the dispute.\(^\text{24}\) The speech showed that he and Campbell-Bannerman still took a similar attitude towards the crisis. Two days later, Asquith wrote to the absent Campbell-Bannerman about the differences of opinion on the crisis. After mentioning his fear that Morley would speak out in favor of the Boers and condemn the

\(^{22}\)Spender, CrE, I, 239.

\(^{23}\)Garvin, p. 438.

\(^{24}\)Liberal Magazine: 1899, VII, 487.
Government, he stated: "It would be a mistake to suppose our people—as a whole—are at all strongly 'pro-Boer.'"25

This assessment was not correct, and this became apparent within the fortnight. On September 15, a group calling itself the Transvaal Committee held a giant rally in Manchester. The principal speaker was John Morley. Morley admitted that the Uitlanders had some legitimate grievances and that the franchise in the Transvaal would have to be reformed. But he urged patience in the negotiations since the maintenance of peace was essential.

I ask myself whether the man with the sword blundering in and slashing at the knots that patient statesmen ought to have untied is not responsible for half the worst catastrophes in the political history of Europe. You may carry fire and sword into the midst of peace and industry—such a war of the strongest Government in the world against this weak little Republic, and the strongest Government in the world, with untold wealth and inexhaustible resources, will bring you no glory. It will bring you no profit but mischief, and it will be wrong. You may add a new province to your Empire. It will still be wrong. You may give greater buoyancy to the South African stock and share market. You may create South African booms. You may send the price of Mr. Rhode's Chartereds up to a point beyond the dreams of avarice. Yes, even then it will be wrong.26

25C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41210, Asquith to C-B, Sept. 4, 1899.

26Liberal Magazine: 1899, VII, 488-89.
It was an impressive speech. And Morley certainly did, as Asquith feared, "produce a fiery cross lighted at the embers of the Hawarden fire." This was the authentic voice of Gladstonian Liberalism and this speech summed up the essential views of all those pro-Boer Liberals who would oppose the war as unjust and place the major blame for it on the British Government.

Harcourt spoke on September 20. He attacked the view that Great Britain still had suzerainty over the Transvaal.

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27 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41210, Asquith to C-B, Sept. 4, 1899. Hawarden was the Gladstone estate. Asquith was referring to the anti-imperialist sentiment of Gladstonian Liberalism.

28 Liberal Magazine, 1899, VII, 490-91. The dispute with the Transvaal was greatly complicated by the suzerainty question. The 1881 Convention which recognized the Transvaal stated in its preamble that the Transvaal was subject to the suzerainty of the British Government. In international law, this implied that the republic was not a completely sovereign and independent state. A second convention was signed in 1884, which made changes in the earlier one. In the 1884 document the term "suzerainty" was not used, although it was stated that the Transvaal could not make treaties with foreign states without British approval. There was disagreement over the significance of this second convention. Did it replace the first? Or did it merely modify certain clauses of the first? If the latter, then the preamble of the earlier document was still in effect and Britain was still the suzerain power. The Boers argued that the second convention replaced the first. Hence the British Government could no longer claim suzerainty over the Transvaal which was an independent state save for the restrictions on its right to make treaties. Harcourt was an expert on international law and accepted the Boer argument. He was supported by Lord Ripon, a former colonial secretary. But Ripon believed that Britain was the paramount power in South Africa and thus had some right in fact, if not in law, to concern herself with Boer affairs. Ripon was C-B's chief advisor on South African affairs and he accepted Ripon's view on this point. Kimberley and Spencer were also influenced by Ripon on this subject. See Wolf, Ripon, II, 256-57.
Several days later, when the London papers finally reached him, Campbell-Bannerman commented on both speeches in a letter to Bryce. "I thought J.M. & Harcourt both good, the latter especially effectively pricked the Suzerain bubble." This was one of the earliest indications that he and Asquith might take different paths in the future.

On September 19, Campbell-Bannerman received a telegram from the Manchester Transvaal Committee calling on him to save the situation. Campbell-Bannerman, still in central Europe, replied that his views were still unchanged from those expressed in his Commons speech of July 28—the dispute was still negotiable. But in his letter to Gladstone describing all this, Campbell-Bannerman expressed growing doubts. He mentioned the effect of Boer duplicity and procrastination as well as the provocative language, impatience and even some inconsistency on the British side. He still hoped for a negotiated settlement, but recognized that "there comes a time when national dignity is involved." Hence he could not give the Committee the straightforward denunciation of war that they wanted.

By September 22, Gladstone was demanding that Campbell-Bannerman return to England. He also warned his leader that "it is quite plain that our people are wandering in different

29 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41211, C-B to Bryce, Sept. 28, 1899.

30 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Sept. 19, 1899.
paths, & any false move will have a bad effect one way or another." Yielding to this pressure, Campbell-Bannerman decided to return. But he traveled at a snail's pace—the slowest journey since the development of railways as one writer has put it—and he did not reach London until October 3.

He did, however, maintain contact. He wrote to Bryce on September 28, saying "Evidently our people are wandering." Bryce wrote of the same thing the next day warning him that they might "have to face the contingency of a split in the party. But there was one in 1876-78 which did not prevent the triumph of 1880." Ripon wrote to Campbell-Bannerman on September 30 that war was now probable and that he believed most Liberals, with some exceptions, were opposed to the war. But they needed a lead. "Are you prepared to give it?"

Ripon's fear was supported that same day by the Westminster Gazette. Hitherto the paper had taken the same view as Campbell-Bannerman; now it despaired of preserving the peace. Both sides were massing troops in South Africa.

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31C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Sept. 22, 1899.
32Jenkins, p. 114
33C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41211, C-B to Bryce, Sept. 28, 1899.
34Ibid., Bryce to C-B, Sept. 29, 1899.
The British Government, in addition, authorized the creation of an expeditionary force of 50,000 soldiers for dispatch to South Africa. But it was not until a week later, October 7, that the Reserves were called up.37

On September 30, Campbell-Bannerman wrote to Gladstone that he would arrive in London the following Monday—October 3—and he wanted a meeting of his Liberal colleagues. In

37 The exact sequence of events was as follows:

Sept. 8: The British Cabinet sent what they called the 'final offer' to the Transvaal. Aside from terms for settling the franchise question, the note denied that the Transvaal was an independent, sovereign state.

Sept. 16: The 'final offer' rejected by the Transvaal. The Uitlanders began to leave Transvaal for Natal and Cape Colony. They brought reports of Boer military preparations.

Sept. 22: Chamberlain made an unsuccessful appeal for the resuming of negotiations.

Sept. 27: The Orange Free State publicly allied itself with its sister republic. This dismayed the British as the Orange government had been trying to mediate the dispute.

Sept. 29: The British Cabinet approved the proposal to send an ultimatum to the Boers. The decision not announced pending a final appeal to the Boers.

Sept. 30: The Duke of Devonshire made the appeal in the name of the Cabinet.

Oct. 2: The Boer parliament approved Kruger's demand for war. Not known in Britain.

Oct. 7: The British Reserves called up. Parliament summoned to meet on Oct. 17.

Oct. 9: Kruger sent ultimatum to the British government. He demanded that they cease military preparations in South Africa or face war. (The British ultimatum still had not been delivered.)

Oct. 10: The Boer ultimatum received that morning and rejected the same day.

addition to the regular attenders, Grey and Sidney Buxton were to be invited. On October 1, Morley had a brief conversation with Gladstone and reported to Harcourt that he found the Chief Whip "in despair." This was partly over the growing splits in the party, partly over Campbell-Bannerman's dilatory traveling.

When Campbell-Bannerman finally arrived in London, he found a letter from Gladstone describing the opinions held by various Liberals. Gladstone reported Ripon, Bryce, and Spencer dreading the war. Fowler "has been apparently inflamed by missionary opinion! & is . . . strongly anti-Boer." Grey condemned Chamberlain's diplomacy, but felt Kruger had put himself in the wrong to a very great extent.

In these circumstances, it was not surprising that the meeting of the ex-Cabinet on October 4 was a very difficult one. Bryce and Fowler represented the extremes of opinion: the former sympathetic to the Boers, the latter violently hostile to them. Asquith and Grey were both critical of

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38 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Sept. 30, 1899. This meeting included the Liberal peers. Both Kimberley and C-B seem to have had the right to request a meeting which would include the Front Bench of both houses. HG would issue the summons. Presumably the two leaders would consult with one another previous to the summons as a matter of courtesy.


40 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Oct. 3, 1899.

41 Spender, C-B, I, 246.
aspects of British diplomacy. On the other hand they were friends of Milner and in correspondence with him. Thus they were influenced by his views which made them more favorable to the Government and critical of the Boers than Campbell-Bannerman. These attitudes were also shared by Haldane, who was not at the meeting.² Campbell-Bannerman did not share the admiration of Asquith and Grey for Milner. Consequently he was far more critical of the British diplomacy although he did not deny that part of the difficulties must be blamed on the Boers.³

These differences of opinion would have made agreement difficult enough. But there were other considerations as well. Harcourt and Morley were not at the meeting. But their views could be predicted from their earlier speeches: critical of the Government and sympathetic to the Boers. Both men were too important to be ignored. There was also Rosebery and so far he had remained silent.

Compounding the problem was the fact that the situation in South Africa was still unclear. War seemed probable, but it had not occurred as yet. Thus the ex-Cabinet had to reach a consensus when everything was still uncertain. Campbell-Bannerman had a speech scheduled for October 6 at Maidstone and it was impossible for him to say nothing on the most critical issue of the day. An agreement was reached and

²Jenkins, p. 104.
³Spender, C-B, I, 245.
almost inevitably it was a compromise that reflected something of the views held by various members of the ex-Cabinet.

This was made clear in Campbell-Bannerman's speech at Maidstone. He still hoped it was possible to achieve a peaceful settlement. After examining the causes of the crisis he confessed to his audience that "no one could tell what we were going to war about." He regretted the raising of the suzerainty question which was bound to offend the Boers. But he also claimed that the latest British proposals to the Boers on how to solve the grievances of the Uitlanders were reasonable ones and he hoped that these proposals would not longer be dismissed out of hand. He spoke of the tragedy for South Africa should war come. There would be "radical enmity and anger, which it will take generations to overcome." He ended where he began, with an appeal to both governments to avoid this calamity which was developing from insufficient grounds.44

The next day he left for Paris to get his wife. He was still there when the Boers ultimatum was delivered on October 10. His return was delayed by a storm in the English Channel. As a result, the Liberals could not hold another ex-Cabinet meeting until October 14, several days after the ultimatum and the outbreak of war.45

There was one thing to be said for the Boer ultimatum and invasion of the British colonies of Natal and Cape Colony.

44Liberal Pamphlets: 1899, No. 4.
45Spender, C-B, I, 244.
Assuming that war was unavoidable, it simplified matters for the Liberals that the Boers rather than the British Government precipitated it. Just before Bryce heard of the ultimatum, he wrote to Gladstone that if a vote of credit were demanded in parliament without a formal declaration of war it would be extremely difficult to avoid a schism in the party.\(^4^6\) Probably the same would have been true if the British Government had taken the initiative in declaring the war and gone to parliament for approval. "The main demand which came up from the rank and file was for an even stronger lead against those who favored war."\(^4^7\) After the Boer ultimatum and invasions of British territory, the reaction of the overwhelming majority of Liberals was stated by Harcourt.

"It is now useless to insist on the correct legal rights of the case. \textit{Inter arma silent leges.} And no hearing can be obtained for reason or law. Of course we cannot oppose money votes for the forces to oppose an attack on a British colony.\(^4^8\)"

When the votes for credit came up in parliament, there were only some thirty odd M.P.s who voted against the Government. And most of these were Irish.\(^4^9\)

\(^{4^6}\)HG Papers, Add. MS. 46019, Bryce to HG, Oct. 10, 1899. \\
\(^{4^7}\)Spender, \textit{C-B}, I, 245. \\
\(^{4^8}\)Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Morley, Oct. 12, 1899. \\
\(^{4^9}\)\textit{Annual Register}: 1899, p. 217.
This did not imply that the party was able to agree on much else. This became apparent during the next few weeks. On October 11, Asquith spoke at Dundee. He said that the Government may have made mistakes in its diplomacy but he credited it with a sincere desire for peace. This view put the major blame for the war on the Boers. The ultimatum had decisively changed Asquith's views on the crisis. Previously he had been fairly close to Campbell-Bannerman in his attitude--critical of both sides. "But the crowning--and in his view coolly premeditated--folly of the ultimatum obliterated all comparison between them and left the British Government no choice." From now on, he would put the major responsibility for the war on the Boers.

That same day, October 11, a letter from Rosebery was published:

I think ... that in a survey of the past three years there is much in the relations of our Government with that of the Transvaal to criticize, if not to condemn.

But all that is over for the present. It is needless to discuss how we could best have attained our simple and reasonable object--of rescuing our fellow-countrymen in the Transvaal from intolerable conditions of subjection and injustice, and of securing equal rights for the white races in South Africa. For an ultimatum has been addressed to Great Britain by the South African Republic, which is in itself a declaration of war. In the face of

50 The Times, Oct. 12, 1899, p. 12.

this attack, the nation will, I doubt not, close its ranks and relegate party controversy to a more convenient season.\textsuperscript{52}

Fowler had written to Campbell-Bannerman advocating this course even before the ultimatum.\textsuperscript{53} Now he repeated his views. "Rosebery's letter and Asquith's speech . . . defines the only policy which a responsible Opposition can adopt."\textsuperscript{54}

To the Oberal Imperialists, it was the plain duty of the party to support the Government in prosecuting the war and to mute criticism of past mistakes lest criticism weaken the British effort. For the moment, Campbell-Bannerman accepted this view. Parliament convened for a special ten day session on October 17 to vote the Government the necessary credits for fighting the war. In his response to the Address from the Throne, Campbell-Bannerman condemned the actions of the Boers and promised support for the war. His criticism of the Government's diplomacy during the preceding months was for the most part rather moderate. The only exception was his charge that the Government had been engaged in a game of "bluff" that had failed.\textsuperscript{55}

Other Liberals were not so restrained and the debates became rather heated. Harcourt was much more critical in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52}\textit{Liberal Magazine: 1899}, VII, 551.
\item \textsuperscript{53}C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41214, Fowler to C-B, Oct. 5, 1899.
\item \textsuperscript{54}Spender, C-B, I, 248.
\item \textsuperscript{55}\textit{Hansard}, LXXVII (1899), 69-77.
\end{itemize}
his speech. He admitted that it was their duty to support the Government, but the Opposition was still free to criticize mistakes. Even in wartime the Opposition could not ignore its function.\textsuperscript{56} Harcourt's speech reflected the attitude of most of the Liberal M.P.s. This was shown by their response to an amendment to the Address moved by the Radical backbencher, Philip Stanhope. The amendment disapproved "of the conduct of the negotiations with the Transvaal, which had involved us in hostilities with the two South African Republics."\textsuperscript{57} The amendment was defeated, but of the approximately 180 Liberals who were present, 135 voted for the amendment. Harcourt, Morley, Bryce, and Robert Reid were among the 135.\textsuperscript{58}

Campbell-Bannerman opposed the amendment in the interest of national unity. As a consequence he found himself in a minority of some forty Liberals. The minority were almost exclusively recognized as the imperialist wing. For a man committed to a middle course, Campbell-Bannerman had miscalculated. He had maintained a united front with Asquith, Fowler and Grey only to find himself in opposition to the majority of Liberal M.P.s. And among this majority was his still-popular predecessor.

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{Ibid.}, LXXVII (1899), 210-211.

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{Ibid.}, col. 199.

\textsuperscript{58}\textit{Ibid.}, cols. 367-68.
During the following weeks in his public speeches, Campbell-Bannerman moved back towards the pro-Boers and away from the Imperialists trying to strike a balance. He promised continuing support for the war "to vindicate the honour and interests and the security of the Empire." But at Manchester, on November 15, he repeated his charges about the Government engaging in a game of bluff, hoping to cow the Boers into submission by adopting a threatening attitude during the negotiations. "It was an unworthy and a dangerous policy, and . . . it has proved a fatal policy . . . to the cause of peace." At Aberdeen on December 19, he was even more outspoken:

Mr. Chamberlain is mainly responsible for the war. It is the result of his persistent policy. Let me put it more fairly. It is one of the possible results of his persistent policy, not perhaps the result which he intended . . . but still a natural result which he ought to have anticipated.

These speeches brought Campbell-Bannerman closer to Harcourt, Morley, and the rest of the Little Englanders, already dubbed the pro-Boers. Very few in this group refused to give any support to the war effort. But they all disliked it. And for them the major responsibility for the war rested with the British Government. For some of them,

60 Ibid., No. 6, p. 7.
62 Spender, C-B, I, 249.
before the British Government were the sinister figures of "Johannesburg capitalists and City financiers." To this group, the Boer ultimatum was the result of a quarrel provoked largely by Chamberlain and Milner.

Harcourt and Morley were delighted by Campbell-Bannerman's movement in their direction. But Campbell-Bannerman had no intention of identifying himself completely with this group. He shared their deep suspicions of Chamberlain and Milner. On the other hand he was more critical of the Boers and attached greater importance to the Boer ultimatum. His position was more or less in the middle of the Liberal spectrum of opinions. Whether he could remain there very long was a moot point. It was also a natural position for a leader of a divided party. From the beginning of the war Campbell-Bannerman realized that there was a danger of a formal split in the party and that he, as leader, had to work to avoid this. Given the passions aroused by the war, it was bound to be a difficult task.

Of the other leaders not identified with the two wings, Kimberley, Spencer, Ripon, Gladstone and, to a lesser extent,

63 Halevy, V, 97.
64 Spender, C-B, I, 249.
65 Harcourt Papers, Morley to Harcourt, Nov. 16, 1899; Harcourt to Morley, Nov. 16, 1899.
66 Spender, C-B, I, 249.
67 Ibid., p. 249.
Bryce, took substantially the same position as Campbell-Bannerman. Bryce had very strong pro-Boer leanings, but also a strong sense of loyalty to Campbell-Bannerman which kept him from completely identifying himself with the pro-Boers.

The two wings contained some of the ablest men in the party. Should it come to a formal break, the loss of either wing would be ominous for the future of the party. Such a loss was a possibility from the start as both sides began attacking the position of the other. As early as October 27, Campbell-Bannerman wrote to Ripon:

I had the greatest difficulty last week in persuading our colleagues not to make speeches in the House against each other. Grey was, I am told, very cross about the division & want off to Glasgow to discharge his mind. In a speech. Of course others will do the same.

It was not only his colleagues in the House that Campbell-Bannerman had to contend with. Rosebery was another problem. Rosebery had stated it was the duty of the Opposition to close ranks during the war and support the Government. However, his own actions only embittered even more relations within the party. In a series of pronouncements in the opening weeks of the war, he touched on one sensitive issue after another.

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69 Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43517, C-B to Ripon, Oct. 27, 1899.
His public letter of October 11 had ended with the following observation:

There is one more word to be said. Without attempting to judge the policy which concluded peace after Majuba Hill, I am bound to state my profound conviction that there is no conceivable Government in this country which could repeat it.70

Whatever Rosebery's intentions, Gladstonian Liberals regarded this as a gratuitous slap in the face. Harcourt wrote Morley that the letter was "a masterpiece of cunning and meanness. The kick in the last sentence to the dead lion is thoroughly characteristic . . . ."71

On October 26, Rosebery received the Freedom of Bath and unveiled a tablet to the two Pitts. Here he called Chatham the first Liberal Imperialist and went on to state: "I believe that the party of Liberal Imperialism is destined to control the destinies of this country." Again returning to the peace settlement which followed Majuba he called it a "sublime experiment" which had been based on the elder Gladstone's deep Christian beliefs but which had failed. He then ended with Chatham's exhortation: "Be of one people: forget everything for the public."72

This was too much for Harcourt. "Fancy the statue of Pitt set up for the Liberal Party of the future to fall down

70Liberal Magazine: 1899, VII, 551.
72Liberal Magazine: 1899, VII, 528.
and worship. Shades of Fox and Grey!”\(^7\) A few days later he made an astute comment about Rosebery.

I fancy what he admires in Chatham was his isolation, which ended in his choosing to act with no one, till no one would act with him . . . . He will never take the rough and tumble of party warfare, but keep himself for the reclame of safe displays at intervals.\(^7\)

Rosebery's speeches, as well as his own views on the war, were encouraging Harcourt to resume a more active political life. Morley encouraged this desire.\(^7\)

Rosebery's pronouncements increased Campbell-Bannerman's difficulties. The latter wrote to Gladstone that he was being compelled to say something about Liberal Imperialism. He would do it in his Birmingham speech but "without any open or even controversial reference to Rosebery."\(^7\) Rather alarmed by this, Gladstone consulted Tweedmouth and wrote back urging caution.\(^7\) None the less, Campbell-Bannerman touched on the topic of imperialism in his Birmingham speech of November 24:

You will have observed that everyone nowadays appears to cultivate some peculiar species of his own . . . Imperialism . . . . Mine is "Common-sense Imperialism." I should be much surprised if it were not found that I belong to the largest congregation of all who worship at that shrine. We have in this country an overflowing population, and we are bound to find for their industrial energy ever fresh . . . . fields and outlets. We, therefore,  

\(^7\)Gardiner, II, 512  
\(^7\)Ibid.  
\(^7\)Harcourt Papers, Morley to Harcourt, Nov. 28, 1899.  
\(^7\)HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Nov. 3, 1899.  
\(^7\)C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Nov. 4, 1899.
cannot do a work more patriotic and more conducive to the happiness of our own people at home than by developing the resources of the Empire, by securing our trade rights, and by cultivating close, cordial and active relations with all the members of the British family scattered throughout the world. There is ample room here for all our activity, and for my party I grudge to see any of that activity diverted to the acquisition—sometimes it may be inevitable—to the acquisition of new dominions which may bring us glory, but which very often is rather a burden than a source of advantage for many years.\(^\text{78}\)

Campbell-Bannerman still hoped Rosebery would return to the party fold. He told Sidney Buxton that Rosebery's standing aloof was "nonsense, . . . he must fall in with his old comrades." There would have to be some adjustments. But there were no differences between Rosebery's views and "ours" so serious that common sense could not bridge. "But if every man is to try and screech out a new policy of his own and excommunicate all who won't accept it, then of course our party efforts are a vain show."\(^\text{79}\) Campbell-Bannerman was an optimist by nature, and this statement about no unbridgable differences reflects that optimism. But there was some validity to this remark.

Rosebery believed that the negotiations with the Transvaal had been badly mismanaged and that Milner was partly responsible for this. Rosebery did not share the enthusiasm for Milner that Asquith, Grey or Haldane had. He also distrysted Chamberlain and believed that more

\(^{78}\)Liberal Pamphlets: 1899, No. 7, p. 11.
\(^{79}\)Spender, C-B, I, 254.
dextrous diplomacy by men whom the Boers trusted might have averted the war.\textsuperscript{80} These opinions were virtually identical to those held by Campbell-Bannerman. But Rosebery also wrote Grey on October 21, that if Kruger had remained in power, eventually "the problem would have had to be solved by the sword."\textsuperscript{81} It is very unlikely that Campbell-Bannerman would have agreed with this. Nor could Campbell-Bannerman accept the view that criticism of the Government's mistakes in negotiations or its inadequate military preparations would hamper victory and should be stilled during the war.

The two men kept in contact with one another. Campbell-Bannerman visited Rosebery at Dalmeny, his estate just outside Edinburgh, at the end of November. Both were attending a ceremonial dinner in Edinburgh. Campbell-Bannerman informed Gladstone that he "found the Lord a little inscrutable, but perfectly friendly and active."\textsuperscript{82} One incident of the trip must have pleased Campbell-Bannerman. At the dinner, Rosebery lashed out at Chamberlain. In a recent speech Chamberlain had told the French, who were pro-Boer in sympathy, to "mend their manners."\textsuperscript{83} Rosebery attacked Chamberlain for this "flouting of foreign nations."\textsuperscript{84} Support for the

\textsuperscript{80} Crewe, II, 65: Rhodes, 410-11.
\textsuperscript{81} Rhodes, p. 411.
\textsuperscript{82} HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Dec. 7, 1899.
\textsuperscript{83} Annual Register: 1899, p. 229.
\textsuperscript{84} Liberal Magazine: 1899, VII, 594.
Government in Rosebery's view evidently did not extend beyond the issue of the war.

Just before Christmas, Rosebery wrote to Campbell-Bannerman to explain his action at a recent meeting of the executive committee of the Scottish Liberal Association of which Rosebery was president. It was one of his few remaining formal ties to the party. He had vetoed a resolution proposed by the committee which expressed confidence in Campbell-Bannerman. Rosebery explained that he always refused to permit any resolutions from being passed by the committee since as president he might be held responsible for them. Hence he had to remain consistent and object to this resolution even though it mentioned Campbell-Bannerman.®

Campbell-Bannerman replied that he understood.® But in a letter to Bryce, he indicated he had been rather hurt by the action and was not entirely satisfied with Rosebery's explanation.®

Campbell-Bannerman's relations with Asquith during the first months of the war remained fairly satisfactory. As Asquith informed Gladstone, on questions such as the temperance issue he was careful to stress his agreement with Campbell-Bannerman.® On the more important issue of the

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®C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41226, Rosebery to C-B, Dec. 22, 1899.
®Rosebery Papers, Box 2, C-B to Rosebery, Dec. 25, 1899.
®C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41211, C-B to Bryce, Dec. 25, 1899.
®Ibid., Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Dec. 12, 1899.
war, he wrote to Campbell-Bannerman regretting the leader's criticism of Milner in his Manchester speech and warned him he might have to criticize the pro-Boers in his next speech. On the other hand, he congratulated the party leader for handling the difficulties of party differences in one of his speeches with skill and tact:

The said differences, wh. relate entirely so far as I know to the interpretation of the past, and involve no issue of principle or policy, have of course been magnified & distorted to the highest degree for purpose of political mischief. For my own part, I have kept as silent as I could, & when I had to speak ... I pitched it in as low key as I could.

In spite of his identification with the Imperialists on the war, Asquith was still concerned with minimizing the differences in the party. For this reason, Asquith told Bryce that he disliked Fowler's too emphatic support on the government in his speeches.

As for Haldane, he wrote Rosebery that the Liberals were hopelessly split and that it would be a fight "a la mort" with Harcourt and Morley. But he believed that the majority of Liberals "at bottom" were with the Imperialists. Among this majority he evidently included Campbell-Bannerman,

89Ibid., Add. MS. 41210, Asquith to C-B, Nov. 23, 1899.
90Ibid., Asquith to C-B, Dec. 20, 1899.
91Ibid., Add. MS. 41211, Bryce to C-B, Dec. 16, 1899.
92Rosebery Papers, Box 24, Haldane to Rosebery, Oct. 29, 1899.
since he wrote to his party leader in December congratulating him on the skill he had shown recently. "You are keeping up the fight under great difficulties."93 Going on to discuss the forthcoming session of parliament in the new year, Haldane still thought that there was "a pretty wide common basis" on which the party could unite--attacking the ineffective preparations the Government had made for a possible war. But he added that this line of attack had to be used with caution or it would backfire on the Liberals.94

As Campbell-Bannerman probably recognized, Haldane's last comment was a fairly accurate one. In the opening phase of the war, a wave of patriotism had swept across the country and even audiences at Liberal meetings showed resentment when speakers were too strong in their criticism of the Government. Campbell-Bannerman had noticed this among his own constituents.95 Gladstone reported the same reaction.96

The events of this phase of the war only strengthened that attitude. The British had been woefully unprepared at the time of the ultimatum and were suffering in a series of humiliating reverses. The culmination came during 'Black

93 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41218, Haldane to C-B, Dec. 17, 1899.
94 Ibid.
95 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45997, C-B to HG, Dec. 7, and Dec. 17, 1899.
96 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Dec. 8, 1899.
Week' in mid-December when in three separate engagements British forces were defeated by the Boers. It was obvious to everyone that the authorities had been caught unprepared. But given the mood of the moment, for the Liberals to stress this fact too strongly left them open to the charge of being unpatriotic.

The Unionist Government was only too willing to take advantage of this situation. At a by-election in October, the Unionists claimed that a Liberal victory would weaken the Government in fighting the war and play into the hands of the Boers. The Liberal candidate supported the war effort, although critical of the pre-war diplomacy. His support for the war was dismissed as irrelevant and he was depicted as a friend of the enemy. He lost by almost twice the number of votes which defeated his Liberal predecessor in the election of 1895.97 The Unionists continued these tactics in the succeeding months. They only aggravated the differences among the Liberals. All Liberals, including Imperialists, were subjected to these attacks, and this seemed bitterly unfair to the Imperialists. As one of them put it: "It is one thing to go to the stake for principles you believe in, and quite another to be roasted alive for a cause you abhor."98

97 Liberal Magazine: 1899, VII, 551-52.
98 Spender, C-B, I, 252.
Such tactics strengthened the conviction of the Imperialists that the party had to dissociate itself from any anti-national or pro-Boer sentiment. They increased their pressures on Campbell-Bannerman to accept this view.\textsuperscript{99} This Campbell-Bannerman would not do. He continued to support the war effort, but he would not cease his criticism.\textsuperscript{100} Aside from his own convictions on this point, he had to consider what would happen to the party. To follow the Imperialist view would mean an irrevocable split with the Radical wing. So he continued to follow his middle course. The result was a deterioration in his relationship with some Imperialists.

Rosebery had been convinced early in the war that a split was inevitable. He wrote to Grey that the party was "nearing its final cataclysm. The Rump will break with the Imperialist section and ally itself with the Irish. All this in the long run must tend to do good."\textsuperscript{101} Rosebery does not seem to have included Campbell-Bannerman among the "Rump", but his attitude on a split was bound to affect their relationship in the long run.

Grey had been critical of the lack of guidance during the special session; this had left the way open for Harcourt and Stanhope. Such criticism could only refer to Campbell-Bannerman. He had written to Rosebery in commenting on all

\textsuperscript{99}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 251-52.
\textsuperscript{100}\textit{C-B Papers}, Add. MS. 41215, C-B to HG, Dec. 9, 1899.
\textsuperscript{101}Rhodes, p. 413.
this, "you cannot feel more independent than I do at the moment." Rosebery's support for the Government was even stronger than Rosebery's, as both recognized. It even led him to consider leaving the Liberal Front Bench.

Campbell-Bannerman was also having difficulties with the Scottish Whip, Munro-Ferguson. Early in November, he had written to Campbell-Bannerman, "We all regard you, however, as one who is able to speak out without involving us in the risk of accentuating divisions." A month later, this was changed. Campbell-Bannerman was complaining to Gladstone about the Scottish Whip: "I hear nothing from him now--& there are deep dissensions in the Scottish Liberal Association." Although the December meeting of the Association had passed off without incident, Campbell-Bannerman informed Gladstone that "there were terrible smouldering fires, however."

By the end of the year, the outlook for the future was bleak. Gladstone in his Christmas greetings to Campbell-Bannerman could only comment: "What a Xmas! The best wishes to you that it admits of."

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102 Rosebery Papers, Box 23, Grey to Rosebery, Oct. 22, 1899.
104 Rhodes, p. 414.
105 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41222, Munro-Fergusson to C-B, Nov. 8, 1899.
107 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Dec. 21, 1899.
CHAPTER IV

In the opening weeks of the new year, the British forces in South Africa suffered more reverses, but the tide was turning in their favor. Men and supplies were pouring in from Britain and her colonies so that by February 1900, the British had a force of 200,000 men ready to take the field. They also had new military leaders. In December, Sir Redvers Buller had been replaced by two of Britain's ablest generals. Lord Roberts had been appointed commander and Lord Kitchner, his chief of staff.

The effect of these changes was a striking reversal of fortunes. In February, Roberts and his forces launched a series of co-ordinated attacks for which the Boers, having been dispersed into a number of small striking forces, were ill prepared. On February 15, the British relieved the town of Kimberley, capturing a Boer army of 4,000 men in the process. That same month Ladysmith was relieved. Roberts then invaded the Orange Free State. Meeting little resistance, he captured the capitol, Bloemfontein, on March 13.

Guerrilla resistance and supply difficulties prevented him from moving into the Transvaal until May. Again the British were successful. Johannesburg was captured on May 31, and five days later the capitol, Praetoria. Kruger's government fled to Portuguese East Africa. The town of
Mafeking was relieved after a Boer siege of 217 days. This, the culmination of a series of striking victories, led to an explosion of patriotic rejoicing and demonstrations in London. In spite of growing resistance from Boer guerrillas, the last organized Boer army was defeated in August, and the remaining British prisoners were freed. The war seemed all but over. The Transvaal was formally annexed to the British empire on October 25. The Orange Free State had been annexed the previous May.¹

As British fortunes changed so dramatically for the better, it might have been expected that this would ease the situation for the badly divided Liberal party. It did not. The Liberals continued to quarrel over the question of responsibility for the war, the inadequate preparations for its prosecution, the roles of Chamberlain and Milner, the treatment of Boer prisoners, and the ultimate fate of the two Boer states.

The Liberals could be divided roughly into three groups. On the left were the pro-Boers. On the right were the imperialists. Between them was a fragmented and shifting center group headed by Campbell-Bannerman. The Annual Register analysed the voting patterns of the party in the major debates on South Africa in 1900 and made some estimates on the size of the three groups. Approximately 62 M.P.s could be classi-

¹The description of the war in South Africa is taken from Ensor, pp. 251-56 and Halevy, V.
fied as imperialists or consistent supporters of the war. Another 68 were classified as pro-Boers. This left a center group of some 57 M.P.s. Of these latter, 30 followed Campbell-Bannerman in consistently avoiding identification with either wing of the party. The remaining 27 fluctuated in their voting; sometimes they sided with the pro-Boers and sometimes with the imperialists.\(^2\)

At best these figures are only approximations. The size of the imperialist group was particularly difficult to estimate. The *Annual Register* said 62. But the previous autumn only 50 odd Liberals had opposed the amendment introduced by the pro-Boer, Stanhope, when parliament was voting the financial credits for the war. This indicates the difficulties of making exact estimates about the size of each group. The line separating the more moderate imperialists, for instance, from the center group was always difficult to delineate.

Differences in the parliamentary party reflected splits among the party supporters in the country. Gladstone reported conflicts in the constituency organizations; the Scottish Liberal Association was in a turmoil that winter; and at the March meeting of the National Liberal Association there were also indications of the splits.

It was against this background that Campbell-Bannerman's relations with the Liberal imperialists developed. In January, Sir Henry was confronted with two immediate problems

\(^2\) *Annual Register*: 1900, p. 165.
which affected these relations. The first was the question of whom to invite to the customary party dinner given before the opening of Parliament. The second, and more important, was the Opposition Amendment to the Speech from the Throne.

As regards the dinner, Campbell-Bannerman did not know whether to invite Harcourt and Morley. Both were more actively engaged in politics since the beginning of the war and to ignore them might harm his relations with the pro-Boers. On the other hand, if they were invited how would the imperialists react?

I fear that the idea of including the two scriveners (as one might call them) is barred (1) because H.H.F., Ronald, & perhaps others would fly put the window, and (2) because our big friend is so overpowering and all pervading not to say overbearing, his admission would restore us to our old and trampled condition. Still it is an odd arrangement. If the late Govt is the test, why not the twins? Echo answers, why?

Campbell-Bannerman finally overcame his hesitations and invited them. "I have written to the fair Malwoodina & I hope that bulky nymph will not be coy."

The Amendment was a more formidable problem. It would be difficult to devise one acceptable to all sections of the party. But, as Campbell-Bannerman was well aware, it was

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3 Fowler.
4 Munro-Fergusson.
5 Harcourt.
6 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Jan. 23, 1900.
7 Ibid., Jan. 26, 1900. Malwood was Harcourt's country home.
imperative that the Front Bench tackle the question lest others in the party propose more partisan amendments.\textsuperscript{8} W.A. McArthur, an assistant Whip and an imperialist, suggested that the Amendment be limited to criticism of the conduct of the war.\textsuperscript{9} This was rejected. It was obviously insufficient for the pro-Boers as it would make no criticism of the pre-war policy of the Government. Campbell-Bannerman wanted an Amendment that would support the war but criticize the Government for its actions leading to the outbreak of the war and for its inadequate preparations. He did not want any direct criticism of the conduct of the generals and soldiers. Such criticism of military conduct should be directed against the Government. He did not want the Amendment to be too vague, but comprehensive enough to win the support of as many Liberals as possible.\textsuperscript{10}

Complete unanimity might be impossible, but Campbell-Bannerman and Gladstone were willing to tolerate a few defections if the majority swung into line. It was clear from which section of the party they expected defections. Gladstone wrote:

\begin{quote}
The policy of the Govt has been so discredited that we can afford to stand the defection of Grey & Fowler if they choose to stick to the
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{8} C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to CB, Jan. 4, 1900.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., Jan. 16, 1900.
\textsuperscript{10} HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Jan. 5, 1900; C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41214, C-B to Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice, Jan. 20, 1900 (Copy).
\end{flushright}
Govt, but it is very desirable to secure Asquith & Ld Kimberley.  

Campbell-Bannerman replied:

I entirely agree with what you say as to our taking a decided line. If certain of our nearest friends find themselves up a tree, tant pis pour eux. But those who have only got up to the first branch, or were merely looking wistfully up the stem may be assisted down.

Implicit in this exchange was the assumption that the imperialists, and not the pro-Boers, were the main offenders in undermining party unity. Campbell-Bannerman tried to avoid being identified publicly with either wing. He hoped to prevent any formal break from the party, but if this proved impossible, the above comment was an indication of where his support and sympathy would be placed. There were other indications as well. When he had visited Rosebery several weeks earlier, he had complained about the unyielding imperialist stance of Grey and Haldane and how difficult this made his task. All this shaped his relations with the imperialists: in seeking co-operation there were limits beyond which he would not go. His pragmatic approach to politics kept these limits blurred, but they did exist in his own mind.

An intensive round of consultations now began, mostly conducted by mail, since many Liberals were still out of

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11 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Jan. 4, 1900.
12 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Jan. 5, 1900.
13 Ibid., Jan. 17, 1900.
town. Asquith had hoped that the Front Bench would return to London as early as possible, but Campbell-Bannerman, himself, remained at Belmont in Scotland for the first three weeks of January. Gladstone met with those Liberals still in London and kept his chief informed through the post.

A draft amendment was drawn up along the lines desired by Campbell-Bannerman. The Chief Whip showed it to Asquith who feared that it did not indicate sufficient support for the war. He was also afraid that criticism of pre-war policy might backfire by reviving the topic of the official inquiry into the Jameson Raid. Campbell-Bannerman had sat on the committee which had investigated the Raid. An attack on the preparedness of the Army might also affect Campbell-Bannerman since he had been War Secretary in the last Liberal government which fell in 1895.

Asquith repeated his doubts to Bryce. In his view, the inquiry into the Raid had been disastrously inadequate, had affronted the Boers, and was an important cause of the war. But he did think the party ought to be able to agree on an Amendment. This last point was the important one, indicating that Campbell-Bannerman might be able to win the support of the more moderate imperialists.

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14 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Jan. 16, 1900.
15 Ibid.
16 Bryce Papers, Asquith to Bryce, Jan. 20, 1900.
Perhaps emboldened by this indication, Campbell-Bannerman had no difficulty in dismissing Asquith's objects. He stated that his conscience was clear on his own role in the inquiry. As for criticism of the War Department hurting him, "the whole army could have been rearmed in these five years. Again I have never said the War Department was perfect—on the contrary . . . . " These arguments were presumably effective. When Parliament opened Asquith supported the Amendment as worded along the lines desired by Campbell-Bannerman. Even Grey and Fowler accepted it at the meeting of the Front Bench on January 25 when Campbell-Bannerman had finally returned to London. McArthur, an assistant Whip, promised to win over as many of the imperialist backbenchers as possible.

This support by the imperialists amazed Morley. Because of his own staunchly pro-Boer feelings, he felt the Amendment might have been more strongly worded, but he went along with it for the sake of the party. Grey's attitude, not to mention Fowler's, was perhaps surprising. But a letter to Campbell-Bannerman helps to explain Grey's decision and probably that of other imperialists as well:

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17 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Jan. 17, 1900.
18 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Jan. 26, 1900: Spender, C-B, I, 272.
19 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Jan. 18, 1900.
20 Harcourt Papers, Morley to Harcourt, Jan. 26, 1900.
All that has happened in the war confirms me in the opinion that the Boers never meant to concede anything worth having in the negotiations: but an awful mess has been made, & the tone of Balfour's speech at Manchester & the cool assumption that the Govt are not responsible for anything and not to be blamed for the unhappy entanglement at Ladysmith are intolerable.  

Thus Grey held to his convictions about the responsibility for the war but was alienated by the Government's refusal to assume responsibility for shortcomings and mistakes which occurred after the war began.

With the wording of the Amendment settled, Campbell-Bannerman wanted Asquith to move it. Asquith would not go this far, however, and Campbell-Bannerman was forced to fall back on Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice. Fitzmaurice was not identified with any faction and could be relied upon to deliver a competent speech. In Campbell-Bannerman's words, he was "as straight as a reed in his actions and as sound as a bell in his views."

During the deliberations about the Amendment Campbell-Bannerman had taken another step. Gladstone had urged him to bring Robert Reid into the inner circles of the party. It would please many party members "for Bob now is looked to by a lot of the men below the gangway."

\[21\] C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41218, Grey to C-B, Jan. 20, 1900.
\[22\] C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Jan. 26, 1900.
\[23\] HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Jan. 21, 1900.
\[24\] C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Jan. 20, 1900.
Bannerman agreed to the proposal. The significance of this move was that Reid was recognized as a pro-Boer. His addition would help balance the front ranks of the party which were weighted towards the imperialists. Intentionally or not, Campbell-Bannerman was strengthening his position with the pro-Boers.

Parliament opened on January 30. During the debate on the Address, all the Liberals could attack the Government for inadequate preparations. Asquith rather ingeniously remarked that British unpreparedness at least indicated their peaceful intentions. For the most part each faction emphasized parts of the Amendment which supported their attitude on the war. An open clash between Liberals was avoided, but not all mention of differences. Grey acknowledged these frankly during his attack on the government. But none of the Front Bench voted against the Amendment. Since, at that moment, the war was going so badly for the British, the Opposition was able to make some telling points. Yet it was apparent that there was no real alternative to the present Government. The debate was "damaging to the Government without being helpful to the Opposition."
Campbell-Bannerman meanwhile was keeping a wary eye on events in Scotland where differences between the imperialists and their opponents were reaching serious proportions. The former were accused of attempting to get only imperialists adopted as official parliamentary candidates by the party organizations in the constituencies.  

Campbell-Bannerman suspected that Haldane was involved in this. There were even rumors that the imperialists were trying to undermine the position of Campbell-Bannerman.

Lord Rosebery figured in this dispute. Ostensibly he was no longer an active member of the party, but he still retained a few ties. He was head of the Midlothian Liberal Association, the Liberal Eighty Club and, most prominently, of the Scottish Liberal Association. His return to public life the previous autumn to espouse the British cause in South Africa had made him the leading Liberal imperialist in Britain. Since he continued to make speeches on this theme in the winter months, growing suspicions of his intentions within the party were inevitable.

Neither Campbell-Bannerman nor Gladstone intervened openly in the developing quarrel in Scotland, but Campbell-Bannerman was very concerned about the attitude Rosebery

31 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Jan. 21, 1900.
32 Ibid.
33 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41018, Channing to HG, Jan. 14, 1900.
34 Rosebery Papers, Box 23, Grey to Rosebery, Jan. 9, 1900.
would take. In spite of momentary twinges of alarm, he re-
mained fairly optimistic. On January 17, he recounted to
Gladstone his discussions with Rosebery when he had visited
the Scottish peer at Dahomey in November. Then Rosebery had
seemed to listen with sympathy to his story of the difficulties
in controlling a divided party. A few days later he wrote
that Rosebery would have to act decisively at the next meeting
of the Executive of the Association if a serious clash was
to be avoided. "Comes he with a sword or with an olive
branch? ... I suspect that the message on high will be
peaceful." Rosebery had just resigned his presidency of
the Eighty Club, and Campbell-Bannerman speculated that he
might also resign from the presidency of the Scottish Liberal
Association. The following month, Rosebery did resign from
the Scottish Liberal Association and from the Midlothian
group: "I now resume absolute independence, unfettered even
by the slight bonds of ... office." Lord Kimberley suc-
cceeded Rosebery as leader of the Eighty Club and Campbell-
Bannerman himself became president of the Scottish Liberal

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35 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Jan. 17, 1900.
36 Ibid., Jan. 21, 1900.
37 Rosebery Papers, Box 24, Haldane to Rosebery, Jan. 17, 1900.
38 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45098, C-B to HG, Jan. 21, 1900.
39 The Liberal Magazine: 1900, VIII, 126.
The latter office was a largely formal, but prominent, post. Campbell-Bannerman's election was an indication of his growing control of the regular party organization. Rosebery's resignations were another indication of his dislike of being involved in the rough and tumble of party politics. It was this distaste for an essential part of the political process that goes a long way to explaining his ultimate failure in British political life.

While Rosebery's resignation momentarily had a calming effect on the Scottish Liberals, it did not seriously weaken the position of the imperialists in the Scottish party. Two leading imperialists still held key positions in the group: Thomas Carmichael was Chairman of the Executive and Munro-Ferguson was Scottish Whip. As Campbell-Bannerman noted, they could continue to "pull strings" for Rosebery.

Rosebery's resignations aroused a degree of public interest that he found distasteful. He saw them as the delayed but logical conclusion to his resignation of the party leadership in 1896. Consistent with this feeling, he refused an invitation from Gladstone in March to meet

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40 C-B was the obvious successor. He was the most prominent Scotsman in the party after Rosebery, as well as the most acceptable person to all factions.


42 HG Papers, Add. Ms. 45987, C-B to HG, Jan. 21, 1900.

43 Hamilton Papers, Add. Ms. 48611, Rosebery to Hamilton, March 6, 1900.
some newly adopted Liberal parliamentary candidates. In his view, merely to meet them would be "a definite step in the direction of committal," that is active party involvement. He was not acting very consistently. While he refused to play an active party role he continued to make public speeches on issues relating to the war—the most important political issue of the day. Hence he remained all too clearly in the public limelight. His standing in the party decreased as his public reputation increased.

As far as his increased public standing went, to a certain extent he was moving into a political vacuum. The prestige of the Government—always excepting Chamberlain—was weakened by the early military defeats; even when the tide of war turned, the credit went to the generals and not the government. The Liberal party offered no realistic alternative to the Salisbury administration because of its divisions. But here was Rosebery—a former prime minister and seemingly divorced from both parties—urging "national unity in a series of elegantly phrased and wildly applauded speeches."

During the first six months of 1900 there was a spate of discussion in the press and among politically minded elements in society about the possibility of reconstructing the government on a broader, possibly non-party, basis.

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44 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45986, Rosebery to HG, March 22, 1900.

45 James, p. 415.
Since the rank and file of the Unionist majority never wavered in their loyalty to the Government, such talk had no substance. It does afford, however, some understanding of Rosebery's public position, since he and Chamberlain were frequently mentioned as leading possibilities for a new cabinet. In January, Bryce wrote to Campbell-Bannerman that he had heard rumors of Rosebery being asked to join a possible coalition government. Later in the spring, the Fortnightly Review had an article entitled "Lord Rosebery and a National Cabinet." The anonymous author said that the Salisbury government—with the exception of Chamberlain—was a "singular disappointment," a Liberal government was impossible, and only Chamberlain and Rosebery offered hope for the future.

Rosebery was certainly aware of this development. After dining with him early in February, his close friend, Hamilton, recorded in his diary:

R. again commented on the curious position of affairs at this moment. There are absolutely no available "outs," no men to form an alternative administrations; for while Campbell-Bannerman & most of the Front Opposition men would have very small followings in the country, those that remained, such as E. Grey & Asquith (plus Rosebery himself), would be followed but would not have the requisite numbers to make a government.

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46 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41211, Bryce to C-B, Jan. 12, 1900.
47 "Lord Rosebery and a National Cabinet" Fortnightly Review, LXVII (June 1, 1900), 1070.
48 Hamilton Diaries, Add. MS. 48676, Feb. 4, 1900.
With Rosebery insisting that he had retired from party politics, but continuing to speak out on the issue most responsible for dividing the party, it was not surprising that the regular leadership were bewildered by him and somewhat suspicious of him. Hamilton recognized the problem:

What he cannot or will not realize is that he cannot, without being unfair to others, have power without some responsibility. If he wants to retire wholly from politics, then he must not go about making speeches. If he looks to lead again, he must act a little with those who will have to serve him.49

There is no question that Rosebery was gradually alienating himself from the party leaders by his behavior. It was quite probable that up to this point most Liberals would have welcomed him back with a sigh of relief. In spite of his personal quirks which made him a difficult colleague, he had abilities which would be a definite asset to the party. Harcourt and Morley aside, most Liberals like Campbell-Bannerman were amiably disposed towards him. But in the opening months of the war there was a definite rift between Rosebery and the party leaders. In mid-March, Hamilton visited Spencer at Althorp and the conversation naturally turned to politics. Hamilton noted that Spencer said nothing disagreeable about Rosebery and even admitted that Rosebery had strengthened his position in the country. He was more prominent than any other Liberal. "But within the Liberal party and its leaders it was different. In their view R.

49Ibid., March 4, 1900.
has done much harm to their prospects." He was a loner and never consulted anyone. "He would probably attain his object in the long run; but it would be at the expense of his old colleagues . . . ."50

Rosebery was ignoring the reality of the Liberal split. The party leaders could not forget it. By identifying himself so strongly with one faction in the party, Rosebery was making it difficult for Spencer and the others--such as Campbell-Bannerman--to reach some accommodation with him that would not be regarded as a surrender. An accommodation was not ruled out absolutely but it was certainly becoming more and more difficult.

Even Asquith was despondent over Rosebery's behavior, Hamilton had also visited Asquith in mid-March:

Asquith is I am sure loyal to him & intends to be loyal; but I can see that his loyalty is strained. He said nothing unkind or disagreeable; but thought it a thousand pities that R. would never consult anybody before he spoke in public. The result was that he constantly said the wrong thing or something that was misunderstood. In fact R. never hardly did or said anything without being obliged to make some explanation subsequently about his action or his words.51

Rosebery's behavior certainly benefitted Campbell-Bannerman in one respect. With Rosebery standing so aloof there was little disposition for the other imperialists to challenge Campbell-Bannerman's position or permit differences to lead to an open split. Differences did continue to exist.

50Ibid., March 18, 1900.
51Ibid., March 11, 1900.
With the country caught up in the feverish excitement of the war this was inevitable. As late as May, Gladstone noted that the war fever was unabated. The pro-Boers and the imperialists were constantly repeating their views publically, thus perpetuating their differences. Spencer rather plaintively mooted the possibility that the Liberals might make fewer speeches.

Under the circumstances, Campbell-Bannerman's relations with most of the imperialists remained fairly friendly. Haldane was the exception. He admitted to Hamilton that "he is working his hardest, above ground and under ground for Rosebery, and is confident that all will come right in the long run." Given the growing doubts about Rosebery among the leadership this was not a course that would endear Haldane to Campbell-Bannerman. Moreover, Haldane wanted the party recast on imperialist lines. He admitted that this would lessen the distinction between the two major parties, but there would still be enough differences on social questions. It was precisely the similarities between the more extreme Liberal imperialists and the Unionists that Campbell-Bannerman found so disturbing.

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52 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, May 30, 1900.
53 Ibid., Add. MS. 41,229, Spencer to C-B, March 26, 1900.
54 Hamilton Diary, Add. MS. 48676, April 8, 1900.
55 Ibid.
56 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, April 25, 1900.
But Haldane was not as prominent as Asquith or even Grey. And these two, while not changing their views on the war, gave Campbell-Bannerman fewer difficulties in this period. The situation could not be called ideal, especially with Grey who was more outspoken an imperialist than Asquith. None the less, Campbell-Bannerman continued to regard Asquith as his chief colleague in the Commons. Asquith often spoke in his place in the Commons when he was absent. There were a number of such absences that spring as Campbell-Bannerman was in poor health. When he came down with laryngitis on the eve of the annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation in March, he accepted Gladstone's proposal that Asquith replace him as the main speaker.

Late in February, Asquith, addressing a dinner meeting of the Eighty Club at the Randolph Hotel in Oxford, expressed sentiments about the party which were virtually identical with those stated by Campbell-Bannerman a year earlier in his inaugural address. He admitted that the party was passing through a most difficult period. He noted that the Liberals had always been a loose knit party tolerating different views but---

subject always to the overmastering claims of the obligations of mutual loyalty and the exigencies of common action . . . . Those differences, serious as they are, are not of such a character to affect

57Ibid., March 25, 1900.
58C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, March 26, 1900.
in any way the possibility of harmonious co-operation in the future.\textsuperscript{59}

Asquith may have been overly optimistic. Even the most loosely knit party probably could not tolerate for long passionate differences of the type now dividing the Liberals. But optimism was a trait he shared with Campbell-Bannerman.

As it turned out, Asquith was unable to speak at the National Liberal Federation because of legal engagements. After considering several possibilities, Gladstone finally turned to Grey.\textsuperscript{60} Given the state of the party at the moment, the meeting passed off remarkably well. There was an occasional outburst of dissent—most notably from two prominent pro-Boers, F.A. Channing and David Lloyd George.\textsuperscript{61} But Grey's speech was well received.\textsuperscript{62} He paid tribute to Campbell-Bannerman, praising his leadership which had helped keep differences within the party to a minimum. Grey went on to insist that the party was less disunited than most people supposed. The heart of the speech concerned the question of the settlement that the British should impose on the Boers after the war. Grey believed that annexation of the two republics followed by reconciliation of the two white races and self-government within the empire were the only possible

\textsuperscript{59}Eighty Club Pamphlets: 1900, #5, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{60}C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, March 26, 1900.
\textsuperscript{61}Liberal Pamphlets: 1900, #1.
\textsuperscript{62}C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, March 29, 1900.
solutions. This was roughly the same solution that Campbell-Bannerman was moving towards. Campbell-Bannerman wrote Bryce that there were some points in the speech that he could criticize "but on the whole I am content." Grey wrote to Rosebery after the meeting:

I am very glad that job is over & I think without making C.B.'s position more difficult. There was a great row at the Federation the day before I spoke, but having blown off their steam, they were the more easily reconciled to a comparatively peaceful evening.

Even the lesser known imperialists were showing little inclination to challenge Campbell-Bannerman's position. Sir Robert Perks, M.P., a devoted Roseberyite, arranged a dinner in May at the National Liberal Club to give new parliamentary candidates and other rising young Liberals an opportunity to meet their leader. In April, however, under Perks' auspices, a new Liberal group was organized which called itself the Imperial Liberal Council. It was intended to show the public that not all Liberals were pro-Boers. The most prominent imperialists refused to join it. Asquith had earlier warned against any formal organizations which would accentuate party

63 Liberal Pamphlets: 1900, #3, pp. 3-5.
64 Spender, C-B, I, 278. The real problem concerned the nature of the transitional regime that should be established, what role the controversial Milner would play in that regime, and what treatment should be meted out to the Boers who had opposed the British.
65 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41211, C-B to Bryce, March 31, 1900.
66 Rosebery Papers, Box 23, Grey to Rosebery, April 1, 1900.
67 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, April 19, 1900.
68 Mills, p. 182.
He and Grey refused invitations to preside at a dinner meeting of the group. Agreeing with Asquith, E.T. Cook, the imperialist editor of the leading Liberal newspaper, The Daily News, refused to let the paper give its blessing to the new group. Immediately after the group was formed with Perks as vice president, Perks wrote to Rosebery that the presidency had been left vacant, presumably a hint to Rosebery that he was the obvious candidate. If so, Rosebery did not accept the offer. In the end the presidency went to Lord Brassey, a former colonial governor. With the leading imperialists refusing to join it, the effectiveness of the new group was very limited. Still it was an indication of the continued seriousness of the party divisions.

As already noted, Campbell-Bannerman sided with the imperialists on the question of the future of the two Boer republics. Early in the war he had concluded that annexation to the empire was the only possible outcome of the struggle. He accepted this even before Asquith did. It was only logical

69 Eighty Club Pamphlets: 1900, #5, p. 16.
70 Rosebery Papers, Box 39, Perks to Rosebery, May 28, 1900.
71 Mills, p. 183.
72 Rosebery Papers, Box 39, Perks to Rosebery, April 18, 1900.
73 Mills, p. 182.
74 Spender, C.B., II, 252, 278.
75 Jenkins, p. 121.
that the pro-Boers, on the other hand, disliked the idea. An unjust war would culminate in an even greater injustice: two small states would be deprived of their independence. By May 1900, the British controlled most of the Orange Free State and were about to annex it. The Liberals could no longer avoid a public declaration of their party attitude. A May meeting of the shadow cabinet failed to resolve the issue. The main opponents to annexation were Bryce and Reid. But Gladstone believed that the others saw no alternative to annexation. The difficulty with the pro-Boer position was that it ignored the reality of the situation. Some decision had to be announced. As Campbell-Bannerman put it, "There is no longer room for vague philosophizing such as we thought would suffice, it is aye or no." And to reject annexation was practically impossible. It was highly unlikely that any future Liberal government would be permitted to reverse the Unionist action. Campbell-Bannerman received a pro-Boer delegation of backbenchers on May 28 and was slightly encouraged by the meeting. Although they still disliked the idea, he thought he detected signs of reluctant acceptance.

On June 7, in a major address at Glasgow, Campbell-Bannerman publically committed the party to the principle of annexation. Presumably in an attempt to soften the blow for

76 Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43543, HG to Ripon, May 24, 1900.
77 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, June 1, 1900.
78 Ibid., May 28, 1900.
the pro-Boers, he denounced the prime minister, Lord Salisbury, for a recent statement which implied that a harsh postwar regime would be set over the Boers and that they could expect few, if any, rights under this regime. Any settlement, Campbell-Bannerman declared, would have to be based on liberal principles, which meant a reconciliation of the two white races to be accomplished mainly through the earliest possible granting of self-government.79

Most of the pro-Boers fell reluctantly into line. Morley spoke for many of them when he gloomily acquiesced in a letter published on June 12;

I have throughout regarded the war and annexation as practically one transaction. That chapter is virtually closed. The thing is done. The evil blunder is consummated.80

The imperialists were naturally more enthusiastic. Haldane wrote to Campbell-Bannerman from Paris praising the speech for its "directness" and for being a "line of policy based on the facts... I am sure that many besides myself will appreciate the skillful way in which you have cleared a path."81

On this important issue then, Campbell-Bannerman agreed with the imperialists. But any closeness that might be engendered by agreement on a particular issue like this was always jeopardized by the effects of the continuous infighting

79Spender, C-B, I, 281-84.
80Liberal Magazine: 1900, VIII, 260-81.
81C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41218, Haldane to C-B, June 9, 1900.
between the two wings of the party. Campbell-Bannerman found it almost impossible to prevent outbursts by one wing that would offend the others. Such outbursts were frequent enough. In February, for example, a backbencher moved for a fresh inquiry into the Jameson raid. This thinly veiled attack on Chamberlain and his South African policy outraged Fowler and Grey who walked out of the house in protest before the division. As his biographer notes, many evenings in the Commons Capbell-Bannerman "sat helplessly while the right and left wings of his party hammered each other to a delighted audience of Ministerialists."

Campbell-Bannerman tried to keep these differences within bounds and to steer a middle course between the two wings. This middle way was chosen partly by the necessity of leading a divided party, but partly out of principle. As he put it, "I have been anti-Joe, but never pro-Kruger." The result was a tendency to compromise and to straddle many issues which often exasperated one or both wings of the party.

The pitfalls he faced were perfectly illustrated by an episode in July which not only gravely weakened his relations with the imperialists but momentarily placed the question of his continued leadership in doubt. On July 25, the Commons were discussing the Colonial Office, always a potentially dangerous subject for the Liberals. In the middle of the

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82 Hansard, LXXIX (1900), 599.
83 Spender, C-B, I, 276.
84 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, June 1, 1900.
debate Sir Wilfred Lawson moved an amendment criticizing Chamberlain's policy in South Africa. In intemperate language, Lawson described it as the policy of the "freebooter, the filibuster, the burglar and the Boxer." With these remarks the battle was on. Lawson was supported by Lloyd George, Reid, and Labouchere, while the imperialists came to the defense of the Government. Campbell-Bannerman was caught between this crossfire. He declared he would not support the amendment because of the extremist views of its supporters. On the other hand, he could not vote against it because this would mean approval of the Government's policy. He declared that he would abstain.

It was the via media once again. This time it only made matters worse. Goaded by the Lawson amendment Grey announced that he could not follow Campbell-Bannerman in abstaining. He would vote against. In turn, Bryce decided to vote for the amendment. When the division occurred the Liberals split into three approximately equal groups, one group voting for the amendment, another abstaining, while Grey led a third which voted for the Government. The latter group included

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85*Hansard, LXXXVI (1900), 1174.*
86*Ibid., cols. 1172-1263.*
87*Ibid., cols. 1231-32.*
88*Ibid., col. 1251.*
89*Ibid., col. 1254.*
two whips, McArthur and Munro-Ferguson. It looked as if the last fragile ties uniting the party had snapped.

Ripon wrote to Sidney Buxton after the division, "The Liberal Party is very clearly dead, I see no use in denying its decease." Buxton replied that it was only another manifestation of the differences which had existed since the war began. Morley agreed with Ripon. In a letter to Harcourt, he criticized Campbell-Bannerman for not foreseeing the possible pitfalls in a debate on colonial policy. Morley sympathized with the amendment but he was also a party man and believed that more effective leadership might have prevented Lawson from giving such an opening to the imperialists. Harcourt had more sympathy for Campbell-Bannerman and asserted that it was their duty to rally around him at this critical moment. Indeed, the event determined him to play a more active political role.

Following this debate, there were persistent rumors that Campbell-Bannerman was so depressed by what happened that he was considering resigning his position. His official biographer denies this, saying that very early in his tenure of office, Campbell-Bannerman had decided that resignation

90 Ibid., cols. 1257-1263
91 Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43543, Ripon to Buxton, July 27, 1900.
92 Ibid., Buxton to Ripon, July 28, 1900.
93 Harcourt Papers, Morley to Harcourt, July 26 & 28, 1900.
94 Ibid., Harcourt to Morley, July 27, 1900.
95 Ibid., Harcourt to Spencer, Aug. 18, 1900.
would be a dereliction of his duty to the party that had chosen him. This may have been his view over the long run, but there is strong evidence that he was upset by the outcome of the debate and that he momentarily considered resigning. Morley wrote to Harcourt that both Gladstone and John Sinclair, Campbell-Bannerman's secretary and close confidant, were under the impression that Campbell-Bannerman was considering resignation. Haldane wrote to Rosebery that he, Asquith and Grey also believed that Campbell-Bannerman might resign. If he was considering resignation, he made no decision before he departed for his annual trip to Marienbad a few days later. By the time he returned a general election was in the offing which made any thought of resignation impossible.

But in the days immediately after the debate, the imperialists were assessing their future course on the assumption that resignation was possible. Grey seems to have been the most disgusted by Campbell-Bannerman's behavior. At any rate he was firmly opposed to any patchwork formula that might plaster over the party splits. Haldane

96 Spender, I, 287.
97 Harcourt Papers, Morley to Harcourt, July 26, 1900.
98 Rosebery Papers, Box 24, Haldane to Rosebery, July 25, 1900. Grey wrote the same thing to Rosebery the next day. (Box 23).
99 Spender, C-B, I, 287.
100 Rosebery Papers, Box 23, Grey to Rosebery, July 30, 1900.
believed that it would be impossible for the entire party to agree on a successor to Campbell-Bannerman. The party would simply dissolve into its factions, and he assumed that Asquith would take over the leadership of the imperialists and any others in the Commons who would follow him. He asked Rosebery to return to accept the overall leadership of their group, with Asquith and Grey as his chief lieutenants in the Commons. He admitted that it would not be a large group at first but believed that it would grow while the pro-Boer faction dwindled. "We have the machinery & the Whips & the future. This means that we grow and become the party."  

Among the whips, Haldane included Gladstone as well as McArthur and Munro-Fergusson. He told Rosebery that Gladstone had urged Campbell-Bannerman to vote against the amendment, that is with Grey. A letter from Harcourt to his son makes the same assertion, and the letter was written after a conversation with Campbell-Bannerman. There is no doubt that relations between Campbell-Bannerman and Gladstone were strained by the episode. Gladstone's letters written in August tend to support Harcourt's opinion. In several letters, Gladstone was very critical of his chief. Part of the irritation was due to the fact that Gladstone was convinced that a general election was near but Campbell-Bannerman

101 Ibid., Box 24, Haldane to Rosebery, July 25, 1900.
102 Ibid.
103 Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Lewis Harcourt, July 29, 1900.
was not convinced and refused to return from Marienbad. But the overall impression left by his letters is that there was more to his irritation than this.104

One indication of Gladstone's feelings was that he now make a determined effort to pressure Rosebery into returning to the party to play a more active role. He wrote Campbell-Bannerman that Rosebery's return would mean that the Liberals could run candidates for an extra 20 or so seats that they planned to leave uncontested.105 Gladstone let Campbell-Bannerman know what he was doing and told him that he assumed that Rosebery would work in harness with Campbell-Bannerman and Lord Kimberley.106 Thus, he implicitly denied that Rosebery's return at this juncture would be a challenge to Campbell-Bannerman. But, if Gladstone really believed that Rosebery would make a crucial difference for the Liberals in an election, it is hard to see how Rosebery could have been prevented from becoming the real leader of the party. At the very least, his return at this moment could only imply that Campbell-Bannerman had been found wanting.

None the less, Gladstone persisted in his attempts to snare Rosebery. Nor was he alone. Grey and Haldane wanted

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105 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Aug. 21, 1900.
106 Ibid.
Asquith did as well; he visited Rosebery late in August to see if the prospects were favorable. They were not. Asquith told Gladstone that Rosebery was very reluctant to act and warned Gladstone not to pressure Campbell-Bannerman to make an overture to Rosebery since the latter regarded Campbell-Bannerman as "discredited & moribund."

Rosebery was convinced that his return at this point would only split the party even more. He told Hamilton, he would not come forward as a political leader, unless the circumstances were very extraordinary, or unless he received the most distinct & emphatic recall from a sufficient number of people or representatives thereof, to form a party.

Given these requirements for any return, Rosebery's refusal was correct. The time was not propitious. Haldane had admitted that a Rosebery-led group would only comprise a segment of the party. True, he had optimistically assumed that the group would grow. But, only several weeks before the colonial debate Perks had reported to Rosebery that both Haldane and Fowler feared that the imperialists were not making as much headway in the country as they had hoped.

107Rosebery Papers, Box 23, Grey to Rosebery, July 26, 1900; Box 24, Haldane to Rosebery, July 25, 1900.
109Hamilton Diary, Add. MS. 48676, July 26, 1900.
110Ibid.
111Rosebery Papers, Box 24, Haldane to Rosebery, July 25, 1900.
112Ibid., Box 39, Perks to Rosebery, July 9, 1900.
Rosebery also knew that Bryce believed that a return by Rosebery at this moment would be the final blow for the party. And Bryce's view was undoubtedly shared by others. 

With Rosebery refusing to come forward, there could be no challenge to Campbell-Bannerman's position. Unquestionably, however, Campbell-Bannerman's reputation among his colleagues had suffered and, more specifically, his relations with the imperialists had been weakened. Yet, there was one small consolation for Campbell-Bannerman in this episode. Several backbenchers assured him that their vote for the amendment was directed mainly against Grey and implied no dissatisfaction with Campbell-Bannerman. In a typical expression of these views, Thomas Lough wrote,

No one has a higher sense of your sacrifice & labours for the party than I have. But I voted against the war at the beginning & I desire to do so at the end. I hope you will not attach any serious meaning to the incidents of today, but stick to those of us who mean to stick to you. 

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113 Ibid., Box 44, Wemyss Reid to Rosebery, Aug. 1, 1900.

114 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41222, Thomas Lough to C-B, July 25, 1900.
CHAPTER V

As early as the spring of 1900, there had been talk of a general election. Parliament had been elected in 1895 and still had two years to run. But there were obvious advantages to the Unionists in an early general election at a moment when British arms were victorious and their political opponents badly divided on the most important issue of the day. Chamberlain was the main advocate of a "khaki" election.¹ By June, prophecies of an early election were so numerous that the editor of the Liberal Magazine denounced the idea in a special editorial in that month's issue.²

Campbell-Bannerman was reluctant to believe that the Unionists would call for an election in circumstance which would enable them to benefit from the patriotism stirred up by the war.³ Hence he departed as usual for Marienbad in August. There he remained for several weeks. Not until September 12 did he admit that Gladstone was right about a probable election.⁴ He left for home on September 18, the same day that Parliament was officially dissolved. The

¹Garvin, III, 578, 582-83.
²Liberal Magazine: 1900, VIII, 216-17.
³Spender, C-B, I, 286.
⁴HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Sept. 12, 1900.
elections were scheduled to begin on September 28 and to continue for the next fortnight.

Circumstances for the Liberals could hardly have been worse. Perks visited the party headquarters on Parliament Street and then informed Rosebery of his impressions. "They don't take a hopeful view—few candidates, evidently little money, divided counsels, no leader." The Unionists were determined to make the war the main issue of the election in order to gain the maximum benefits from it. Liberals were accused of being unpatriotic and the British voters told that a Liberal victory would benefit the Boers. Chamberlain claimed that Liberal opposition had lengthened the war. No distinction was made between the imperialists and other Liberals. Chamberlain was contemptuous of Rosebery and had little use for his supporters. The Unionist slogan was, "Every vote given to a Liberal was a vote given to the Boers." In one case, these tactics were used against a Liberal candidate who had actually fought in the field against the Boers. The Westminster Gazette pointed out that at least two thirds of the party consistently supported the war, but such Liberal protests were unavailing.

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5Rosebery Papers, Box 39, Perks to Rosebery, Sept. 15,1900.
7Hansard, LXXXVI, 1199.
8Liberal Magazine: 1900, VIII, 515-19.
9Ibid., p. 519.
Unionist tactics did one thing for the Liberals. They united the party as nothing else could have done at this point. Denunciation of the Unionists came from all quarters. Asquith was particularly scathing in his remarks. Even Rosebery spoke out. He had originally intended to remain silent. Now he published a letter addressed to one of the Liberal candidates which strongly attacked the Government. Nor was this a momentary gesture on Rosebery's part. Two months later when the new parliament assembled, he again criticized the Unionists for attacking the Liberals as unpatriotic and singled out the attack on Campbell-Bannerman by his opponent at Stirling as a specific example. The original intention of the party leaders had been for everyone to fight an independent campaign. As Campbell-Bannerman told Gladstone, "to take my chance of harmony." As it was, they achieved a surprising degree of harmony. The election manifesto of Campbell-Bannerman pleased many imperialists as well as Gladstone. The moderately imperialist organ, The Westminster Gazette, was full of praise not only for this manifesto but for Harcourt's as well. There were

11Jenkins, p. 120.
12James, p. 417.
13Hansard, LXXXVIII, 38-41.
14HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Sept. 12, 1900.
15C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41211, C-B to Bryce, Sept. 23, 1900.
16The Westminster Gazette, Sept. 22, 1900, p. 1. This praise was not surprising as both men stressed their devotion to the empire in their manifestos.
There were some difficulties. Bryce and Morley complained about particular statements made by Asquith. The Imperial Liberal Council recommended its own list of candidates, all imperialists. This implied proscription of the non-imperialists was roundly condemned even by many of those recommended.

But the really surprising aspect of the election, as Asquith saw it, was the degree of co-operation between the various sections of the party, the pro-Boer Lloyd George made the same point to Gladstone, and the Westminster Gazette was encouraged to hope that the cooperation might be the beginning of a party revival.

However, this could not change the fact that the party was fighting the election under adverse conditions, and the resulting Unionist victory was not surprising. The Unionists won 402 seats and the Liberals took 186. For the first time since 1832 the party did not capture a majority of the Scottish seats. The Unionists had a majority of 130 seats at the dissolution. This was now increased by four. Yet the Liberals did surprisingly well, given the circumstances.

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18 Rosebery Papers, Box 44, Wemyss Reid to Rosebery, Sept. 19, 1900.
20 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Nov. 5, 1900.
21 Liberal Magazine: 1900, VIII, 508-14.
22 Ibid., p. 511.
The Unionists polled 2,428,492 votes, while the Liberals received 2,105,518 votes, a difference of only some 300,000.

It was, as Gladstone had hoped, "a good second." The results could be seen as a partial vindication of the imperialists. Some extreme pro-Boers like Stanhope and Lawson lost their seats. Campbell-Bannerman's majority and that of the more outspoken Bryce fell. Asquith increased his. The losses in Scotland were unquestionably the result of the party's ambiguous attitude on the war. Even Bryce had noted the strong "jingo" sentiment in the north. But, if the imperialists were strengthened it was not decisively. None of the leading Liberals not identified with the imperialists actually lost their seats. And Rosebery pointed out to Fowler that the one imperialist candidate that Rosebery had backed publicly had lost by a wide margin.

Perhaps the best indication that the imperialists had been slightly strengthened by the election came from Gladstone. The Chief Whip decided that Campbell-Bannerman's middle of the road policy was no longer tenable. The party leader must give a definite lead even if this meant identification with

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23 Ibid.
24 Spender, C-B, I, 291.
26 Jenkins, p. 120.
27 James, p. 419.
28 Mallet, p. 178.
one section. Early in November, Gladstone sent a long letter of advice to Campbell-Bannerman on the course he should follow in the coming months. Gladstone stated that the strongest wish of party members was for unity, and he implied that the best way to achieve this was to work more closely with the imperialists:

The clear wish of the vast majority of Liberals is that you should have the active co-operation of Rosebery for general party purposes. Is this not possible now that the air has been cleared by the election? It is pretty clear to me that a crisis must be faced when Parliament meets. The crucial point is the appointment of Milner to administer the annexed Republics on a Crown Colony basis. Probably that form of Government for some time will have to be so strongly supported by military force that it will be scarcely distinguishable from military Government. I believe that the great majority of the party would accept this if Campbell-Bannerman supported it. Rosebery, if disposed to come in at all, would come in on it. Grey would cheerfully accent it. I know Asquith would. If Harcourt declined it, he would have very little support so formidable is the wish for party unity and loyalty . . . . To vote against Milner of course means disruption.29

Gladstone regarded the election as a vote of confidence in the South African policy of the Government which the Liberals could not ignore.30

Campbell-Bannerman was less sanguine about the possibility of unity. He forwarded the letter to Ripon for his

29 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41215, HG to C-B, Nov. 5, 1900.
30 Ibid.
comments "because your opinions are those with which I most fully sympathize," and added that "Herbert G. has been 'got at', or he wd. not write as he does." In a letter to Harcourt he wrote,

I greatly fear that the effect of the election will be not to heal sores but to open them wider. I have sent to the Press an letter in denunciation of the Perks manifesto, which carries mischievous audacity beyond toleration, but I think the manifesto is a happy incident as shewing quiet Liberals through the country something of the spirit of the men we have to deal with. I have no doubt there will be any quality of subterranean working until Parliament meets, and we must be prepared to meet it.32

The three figures, Rosebery, Harcourt and Milner, mentioned by Gladstone were the main figures affecting Campbell-Bannerman's relations with the imperialists. But they were not the only ones as the above letter indicates. Campbell-Bannerman denounced the manifesto of the Imperial Liberal Council because it's proscription of non-imperialists carried dissent beyond the limits he would tolerate.33 His denunciation was generally applauded. Both The Westminster Gazette and The Daily News agreed with him.34 And the latter paper, edited by Cook, was the leading imperialist organ in

31Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43,517, C-B to Ripon, Nov. 7, 1900.
32Harcourt Papers, C-B to Harcourt, Oct. 21, 1900.
33Spender, C-B, I, 296.
the party. However, while regretting the tactics of the council, The Daily News did believe that the council was correct in trying to erase the pro-Boer image of the party.35

Another action of Campbell-Bannerman at this time was to accept the resignation of Munro-Fergusson as the Scottish Whip. Feeling that Campbell-Bannerman believed that he was using his position to further the interests of the imperialists in the party, Munro-Fergusson had wanted to resign earlier. Early in September, in a very cold and formal letter he asked to be relieved of his post on the day parliament was dissolved.36 Campbell-Bannerman wrote a soothing reply which persuaded Munro-Fergusson to remain until the elections were over.37 He even suggested a possible successor, John Sinclair.38 This was the person Campbell-Bannerman selected.39 Well-known in Scotland, Sinclair was a loyal confidante of Campbell-Bannerman and had been acting as his private secretary.40 The appointment strengthened Campbell-Bannerman's grip on the Scottish Liberals and meant additional support in the Whips's Office presided over by Gladstone. This was a timely move as

36C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,222, Munro-Fergusson to C-B, Sept. 12, 1900.
37Ibid., Sept. 22, 1900.
38Ibid., Nov. 1, 1900.
39HG Papers, Add. MS. 45,987, C-B to HG, Nov. 3, 1900.
40Spender, C-B, I. 299-300.
relations between Campbell-Bannerman and Gladstone were still strained. Gladstone did not believe that Campbell-Bannerman was leading the party as effectively as he might and indicated this to MacArthur and Morley.\footnote{HG Papers, Add. MS. 46, 023, MacArthur to HG, Oct. 13, 1900. Harcourt Papers, Morley to Harcourt, Oct. 13, 1900.} Gladstone's attitude stemmed partly from lack of contact.\footnote{C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41, 215, HG to C-B, Nov. 5, 1900.} Campbell-Bannerman's long sojourn in Marienbad had been followed by the hectic weeks of campaigning. There was also Gladstone's belief that a greater effort should be made to conciliate the imperialists, giving rise to complaints in some circles that the Whips' office was drawing too close to the imperialists.\footnote{C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41, 222, Labouchere to C-B, Oct. 22, 1900.} Campbell-Bannerman shared this feeling as indicated by his remark that Gladstone had been "got at."\footnote{Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43, 517, C-B to Ripon, Nov. 7, 1900.} Sinclair's appointment helped redress this situation.

If Campbell-Bannerman had not found Gladstone's memorandum of November 5 entirely to his taste, he could not ignore the cogency of some of Gladstone's arguments, especially as regards Rosebery. There was an increased demand in the party for unity at the top and for Rosebery's play of a more active role. Lord Tweedmouth suggested that Campbell-Bannerman meet privately with Rosebery and "thrash out a plan and a policy which you could jointly put forward..."
& which would have the effect of uniting a scattered flock which sorely wants to come together."\(^{45}\) Ripon forwarded a similar suggestion.\(^{46}\)

Rosebery was also being pressured to return. Both Haldane and Fowler appealed to him.\(^{47}\) Perks calculated that 142 M.P.s would probably support his leadership, with 33 actively opposing and 7 doubtful.\(^{48}\) Hamilton wrote a letter to The Times, signed "Spectator," in which he asserted that Rosebery's return was essential.\(^{49}\) The Westminster Gazette and The Daily News demanded that Rosebery play a more active role.\(^{50}\)

Rosebery was reluctant. He told Haldane that he could see no general call for his return and that he thought he could play a more valuable role as an independent.\(^{51}\) Few shared this view. Previous to the election Wemyss Reid had warned him that his continued aloofness would be regarded

\(^{45}\)C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41213, Tweedmouth to C-B, Nov. 7, 1900.

\(^{46}\)Ibid., Add. MS. 41,214, Ripon to C-B, Nov. 9, 1900.

\(^{47}\)James, p. 419.

\(^{48}\)Rosebery Papers, Box 39, Perks to Rosebery, Oct. 19, 1900. The figures should be treated with caution and are only used to indicate the pressure being exerted on Rosebery.

\(^{49}\)Hamilton Diary, Add. MS. 48,677, Nov. 6, 1900.


\(^{51}\)James, p. 419.
as a dereliction of duty. Rosebery's last minute decision—made without consulting anyone—to speak out in the election did not improve matters. Asquith wrote Gladstone:

Rosebery has not improved his position. He was afraid to plunge, yet not resolute enough to hold his determination to keep aloof. So he just dipped one foot in the stream, & . . . has managed to procure by his solitary act of intervention a personal rebuff.

Perks wrote him rather pointedly, "No cause has triumphed unless in a man." Others, not his followers, were expressing similar views. Kimberley wrote to Ripon, "I do not admire the attitude of a man, who bitterly condemns the Gov't from his armchair, and will not take an active part in political warfare." Campbell-Bannerman fully shared these feelings:

Things cannot go on as they are. So long as R. is hanging on our flank, with his myrmidons busy, there can be no peace. He is running the Party & himself at the same time: he must either join in or openly vanish. Can he join in?

I have to speak next week & must refer to this. I am disposed to say we shall all be glad to see him back working for the common cause, (which he ran away from--this more politely): but it must not be any sectional party that he works with, but the old party with the old principles, adopted of course to new events & conditions.

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52 Rosebery Papers, Box 44, Wemyss Reid to Rosebery, July 11, 1900.
54 Rosebery Papers, Box 39, Perks to Rosebery, Nov. 3, 1900.
55 Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43,527, Kimberley to Ripon, Sept. 27, 1900.
56 Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43,517, C-B to Ripon, Nov. 7, 1900.
Campbell-Bannerman informed his colleagues of his intentions. Gladstone was pleased. Others, expressed some reservations. Kimberley thought that Rosebery, if he was to return, would have to satisfy the party on his views on South Africa and domestic questions. Ripon had "no intention of buying a pig in a poke." If Rosebery did return under conditions satisfactory to everyone, Kimberley was prepared to relinquish his position as Liberal leader in the upper house to Rosebery, but neither Campbell-Bannerman nor Spencer, Kimberley's chief lieutenant, favored this suggestion.

Not overly enthusiastic about approaching Rosebery, the party leaders were aware such an approach would create problems with Harcourt and Morley. They might leave the party, warned Spencer: "One works for himself & not the party, the other two do work for the party & in any reconciliation this cannot be over looked." At his point Harcourt was preparing to play a more active role since he was concerned about the influence of the "Perksites." He decided to strengthen the

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57 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,216, HG to C-B, Nov. 13, 1900.
58 Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43,527, Kimberley to Ripon, Nov. 15, 1900.
59 Ibid., Add. MS. 43,543, Ripon to S. Buxton, Nov. 15, 1900.
60 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,229, Spencer to C-B, Nov. 12, 1900.
61 Ibid., Add. MS. 41,221, Kimberley to C-B, Nov. (28?), 1900.
62 Ibid., Add. MS. 41,229, Spencer to C-B, Nov. 4, 1900.
63 Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Spencer, Oct. 17, 1900.
position of the regular leadership by backing them with whatever influence he still had in the party. He made clear his declaration of faith and purpose in a letter to Kimberley.  

Alarmed by the talk of an approach to Rosebery, Harcourt informed Asquith that if Rosebery returned he would publish Rosebery's letter of 1895, in which Rosebery had announced his refusal to work with Harcourt again. This was an alarming threat since it would have rekindled old quarrels and ended whatever chance existed at this point of healing the divisions in the party. Asquith told Harcourt he would do a grave dis-service to the party if he carried out his threat. Campbell-Bannerman also deprecated the proposal: "The great object is to keep together; but if we have to split it shd be on some obvious public point." Spencer visited Harcourt at Malwood to try to persuade him not to publish. He was unable to get an explicit promise, but Harcourt did agree to wait until Rosebery outlined his views and policies before he took any action.

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67 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,210, Asquith to C-B, Nov. 20, 1900.
68 Harcourt Papers, C-B to Harcourt, Nov. 18, 1900.
69 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,229, Spencer to C-B, Nov. 23, 1900.
Harcourt was overly alarmed about the possibility of Rosebery returning. Kimberley told Ripon that neither he nor Campbell-Bannerman expected a favorable response to Campbell-Bannerman's invitation. Nor did Asquith. He told Campbell-Bannerman that "I am not (entre nous) very sanguine as to the effect of any overture to R. at the present time and under existing conditions." But he agreed that the appeal was necessary, at least it would clear the air and "if we are to have a strong & effectual opposition, he is, sooner or later, a necessary ingredient." Asquith's pessimism was equalled by Campbell-Bannerman's lack of enthusiasm for his task. He wrote to Gladstone just before his departure to make his speech, "I am off to Dundee for my function. As to R. I will hold the door wide open, but I shan't ring the dinner bell or hang out a flag of distress."

Campbell-Bannerman delivered his speech on November 15. He attacked the electioneering methods of the Unionists and denounced them for saying that the Liberals were indifferent to the empire. "It was to a great extent Liberal enterprise

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70 Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43,527, Kimberley to Ripon, Nov. 15, 1900.
71 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,210, Asquith to C-B, Nov. 13, 1900.
72 Ibid.
73 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45,987, C-B to HG, Nov. 15, 1900.
that founded the Empire; and it certainly was Liberal policy that had preserved it." He went on to defend the Manchester school\textsuperscript{74} and their doctrines of free trade, love of peace, non-intervention, and self-government in the colonies so that they might "become nations on their own account in co-operation with the people of this country from which they sprang." He praised the men who advocated these views and kept the British from turning "a love of Empire and pride of Empire running into a greed of Empire." It was these men whom the Imperial Liberal Council would drum out of the party. Here, by a slip of the tongue, he used the term "Liberal Unionist Council."

He singled out Harcourt and Morley as specific individuals whom the council would exclude from the party and whose services the party could not afford to lose. Only after these significant preliminaries did Campbell-Bannerman speak to Rosebery:

\begin{quote}
Lord Rosebery, to our great regret, went out of public life four years ago . . . . The desire of the Liberal Party ever since has been that he should return . . . . The door has always been open for Lord Rosebery's return. We should welcome him and rejoice to see him standing among his old comrades and taking his share in carrying on, as he so well can, . . . Of one thing you may be quite sure—that Lord Rosebery will never come back to put himself at the head of a section. I know nothing of his disposition or intentions; but I am certain of this—that if he enters public life again, he will come back to the whole party, the whole Liberal Party with which he was associated before, to the party with all its healthful shades of opinion, which after all, are only indications of a healthy intelligence.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{74}i.e. the Little England group.

\textsuperscript{75}Spender, \textit{C-B}, I, 303-305.
The speech did not please the imperialists very much. The invitation to Rosebery, when placed within the context of the entire speech and with its warnings about sectional leadership, seemed to lack warmth. Wemyss Reid wrote to Rosebery that opinions differed as to whether Campbell-Bannerman was serious or not. This was not the only thing that displeased the imperialists. Grey felt that the speech was a general condemnation of all the imperialists in the party and protested to Campbell-Bannerman. Campbell-Bannerman had to send an elaborate explanation assuring Grey that it was the exclusionist tactics of the council and not the opinions of the Liberal imperialists that he was criticizing. Haldane thought that Campbell-Bannerman was much too concerned about the council and over-estimated its potential power. Consequently, Campbell-Bannerman was "showing himself a weak & foolish man." The slip of the tongue implying Liberal Unionist tendencies to the council, and possibly other imperialists, horrified MacArthur.

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76 Rosebery Papers, Box 44, Wemyss Reid to Rosebery, Nov. 22, 1900.
77 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,218, Grey to C-B, Nov. 17, 1900.
78 Ibid., C-B to Grey, Nov. 19, 1900.
79 Rosebery Papers, Box 24, Haldane to Rosebery, Nov. 17, 1900.
80 HG Papers, Add. MS. 46,023, MacArthur to HG, Nov. 17, 1900.
Gladstone was also disturbed and Campbell-Bannerman had Sinclair write Gladstone an explanation of what happened. He admitted that some criticism—even resentment—of the slip was natural but thought that the furor was out of proportion to the offense.81

Under these circumstances, it was not surprising that Rosebery remained silent. Nor did Campbell-Bannerman publicly repeat the invitation in a more positive fashion that might have eliminated the doubts about his sincerity. He did renew the invitation privately when the occasion arose, but never directly to Rosebery. Late in November Campbell-Bannerman granted an interview to Leicester Harmsworth, newspaperman, M.P., and supporter of Rosebery. According to the account of the meeting that Campbell-Bannerman dictated to his secretary, Harmsworth was dissatisfied with the "passive position" Campbell-Bannerman took at Dundee. Campbell-Bannerman then stated that he personally felt very friendly to Rosebery and would welcome him back. Harmsworth asked Campbell-Bannerman if he would support a call for Rosebery to return as leader of the party. Campbell-Bannerman said that he lacked the authority to deal with that question. He also noted that the position of leader in both houses was filled and that he did not believe that Rosebery would want to oust Kimberley. For the moment Rosebery "should join his friends & the miserable leadership question wd settle

81Ibid., Add. MS. 45987, Sinclair to HG, Nov. 20, 1900.
itself." Asked if he would serve in a Rosebery cabinet, Campbell-Bannerman replied, "Certainly, with the greatest pleasure; provided I was willing to take office at all, & provided R.'s policy was sound."82

Early in December, Campbell-Bannerman had a brief chat with Perks at a political dinner and again stressed his desire to see Rosebery return.83 In January 1901, Haldane attempted to bring Rosebery and Campbell-Bannerman together to reach a modus vivendi but nothing came of it.84 The two men did not actually meet until early in February when Campbell-Bannerman

82 C-B Papers, Add. Ms. 41,218, Untitled Memorandum, Nov. 22, 1900. It should be remembered that C-B was merely Liberal leader in the Commons while Kimberley was Liberal leader in the Lords. Neither was designated as leader of the entire party. This latter position had been vacant since Rosebery had retired in 1896. Rosebery had held the position because he had been prime minister in the last Liberal government which resigned in 1895. Any person accepted as leader of the party would become prime minister when the Liberals next took office. (Conversely, if the position was vacant when the Liberals took office, the person requested by the monarch to form a cabinet would, if successful, automatically inherit the post of party leader.) The question of who should fill this position was hardly an urgent one for the party in 1900 but it was a topic much discussed since the designation of a party leader would indicate the future direction of the party. Since this might imply the triumph of one faction over the other, C-B deprecated any discussion of this question.

83 Rosebery Papers, Box 39, Perks to Rosebery, Dec. 5, 1900.

84 James, p. 420. The mere fact that it was Haldane acting as go-between probably accounted for this failure. C-B distrusted Haldane whom he viewed as a man who delighted in intrigue. In his conversation and correspondence, he often referred to Haldane as "Master Haldane", using the term, Master, as a term of opprobrium. Grey also earned the title on occasion. Asquith did not.
dined with Rosebery at the latter's residence in Berkeley Square. Informing Ripon of this encounter, Campbell-Bannerman said, "I should say he is not steadfast & immoveable, but unmoveable without being steadfast. I of course made no proposals & used no arguments, ..." There the matter rested for the moment.

The Dundee speech did not please the imperialists nor evoke any response from Rosebery. It did please Harcourt and Morley. Harcourt responded by letting it be known that he would be happy to rejoin the shadow cabinet. He was prepared to submit a written request to Campbell-Bannerman on the matter. Under the circumstances this was an embarrassing offer. Campbell-Bannerman's relations with the imperialists at this moment were already sufficiently strained. The return of Harcourt would only be an additional aggravation. It was decided to deline the offer. Tweedmouth was selected as emissary to explain this decision as tactfully as possible. Tweedmouth reported that Harcourt received the news "fairly quietly." In a letter to Campbell-Bannerman, Harcourt was obviously disappointed but emphasized his "sincere regard" for Campbell-Bannerman and his determination to continue

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85 Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43,517, C-B to Ripon, Feb. 9, 1901.
86 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,229, Spencer to C-B, Nov. 23, 1900.
87 Ibid., Add. MS. 41231, Tweedmouth to C-B, Dec. 5, 1900.
88 Ibid.
Campbell-Bannerman responded in a very warm fashion, saying that he would "always be delighted to have your most valuable co-operation and to consult with you in the most friendly & loyal spirit."

Campbell-Bannerman was full of praise for the way that Tweedmouth had handled the problem, and no doubt the warmth of his response to Harcourt indicated a sense of relief. But there was more to it than this. He and Harcourt were closer than they had been. In contrast with his lack of contact with Rosebery, Campbell-Bannerman and Harcourt wrote one another rather frequently in this period. Harcourt's letter to his son indicated that Campbell-Bannerman spoke very openly to Harcourt on his difficulties with the various party factions. Two years after his election to the leadership, Campbell-Bannerman's relations with his two predecessors had been completely reversed.

Harcourt also won Campbell-Bannerman's gratitude at this point by stating that he could not support any attack on Milner. This controversial person was again a major problem for Campbell-Bannerman. Although Boer guerillas were increasingly active in South Africa, to most Britons the war was virtually over. Hence, the nature of the peace settlement

90 Harcourt Papers, C-B to Harcourt, Dec. 7, 1900.
91 Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43,517, C-B to Ripon, Dec. 9, 1900.
and postwar policies took on a new urgency in the autumn of 1900. Gladstone, in his letter of November 5, had noted the likelihood of some sort of non-representative regime similar to a crown colony government being imposed on the Boers once the period of military occupation was ended. In all probability Milner would head this regime. He urged Campbell-Bannerman not to sanction an attack on Milner by the pro-Boers as this would mean "disruption."92

Campbell-Bannerman was very critical of this advice. In a letter to Ripon, he called Milner "the worst possible man for his position," and attacked the "Milner worship" by the "Balliol set" of Asquith, Grey and Haldane. Moreover, he did not think the party should be content with seconding the Government's policies in South Africa.93 Ripon replied that the party could hardly accept the idea of a crown colony regime—even apart from their views on the man proposed to head it. But he warned Campbell-Bannerman that any attack on this proposed regime should avoid touching on Milner even by implication.94 An attack on Milner was patently too dangerous. Ripon advocated the granting of some form of representative government as quickly as possible after the interval of military occupation.95

92C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,215, HG to C-B, Nov. 5, 1900.

93Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43,517, C-B to Ripon, Nov. 7, 1900.

94C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,224, Ripon to C-B, Nov. 9, 1900.

95Wolf, II, 258.
Campbell-Bannerman was left in no doubt that the imperialist wing had very strong feelings on Milner. Asquith wrote him that "an attack on Milner wd. split the party into fragments." Grey said the same thing. This left Campbell-Bannerman no choice. He had to prevent any attacks from being made during the upcoming session of parliament in December. He wrote to Harcourt:

A motion for the recall or condemnation of M. would raise a storm; and it would be most desirable that any of our friends who think of making it should be persuaded to accept some sort of suspension of judgement instead of actual condemnation.

It was impossible to silence all the back benchers, especially after the announcement of Milner's appointment as administrator of the two Boer states early in the month. But, aside from a few isolated criticisms, the party ranks held firm and a major and suicidal attack was avoided. A contributory factor in this matter was a conciliatory speech by Chamberlain which indicated that the Government would move as quickly as possible to the stage where the Boers might have some voice in their regime: this pleased the Liberal front bench so much that they agreed to withdraw the amendment they were sponsoring. The amendment had called for a promise on the lines of Chamberlain's statement being

96 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,210, Asquith to C-B, Nov. 20, 1900.
97 Ibid., Add. MS. 41,218, Grey to C-B, Nov. 17, 1900.
98 Harcourt Papers, C-B to Harcourt, Nov. 18, 1900.
incorporated in an official proclamation to the Boers.  

A few days later, on December 10, the Liberals united enthusiastically in attacking Chamberlain for his connections with family firms in Birmingham who had been awarded official contracts for various supplies, mostly military. The implication was that the presence of one member of the family in the Government had been a factor in awarding the contracts. Pro-Boers and imperialists joined in the attack: Lloyd George and Haldane played conspicuous roles. Their speeches and the sight of Asquith, Bryce, Campbell-Bannerman, Haldane and Harcourt marching off to vote in the same lobby on an issue generated by the war probably did something to help strengthen—momentarily at least—the frayed bonds of party solidarity.

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99 *Hansard*, LXXXVIII, 303.


CHAPTER VI

"How the war drags on!" wrote Kimberley in a New Year's day letter to Campbell-Bannerman.\(^1\) The Boer armies had been defeated in the open field but guerrilla activities were increasing and peace in South Africa was still a long way off. This was ominous for the Liberal party, since there was little hope of ending the party divisions while the war continued. During 1901 the impact of the war almost destroyed what unity the party still possessed, and Campbell-Bannerman's relations with the imperialists plummeted to a new low.

A comparison of the views of Campbell-Bannerman and the imperialists on ending the war and on essentials of a postwar settlement indicates that they were not too dissimilar. Campbell-Bannerman advocated giving to the Boers increasing control of their own affairs as quickly as possible along with the reconciliation of the two white races. But this was to be within an imperial framework, a qualification which meant that Campbell-Bannerman accepted the need to establish a clear military superiority over the Boers and to make it clear to them that their future could only lie within the empire.\(^2\) The imperialists would not differ on this last

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\(^1\)C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,221, Kimberley to C-B, Jan. 1, 1901.

point, of course. Nor did they disagree with the general principles behind Campbell-Bannerman's other views. In February in the House of Commons, Campbell-Bannerman sharply attacked the Government for implying, in a statement by the prime minister, Lord Salisbury, that it might be at least a generation before the Boers were granted self-government. ³ None of the imperialists disagreed with the view.

The divergences arose over the problem of translating principles into practice: how to end the guerrilla warfare, the fate of the Cape Colony rebels ⁴, and the role of Milner. In late February negotiations between the Boer leader, General Botha, and Kitchner had failed. The Boers still hoped to retain some degree of independence and also were put off by Chamberlain and Milner's refusal to grant amnesty to the Cape rebels. The imperialists had no doubts about the policies or abilities of Milner. Grey wrote Haldane that he had told Milner:

we were quite firm on four points. 1) the prosecution of the war to a successful end. 2) Annexation. 3) An interval of direct Imperial administration leading eventually to Representative Govt when the new territories had filled up & settled down. 4) that he was to be the Administrator. ⁵

³ Hansard, LXXXIX, 94.

⁴ The Cape Colony rebels were British subjects of Boer descent who had sided with their fellow Boers from the two republics. Hence they had committed treason.

⁵ Haldane Papers, Add. MS. 5905, Grey to Haldane, May 28, 1901.
The retention of Milner was the stumbling block for many Liberals. But point one, by the late spring of 1901, was also causing grave problems for the party.

Grey's comments to Milner had been made in person when Milner arrived in England for a vacation late in May. He received a rapturous official welcome, was awarded a peerage, and in the festivities Grey and Fowler were very prominent.\(^6\) In a speech given at a banquet attended by Fowler, Milner attacked those not giving full support to the war effort.\(^7\) It was not surprising that many Liberals felt compelled to speak out at this point. Morley denounced Milner as an "imitation Bismarck" and others followed suit.\(^8\) Campbell-Bannerman's hope of avoiding a public party controversy over Milner collapsed.

It was at this moment that another and a more abrasive issue came to the forefront. This was the tragic situation which had developed in the internment camps in South Africa. It was the direct result of the tactics pursued in suppressing the Boer guerrillas in South Africa. The British solution was to destroy the Boer farms and homesteads. The Boer farmers comprised the irregular guerrilla forces, farming at one moment, and the next, armed with their personal weapons, becoming formidable snipers. By destroying the farms, the British

\(^6\)Jenkins, p. 122.
\(^7\)Spender, I, 332-33.
\(^8\)Ibid., p. 333.
were destroying the enemy's base of operations. It also had the effect of destroying their livelihood leaving them utterly dependent on British relief for survival. Huge camps were created when the population was interned and supplied with the necessities of life. By the end of 1901 the camps contained a population of over 100,000 persons.\textsuperscript{9}

Many Liberals had grave doubts about the camps from the start. Campbell-Bannerman had spoken out against the burning of farms and the deporting of women and children as early as December, 1900.\textsuperscript{10} During the next few months, it became apparent that the internment policy was being badly handled by the military and that there were grave shortages of foodstuffs, medical supplies, and other necessities. The military were very reluctant to release any information. The truth, when it became known, was appalling. In fourteen months time, one fifth of the inmates had died from inadequate care. The mortality rate among the children was especially high.\textsuperscript{11}

Much of the information about the true situation in the camps was revealed by a Miss Emily Hobhouse who had gone to South Africa as a delegate from a private British group raising relief funds for the internees.\textsuperscript{12} She returned to England on the same ship that brought back Milner. Shortly

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{9}Ensor, pp. 345-46.
  \item \textsuperscript{10}Hansard, LXXXVIII, 117.
  \item \textsuperscript{11}Ensor, p. 346.
  \item \textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
thereafter she had a two hour interview with Campbell-Bannerman. The facts that she gave him horrified the Liberal leader.\(^{13}\)

A few days later, June 14, Campbell-Bannerman was a guest at a dinner given by the National Refor Union at the Holborn Restaurant in London. In a response to a toast, the Liberal leader gave voice to his feelings: referring to those who disliked his opposition to a harsh settlement or unconditional surrender, he asked them to consider what this policy meant in practice:

> It was that now we had got the men we had been fighting against down, we should punish them as severely as possible, devastate their country, burn their homes, break up their very instruments of agriculture and destroy the machinery by which food was produced. It was that we should sweep—as the Spaniards did in Cuba; and how we denounced the Spaniards—the women and children into camps into which they were destitute of all the decencies and comforts and many of the necessaries of life, and in some of which the death-rate rose so high as 430 in the 1000 . . . . On the previous day I asked the leader of the House of Commons when the information would be afforded of which we were badly in need. My request was refused. Mr. Balfour treated us to a short disquisition on the nature of war. A phrase so often used was that 'war is war', but when one came to ask about it one was told that no war was going on, that it was not war. When was a war not a war? When it was carried on by methods of barbarism in South Africa.\(^{14}\)

This speech was destined to be the most controversial Campbell-Bannerman ever made. The phrase, "methods of barbarism" was regarded in many sections of British society as insulting to the army and national honor. The King's reaction was

\(^{13}\)Spender, I, 335

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 336.
typical. Edward VII asked the prime minister whether he should privately administer a royal rebuke to the Leader of the Opposition. Salisbury discouraged this idea, but for sometime after this incident, the King attempted to avoid meeting Campbell-Bannerman socially.  

What concerned the Liberal imperialists almost as much as the speech itself, was the setting in which it was delivered. Harcourt's son, Lewis, was instrumental in arranging the dinner. Chairman for the evening was the pro-Boer, Philip Stanhope, and Harcourt and Morley were among the chief guests. It was virtually a pro-Boer enclave. Morley speaking after Campbell-Bannerman, did his best to ensure that there would be a strong imperialist reaction:

I consider that this gathering is representative, . . . of all that is best, truest, most strenuous in the party . . . I cannot for one moment doubt that we are not to-night in any cross-current of Liberalism, . . . we are in the mainstream. After listening to the eloquent speech of Campbell-Bannerman . . . . I cannot doubt that now we know where the Liberal Opposition stands . . . Gentlemen, we have found it very difficult to persuade some of our friends that there is a difference between right and wrong; but there is a second great law of our moral being to which, I think, they are accessible, and that is that there is a relation between cause and effect. 

16Harcourt Papers, Lewis Harcourt to Harcourt, May 4, 1901.
17Spender, I, 335.
18Liberal Magazine: 1901-1902, IX, 320.
Imperialist reaction to the dinner was immediate. For the moment, Asquith's was relatively mild as far as Campbell-Bannerman was concerned since he regarded Morley as the leading offender. He wrote to Campbell-Bannerman the day after the dinner:

I have read--with more regret than surprise--the report of last night's dinner. Through no fault of yours, the proceedings were turned into an aggressive demonstration by one section of the party. J.M.'s 'impromptu', in particular being of the most challenging description.

I am very glad I was not there, and I shall do all that I can to discourage reprisals but I do not know with what success. It is a 'regrettable incident.'\(^9\)

Other imperialists were more angry with Campbell-Bannerman, however, as they felt that he had allied himself with the pro-Boers.\(^{20}\)

Campbell-Bannerman made no attempt to retract or explain away his words. He did attempt to make it clear that he did not mean to slander British soldiers, but this did not soften his views on the policy they had to carry out. He made this clear in a speech in the House of Commons three days after the dinner. He spoke on a motion by a pro-Boer, Lloyd George, to discuss Miss Hobhouse's report on the camps:

She brings no accusation, and I assume none of us would do so--at least speaking for myself, I never said a word that would imply cruelty or even indifference on the part of officers or men in the British army. It is the whole system that I consider--to use a word which I have already applied to it--

\(^{19}\)C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,210, Asquith to C-B, June 15, 1901.

\(^{20}\)Rosebery Papers, #45, Reid to Rosebery, June 16, 1901.
barbarous. There are no people in the world who feel that barbarity more than the unfortunate men whose duty it is to enforce that system.\footnote{Hansard, XCV, 599.}

The repetition of the word, barbarous, was bad enough. But Campbell-Bannerman's decision to vote for the motion—especially after Lloyd George's speech had included an attack on Milner\footnote{Ibid., 574.}—was too much for many imperialists. As Harcourt put it, Lloyd George was a "red rag" to the imperialists\footnote{Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Lewis Harcourt, June 18, 1901.} and now Campbell-Bannerman was siding with him. Haldane felt compelled to disassociate himself from the motion and rebuke Campbell-Bannerman.\footnote{Hansard, XCV, 604.} In the vote which followed about fifty Liberals abstained. Among them were Asquith, Grey and Haldane.\footnote{Jenkins, p. 124.}

After the debate there was little inclination by the imperialists to minimize the possible significance of Campbell-Bannerman's dinner speech. Rosebery wrote to J.A. Spender:

To me that banquet is a sinister event. There was nothing unforeseen & unexpected about it. C.B. knew exactly who he would meet and met them. Moreover, he made them a speech such as they might have made themselves. I do not see therefore how a schism can be avoided. Indeed I think it must have been in the minds of the organizers of the banquet to bring one about.\footnote{Harris, p. 107.}
Rosebery can hardly be criticized for taking this view since the pro-Boer Manchester Guardian shared it. The paper declared that Campbell-Bannerman had "thrown his weight more definitely than ever on the side of advanced Liberalism." 27

The imperialists could hardly remain silent, and it was Asquith who took upon himself the task of reaffirming the imperialist views. Appropriately enough, he did this at another political dinner, this time given by the South Essex Liberals at the Liverpool Station Hotel on June 20. He noted the views of the imperialists, shared with other Liberals, on the mistakes that the Government had made in South Africa. He agreed that major differences stemmed from their disagreement on who was primarily responsible for the war. And on this the imperialists could not alter their opinion:

We have never sought to make the holding of that view the test of political orthodoxy of our fellow Liberals, and I hope that we never shall. But that makes it all the more necessary to say . . . that we shall not recant it. 28

This was a significant speech. Although an imperialist Asquith had worked with Campbell-Bannerman to deprecate differences and preserve party unity. As his biographer notes, he had hitherto left it up to Grey, Haldane or Fowler to be the leading spokesmen for the imperialist M.P.s. 29 Now he was

27 The Manchester Guardian, June 19, 1901, p. 5.
28 Liberal Magazine: 1901-02, IX, 322.
29 Jenkins, p. 124.
siding emphatically with the imperialists and emerging as their leading spokesman. Rosebery recognized this:

What I do see is the long suffering Liberal imperialists have at last lost patience, and that they have, to my great delight, found a leader and a spokesman in Asquith.\(^{30}\)

Fowler agreed and congratulated Asquith on his "defence of the true Liberalism."\(^{31}\)

Others who still hoped to preserve some shred of party unity were dismayed by the Asquith speech. The Westminster Gazette regretted it even while admitting that the provocation had been great. The imperialists were warned, however, not to attack Campbell-Bannerman's position in the party as the party would never be able to agree on an alternative. The editorial ended with a warning to Campbell-Bannerman to be more careful himself.\(^{32}\)

Although the liberals were on a collision course, with lines hardening rapidly, a letter to Ripon indicates that Campbell-Bannerman for the moment remained in an embattled and exhilarated mood.\(^{33}\) Gladstone, impressed by Campbell-Bannerman's firmness, in a letter to his brother lamented that Asquith had joined the handful of dissidents--"about six irreconcilables," but he felt that most of the party was

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\(^{30}\) Rosebery Papers, #16, Rosebery to Munro-Fergusson, June 25, 1901.

\(^{31}\) Jenkins, p. 125.


\(^{33}\) Ripon Papers, Add. Ms. 43,517, Campbell-Bannerman to Ripon, June 22, 1901.
"staunch" and that if Campbell-Bannerman appealed to the whole party, the imperialists would go "down like ninepins—they have dished themselves . . . . You may bet your bottom dollar that I stand by C.B. right through this affair." This was a complete switch from his past role of urging Campbell-Bannerman to avoid a clash with the imperialists. A close friend of most of the leading imperialists and their families, he had been left in no doubt about their views:

I have had a long talk with Margot [Asquith]... I had a fiery half-hour with Ronald [Munro-Ferguson] last night. And a pretty still ten minutes with Grey at 2 a.m. this morning.

The imperialists now decided to hold another dinner to honor Asquith for his speech to the South Essex Liberals. It was to be held at the Hotel Cecil on July 19. When this became known, the Westminster Gazette commented sharply that the party would soon be dining itself out of existence. A group of forty M.P.s wrote a joint letter to Asquith stating that while they would be happy to give recognition to Asquith for his "eminent services to the party" they felt unable to attend the dinner because of its sectional implications. Tweedmouth warned Asquith that the dinner would only serve to emphasize the disunity of the party further.

34 Mallet, p. 182.
35 Ibid.
37 Asquith Papers, Box 10, Joint letter to Asquith, June 28, 1901.
38 HG Papers, Add. MS. 46,022, Tweedmouth to HG, June 27, 1901.
wrote on similar lines. Asquith himself wrote to Gladstone that he was not responsible for the idea of another dinner but it had been put to him in such a way that he could not refuse. He had agreed to it on the distinct understanding "that it was to be in no sense anti-C.B."  

Asquith also replied to the forty M.P.s in a very friendly fashion. He denied any desire to widen the breach in the party and hoped to use the occasion to emphasize that the imperialists, whatever their views on the war, had no intention of joining the Unionists. This eased the situation somewhat, but not entirely. The dinner was still scheduled and, despite Asquith's disclaimers, was still regarded as an imperialist move.

Speaking at Southhampton on July 2, Campbell-Bannerman admitted that the party was in a "critical position." He blamed this on the persistent schemes and efforts of a few men who, under the influence of some personal jealousy or antipathy of their own, are constantly and actively engaged in magnifying and embittering such differences in political opinion as exist.

In order to put an end to this, Campbell-Bannerman announced that he would appeal to the party in the House of Commons.

39 Asquith Papers, Box 10, Kimberley to Asquith, June 29, 1901.
40 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45,989, Asquith to HG, June 27,1901.
41 Asquith Papers, Box 10, Reply to Joint Letter, June 29, 1901.
42 Liberal Magazine: 1901-02, IX, 380.
43 Ibid.
Haldane, Grey and Munro-Ferguson were the "schemers" Campbell-Bannerman referred to. He had long believed that they were trying to undermine him and to exaggerate the differences in the party to serve this end, and that Haldane and Munro-Ferguson were active against him in the Scottish Liberal party.\footnote{Spender, I, 427.} As for Grey, even his friends admitted his tendency to exaggerate differences.\footnote{Asquith Papers, Box 10, Acland to Asquith, July 17, 1901.} Haldane's biographer does not deny the charges against him.\footnote{Summer, p. 427.} Campbell-Bannerman did not place Asquith in the same category as the other three. He believed that Grey and Haldane used Asquith. "Those gentry have made Asquith their tool in a great plot against me."\footnote{C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41226, C-B to William Robertson, July 13, 1901.}

Following the speech at Southhampton all Liberal M.P.s were summoned to a party meeting at the Reform Club on July 9. The summoning of a party meeting was a very unusual event--the last one had been for the election of Campbell-Bannerman. However, there had been talk among the rank and file of holding such a meeting ever since the announcement of the Asquith dinner.\footnote{Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43,527, Ripon to Kimberley, June 29, 1901.} Campbell-Bannerman explained this course to Ripon
I shall make my views as to the S. African situation, present & future, perfectly plain & ask their confidence on that basis: recognizing of course the right of independent opinion in everyone, but denouncing personal feuds and sectional organizations.

How anything I can say will leave us is another question: I hardly see how we can go on. The only hopeful thing is the great loyalty & good feeling with which the bulk of the party has behaved in the present trying circumstances. 49

When Gladstone informed Asquith of this proposed course, Asquith expressed his pleasure with it and said that he would do all he could "to keep the peace." Assured that the meeting would not result in ostracizing the imperialists, Asquith even felt that it would do more good than harm. 50

The meeting proceeded as planned. Campbell-Bannerman asked for a vote of confidence, speaking on the lines indicated to Ripon. He recognized that there were differences of opinion on the war but this was acceptable as the party was "a party of free speech and independent thought, of comprehensiveness and tolerance." However, he did caution against personal intrigues. 51 A resolution of confidence in him was then moved. 52 Harcourt gave enthusiastic support. 53 Then Asquith spoke, followed by Grey. Asquith praised Campbell-Bannerman's efforts as leader and gave the resolution his

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49 Ibid., Add. MS. 43,517, C-B to Ripon, July 6, 1901.
50 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45,989, Asquith to HG, July 5, 1901.
52 Ibid., p. 399.
53 Ibid., pp. 399-400.
"cordial support." He acknowledged that there were differences of opinion on the war that affected the party but deprecated the belief that personal jealousies and ambitions were involved. It should be possible to acknowledge these differences without imputing party disloyalty. Grey took a similar line to Asquith but went further and stated his belief that the meeting implied not only their vote of confidence in Campbell-Bannerman but gave the imperialists "a charter to express our opinions freely upon questions upon which we know that we differ, because nothing is more painful than to have misunderstandings." The resolution was then passed unanimously and the meeting thus concluded on the note that loyalty to Campbell-Bannerman and the party did not preclude members from differing openly on the most critical issue of the day.

The Westminster Gazette gave its cautious approval to the events of the meeting but warned that continuous emphasizing of differences did make common action more difficult. Perhaps influenced by this line of reasoning, Campbell-Bannerman decided to write to Asquith asking him to postpone his dinner to a later date. That way it would lose its sectional flavor and at the later date the whole party could join in honoring Asquith, "for nothing wd. give me greater pleasure than to

54 Ibid., pp. 400-02.
55 Ibid., pp. 402-04.
56 Ibid., p. 404.
pay you honour both for your own sake & account of your
services to the Party." Asquith replied that arrangements
were so far advanced that postponement would cause "enormous
inconveniences to people in all parts & countless expla-
nations & misunderstanding." He hoped---after the outcome
of the party meeting—that the dinner could be held without
arousing suspicions of "ulterior motives." He concluded by
expressing his gratitude for Campbell-Bannerman's kind
comments and his regret that he was unable to "carry out
your request."59

Campbell-Bannerman interpreted this as meaning that
Asquith personally wished to give up the dinner, but found
it impossible to do so.60 Hence he bore him no ill will
because of his refusal. A letter from Grey to Asquith, how­
ever, indicated that Asquith and others were annoyed by the
request.61 Another letter from Reid to Rosebery confirms
that some of the imperialists, if not Asquith, were indignant
over it.62

To the surprise of everyone, Rosebery now joined the
fray. Up to this pint the former Liberal prime minister had
not spoken out publically. He had followed the developing

58 Asquith Papers, Box 10, C-B to Asquith, July 10, 1901.
59 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,210, Asquith to C-B, July 10,
1901.
60 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,226, C-B to William Robertson,
July 13, 1901.
61 Asquith Papers, Bex 10, Grey to Asquith, July 12, 1901.
62 Rosebery Papers, Box 45, Reid to Rosebery, July 14,1901.
crisis very closely and commented on it in his letters. But, as late as July 9, he had told Hamilton he had no intention of involving himself. For this reason he had refused an invitation to the Asquith dinner, although he sent his blessing. He had also refused an invitation to address the annual luncheon meeting of the City Liberal Club scheduled the same day as the Asquith dinner.

Rosebery had been greatly shocked by the "methods of barbarism" speech. He felt that Campbell-Bannerman was siding with the pro-Boers and had handed the Unionists a weapon with which they could attack the Liberals. This was probably the major reason for his change of mind, although the timing of his intervention has led one writer on the subject to suggest that it may have involved some jealousy towards Asquith.

Without consulting anyone, he addressed a letter to the City Liberal Club on July 16. It was published the next day. Noting the "remarkable charter" by which the party had reunited on the basis of allegiance to Campbell-Bannerman coupled with the right of dissent on "the one vital issue before the country," he claimed his right to speak out. After

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63 Hamilton Diary, Add. Ms. 48,678, July 9, 1901.
64 Rosebery Papers, Box 16, Rosebery to Munro-Fergusson, June 28, 1901.
65 Jenkins, 128.
66 James, pp. 424-25.
67 Jenkins, p. 128.
affirming that he would "never voluntarily return" to party politics, he then proceeded to inform the party:

Morally, either the war is just or unjust. Either the methods are uncivilized or legitimate. If the war be unjust and its methods uncivilized . . . the war should be stopped at any cost. If the war be just, carried on by means which are necessary and lawful, it is our duty to support it with all our might in order to bring it to a prompt conclusion. These are supreme issues; none greater ever divided two hostile parties. How, then can one party agree to differ on them? Cavaliers and Roundheads might almost as well have combined on the basis of each maintaining their different opinions on the policy of Charles I.

While the party was still digesting this, Rosebery spoke out again. In spite of his earlier refusal, he did appear at the luncheon meeting of the City Liberal Club. The effect of this speech can only be compared to a shotgun blast: pellets flew in all directions. Again he insisted that it was impossible for the party to take a divided stand on the war. He balanced a few words of praise for Campbell-Bannerman's leadership with criticism of the ineffective committee which investigated the Jameson Raid. Campbell-Bannerman, of course, had been a member of the committee. So had Harcourt. Without naming him, he attacked Morley for claiming that anti-imperialism was in the mainstream of Liberalism. He criticized the clumsy handling of the negotiations prior to the war. Milner, of course, had been the main British negotiator. In discussing the party meeting of July 9, he denied that Disraeli's phrase,

68Liberal Magazine: 1901-02, IX, 415-17.
"organized hypocrisy" would be an accurate description of it. The denial was virtually an affirmation. He insisted that the party must start anew with a "clean slate as regards these cumbersome programs with which you were overloaded in the past." This was a bit vague, but a reference to the Liberal Unionists which followed shortly would seem to indicate that the clean slate applied to Irish Home Rule. In conclusion he said:

I must plough my furrow alone. That is my fate, agreeable or the reverse; but before I get to the end of that furrow it is possible that I may find myself not alone.69

Under the circumstance, Asquith's speech that same evening was something of an anti-climax. It was also very different in tone. Asquith stressed the underlying unity of the party, in spite of the war. In a conciliatory gesture, he linked up a program of domestic reform as advocated by the anti-imperialists.70

Irritation with Rosebery was almost unanimous in the party. The reaction of the pro-Boers and the center group—now much closer to the pro-Boers after "methods of barbarism"—was predictable. Gladstone was furious with the reference to "organized hypocrisy" and did not like the reference to Home Rule.71 The imperialists were also irritated. Grey

69 Ibid., 417-19.
70 Liberal Pamphlets: 1901, #11.
71 Rosebery Papers, Box 45, Reid to Rosebery, Aug. 1 and 24, 1901.
delivered a public rebuke in a speech at Peterborough: "The position of standing aside from party politics cannot last. It is true that lookers-on see most of the game. Yes, but they do not influence the result." He followed this with a letter regretting that Rosebery would not work more closely with the others. His and their views were the same, "we ought not, therefore, come into conflict but the situation needs delicate handling and for the present there is soreness." He implied that they felt that Rosebery had slighted Asquith at the very moment that Asquith had "saved the situation." Haldane made the same two points in another letter to Rosebery. He urged him to give a "word of encouragement" to Asquith. Asquith himself wrote to Rosebery: "Whatever comes and goes, our old & tried friendship rooted in such deep soil, can (as I hope and believe) never suffer any change." There is little doubt that Asquith was upset and depressed by Rosebery's actions coming on top of his differences with Campbell-Bannerman and others. Some weeks later, Wemyss Reid told Rosebery that Fowler thought that Rosebery should take the chair at one of Asquith's meetings. This "would put everything right."

72 Liberal Magazine: 1901-02, IX, 386.
73 Rosebery Papers, Box 23, Grey to Rosebery, July 20, 1901.
74 Ibid., Box 24, Haldane to Rosebery, July 22, 1901.
75 Ibid., Box 1, Asquith to Rosebery, July 22, 1901.
76 Ibid., Box 45, Reid to Rosebery, Aug. 13, 1901.
Regardless of the convictions of his fellow imperialists that he was hurting their cause by his remotness, Rosebery continued to remain aloof for the next few months. Even Hamilton, one of his closest friends, became critical.

I am beginning to think R. will now never occupy the position for which I believe he is destined by his brilliant talents. Something seems to be wanting.77

The rift between Rosebery and the other imperialists did not mean that the latter drew any closer to Campbell-Bannerman. Too much had happened for this to occur, in spite of the party meeting of July 9. The imperialists felt that Campbell-Bannerman had moved much closer to the pro-Boers by his "methods of barbarism" speech. Nor did his speeches during the autumn, although less provocative, differ in substance from the views he expressed in the earlier speech. Both Campbell-Bannerman and the imperialists seem to have made an effort to avoid saying anything that might be considered a personal challenge, but this was irrelevant, as he told Ripon late in October, since the differences on issues were so obvious.78 He would occasionally praise a speech by Asquith for its moderateness, but always to Ripon or Gladstone, never to Asquith himself. He had to admit that there was no longer any "frank co-operation" and he did not see how it could be renewed.79

77Hamilton Diary, Add. Ms. 48,678, July 17, 1901.
78Ripon Papers, Add. Ms. 43,517, C-B to Ripon, Oct. 30, 1901.
79Ibid.
As an indication of this growing rift, Grey and Haldane joined Perk's Liberal Imperial Council. Grey replaced Brassey as President. Haldane became one of the vice-presidents. Asquith did not go this far, but he accepted an honorary membership.

This was the situation in the party when it was announced late in autumn that Rosebery had agreed to address a Liberal meeting at Chesterfield in mid-December.
CHAPTER VII

The announcement that Rosebery was to make a speech on December 16 at Chesterfield set off a flurry of speculation in political circles. Harcourt, while observing that the speech would be a "fizzle," nonetheless urged Campbell-Bannerman not to leave the country at such a moment.1 Campbell-Bannerman wrote to Bryce of the "general fuss."2 When a storm knocked down the telegraph wires to Chesterfield, every effort was made to restore them in time.3 On the day of the speech, the Westminster Gazette parodied the mounting excitement in an article titled "Alice goes to Chesterfield."4

There were several reasons for this interest. A Rosebery speech always attracted attention; he had remained silent since his two explosive addresses of the previous summer, and the war, had now been dragging on for more than two years. The Government seemed unable to end it; a divided opposition offered no effective alternative. Now a former prime minister no longer tied to his party, was to speak out. Possibly he might offer a solution. The knowledge that Perks was chartering

2Ibid., Add. MS. 41,211, C-B to Bryce, Dec. 13, 1901.
a special train to take various notables to and from Chesterfield probably confirmed the belief that the speech was to be an important one.

On the evening of December 16, flanked by Asquith, Grey and Fowler, Rosebery spoke out. He attacked the Government for its bungling of the pre-war negotiations with the Boers and for its inability to end the war. He advocated effective prosecution of the war to "its natural end . . . a regular peace and a regular settlement--not unconditional surrender or interminable hunting down of an enemy proclaimed outlaws or rebels." In his plea for a negotiated settlement, he urged generous concessions on such issues as amnesty for rebels, financial aid to restore Boer farms, and full civil rights to all who took a "definite and drastic oath of allegiance." He would not assent to the cry--from pro-Boer circles--that Milner be recalled, but he did recommend in a pointed fashion that Kitchner handle the negotiations. On the question of the camps, he could not accept the charge of "methods of barbarism" but he did agree with the Derby Resolution which deplored the conditions in the camps and called for swift remedial action. Turning next to the domestic scene and the Liberal party he attacked those

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5 Rosebery Papers, Box 39, Perks to Rosebery, Nov. 30, 1901.

6 Passed at a meeting of the General Committee of the National Liberal Federation at Derby on Dec. 4, 1901.
men who sit still with the fly-blown phylacteries of obsolete policies bound around their fore­heads . . . the world had been marching and revolving, and . . . they must march and move with it too. I hope, therefore, that when you have to write on your clean slate, you will write on it a policy adapted to 1901 or 1902, and not a policy adapted to 1892 or 1885 . . . .

My advice is not to move much faster than the great mass of the people are prepared to go . . . . My last piece of advice to the party is that it should not disassociate itself, even indirectly, from the new sentiment of Empire which occupies the nation.  

The speech made a profound impression on most people. Grey spoke for the imperialists when he wrote Rosebery that he supported the proposals in the speech enthusiastically and that he and the other imperialists would do what they could to carry out these policies. 8 Bryce welcomed it and thought it offered a basis for party reunion. 9 The Daily News did not consider it a great speech, although it liked some of the proposals for a settlement. 10 Yet the paper felt compelled to discuss the speech for three successive daily issues. 11 The Westminster Gazette approved of most of the speech and commented that Rosebery "must be a leader and must be a Liberal." 12 Gladstone wrote to Campbell-Bannerman that he

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7 Liberal Magazine: 1901-02, IX, 648.
8 Rosebery Papers, Box 23, Grey to Rosebery, Dec. 17, 1901.
10 Daily News, Dec. 17, 1901, p. 6. The Daily News had changed owners in January 1901. The Liberal Imperialist editor, Cook, was dismissed and the paper adopted a pro-Boer line. Morley and Lloyd George were involved in the transaction.
11 Ibid., Dec. 17, 18, 19, 1901.
was not entirely pleased with the comments on domestic issues but thought that the portions dealing with South Africa "gives a basis for united action."\(^{13}\)

Campbell-Bannerman's feelings were mixed. He implied to Gladstone that the views on peace and war went very far and were not unreasonable, but that "all that Rosebery said about the clean slate . . . was pure claptrap."

It is not unfavorable to the chance of unity on the war and peace issue; but ominous of every horror in general politics, if it is meant seriously. However, we can talk this over.\(^ {14}\)

Harcourt reacted to the "clean slate" as strongly as Campbell-Bannerman:

> All the traditions, the pledges, and the faiths of the Liberal Party are to be wiped out . . . an insult to the whole past of the Liberal Party and a betrayal of its growth in the future.\(^ {15}\)

There was undoubtedly an element of personal animosity in this, but that was not the entire reason for this kind of reaction. Campbell-Bannerman and Harcourt were party men, Rosebery was not. To repudiate Irish Home Rule and the Newcastle program, not to mention the anti-imperialism of the "Little Englanders", was to strike at essential parts of the Liberal heritage, the central deposit of faith as it were.

\(^{13}\) C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,216, HG to C-B, Dec. 17, 1901.
\(^{14}\) HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Dec. 18, 1901.
\(^{15}\) Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Lewis Harcourt, Dec. 17, 1901.
In repudiating all this the party would lose its sense of identity. It could be argued that many of these issues were responsible for the deplorable state of the party. It could also be argued that it was the consciousness of a great heritage that kept alive a hope for the future and gave many Liberals an incentive to try to overcome their present difficulties.

Nor were Campbell-Bannerman and Harcourt alone in their views. Such party stalwarts as Spencer, Ripon, Bryce and Gladstone shared these reservations about the "clean slate." It is significant that Asquith also recognized the difficulties involved in a flat repudiation of Home Rule.

However, Rosebery's comments on the peace and war issue were strongly applauded. This was the most urgent issue before the country and there was a widespread belief that only a united party could work effectively for peace. There was strong pressure on Campbell-Bannerman to make an overture to Rosebery. Bryce supported it, hoping that co-operation on South Africa would make it possible to work out some accommodation on domestic policy. Gladstone wanted Campbell-Bannerman to express general agreement with Rosebery's views.

16 James, p. 432.


18 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45,989, Asquith to HG, Jan. 5, 1902.

19 Ibid., Add. MS. 46,019, Bryce to HG, Dec. 21, 1900.
on the war. Campbell-Bannerman resisted this proposal but agreed to the necessity of approaching Rosebery. Spencer was doubtful about Rosebery's willingness to work with the regular party leaders. But even Harcourt recognized that it must not appear that Campbell-Bannerman was the obstacle to any understanding.

How sincere Campbell-Bannerman was in making his overture is difficult to say. He was still convinced that Haldane, Grey and other imperialists were trying to overthrow him in favor of Rosebery or, possibly, Asquith. An overture to Rosebery, was bound to be viewed as a capitulation of some sort. Even if Campbell-Bannerman did not accept this view, his close associates did. When Kimberley, at this point, raised the possibility of his resigning as leader of the Liberal peers because of ill-health, both Ripon and Spencer refused to hear of it. lest there be a demand that Rosebery replace Kimberley. There was no guarantee that Rosebery would work closely with Campbell-Bannerman, an essential requirement of the position. They also opposed it because it would be viewed as a victory over Campbell-Bannerman by

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22 Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Morley, Dec. 27, 1901.
the imperialists and weaken his position in the party. Confronted with these arguments, Kimberley agreed to remain with Spencer as his deputy.

Campbell-Bannerman lunched with Rosebery at the latter's residence in Berkeley Square on December 23. There are two accounts of the discussion, one given by Campbell-Bannerman in letters to his associates, the other written by Rosebery immediately after the meeting was concluded. The accounts differ.

Writing to Bryce about the interview, Campbell-Bannerman said that he had stressed that there was no impediment on their side to working with Rosebery "except of course the one personal quarrel." To this Rosebery assented. Rosebery agreed that there "is little or nothing between us on the war."

Will he then co-operate and consult? Impossible; left the Liberal party five years ago; is not 'in communion with you,' in ecclesiastical phrase.

Ireland is of itself enough to keep him away; is opposed to H.R. in any form; ... I tackled him about the clean slate ... Explains he only meant to be done with N. [Newcastle] programme.

For good or evil there it is. The country does not know all this; thinks we are selfishly excluding a broadminded statesman. It may be very clever but it is diabolically unfair and mischievous.

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26 James, p. 434.
27 Harcourt and Rosebery.
28 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,211, C-B to Bryce, Dec. 25, 1901.
Rosebery's account agrees with some of these points, such as Home Rule and Newcastle. But he says nothing about an overture being made and spurned. He does say that Campbell-Bannerman was very nervous. It is just possible that this prevented Campbell-Bannerman from expressing himself very clearly and that Rosebery did not understand that a definite overture was being made. But this is only speculation. What is clear is that Campbell-Bannerman came away from the interview convinced that Rosebery was not willing to work with him and his associates. Even if Rosebery had been willing to work with Campbell-Bannerman, there was always the difficulty over Home Rule. Both accounts agree that Rosebery was not willing to compromise on this point.

Campbell-Bannerman sent his account to almost all of his associates. Gladstone's reaction was typical:

Ye Gods what a Man! Well let us see what 'the country' says . . . . His position is lamentable and it seems to me the height of selfishness.

The question that Campbell-Bannerman now faced was, what would the other imperialists do? One indication was already at hand. On December 24, Grey wrote to Gladstone that he believed that there were basic conflicts between Campbell-Bannerman and Rosebery on South Africa. Unless Campbell-Bannerman was prepared to adopt the policy set forth at

29 Crewe, p. 471.

30 C-B Papers, Add. Ms. 41216, HG to C-B, Dec. 27, 1901.
Chesterfield, Grey would no longer acknowledge Campbell-Bannerman's leadership.\(^3\) Campbell-Bannerman described the letter as "impertinent."\(^2\) Grey followed this with a letter directly to Campbell-Bannerman. It made the same points but Campbell-Bannerman found it more "reasonable" in tone.\(^3\) His reply to Grey stressed his view that there were no serious differences between himself and Rosebery on the issue of South Africa. He also informed Grey of the interview and Rosebery's refusal to co-operate, and he concluded with the hope that Grey would avoid a final breach.\(^3\) Grey agreed not to take any precipitate action.\(^3\)

Frey's reaction probably could have been predicted. The important figure was Asquith: there was no hope of averting a major split if Asquith broke away.\(^3\) Asquith had already informed Gladstone that he would be unable to attend a Liberal gathering in late January at Saint James Hall where Campbell-Bannerman was to speak.\(^3\) The implication of this refusal

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\(^3\)C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41216, Grey to HG (copy), Dec. 24, 1901.
\(^3\)HG Papers, Add. MS. 45987, C-B to HG, Dec. 31, 1901.
\(^3\)C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41218, Grey to C-B, Jan. 2, 1902; HG Papers, Add. MS. 45988, C-B to HG, Jan. 4, 1902.
\(^3\)C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41218, C-B to Grey, Jan. 4, 1902.
\(^3\)Ibid., Grey to C-B, Jan. 8, 1902.
\(^3\)HG Papers, Add. MS. 45988, C-B to HG, Jan. 6, 1902.
\(^3\)HG Papers, Add. MS. 45989, Asquith to HG, Dec. 28, 1902.
was not clear since Asquith was deeply immersed in family affairs at this time. His daughter was seriously ill.\(^{38}\)

Because of this Sinclair had been unable to arrange a meeting with Asquith. Sinclair had been instructed by Campbell-Bannerman to inform Asquith of the Rosebery interview and its result. Finally, on January 7, Campbell-Bannerman decided to write to Asquith and inform him of what had happened.\(^{39}\)

Asquith replied that Campbell-Bannerman's account of the interview did not seem to tally with what Rosebery had told his friends. He had not seen Rosebery but would do so shortly. "I need not say that I am most anxious that Rosebery should find & take his proper place in the party, & not outside it."\(^{40}\) This was hardly encouraging. But, a few days later Asquith reluctantly agreed, "for the sake of party unity," with Campbell-Bannerman's view that the party should offer the usual amendment to the address opening the session of Parliament that month. However, Asquith insisted that the amendment follow the draft that he and Rosebery had worked out. The proposed draft would support all measures necessary for concluding the war, but was critical of the Government

\(^{38}\)Ibid.

\(^{39}\)Asquith Papers, Box 10, C-B.to Asquith, Jan. 7, 1902.

\(^{40}\)C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41210, Asquith to C-B, Jan. 9, 1902.
on the issue of concessions for settlement which might induce the Boers to accept peace.\textsuperscript{41}

The disclosure that Asquith had consulted with Rosebery on the draft could hardly have pleased Campbell-Bannerman, but he went along with the proposal. The amendment finally offered echoed Asquith's draft.\textsuperscript{42} Liberals with pro-Boer sympathies, like Morley, disliked it intensely.\textsuperscript{43} Campbell-Bannerman accepted it in the hopes of getting the imperialists to vote with the party leaders.\textsuperscript{44} When the vote occurred, however, Asquith, Grey and Haldane abstained. Grey offered the excuse that the Government seemed to be accepting the Chesterfield proposals.\textsuperscript{45} Campbell-Bannerman was not convinced, believing they had been looking for any pretext to renege on their promise of support. However, his disappointment was tempered by his belief that their abstention had harmed them in the party.\textsuperscript{46}

Campbell-Bannerman may have believed that Rosebery was behind the abstention, something Rosebery, in writing to

\textsuperscript{41}\textit{Ibid.}, Asquith to C-B, Jan. 16, 1902.

\textsuperscript{42}\textit{Spender, C-B, II}, 23.

\textsuperscript{43}C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,223, Morley to C-B, Jan. 19, 1902.

\textsuperscript{44}\textit{Spender, II}, 23.

\textsuperscript{45}C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,218, Grey to C-B, Jan. 16, 1902.

\textsuperscript{46}Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43,518, C-B to Ripon, Jan. 24, 1902.
Gladstone, denied. The denial was sent to Gladstone, because the Chief Whip was now the recognized intermediary between the diverging groups in the party. Gladstone's correspondence in this period indicate that everyone relied on him to communicate his views. This was particularly necessary in Rosebery's case as relations between him and Campbell-Bannerman had reached the point of rupture. Stories had been appearing in the newspapers giving Campbell-Bannerman's version of the much discussed interview. Rosebery also heard that Campbell-Bannerman was informing his associates of the meeting. He expressed to Campbell-Bannerman his surprise that he would communicate to others "our private & confidential (and interrupted) chat." Campbell-Bannerman denied any responsibility for the newspaper accounts, but added that he had felt obligated to inform his colleagues "in the strictest confidence" of what happened at the interview. If Rosebery had not intended to make so definite a refusal to co-operate, "no one would be better pleased than I." Rosebery's reply was brief.

47 HG Papers, Add. MS. 45986, Rosebery to HG, Jan. 24, 1902.

48 Nobody admitted that they gave the story to the newspapers. There was some suspicion that it might have been one of the Harcourts. The Harcourt Papers contain two letters, one from Morley to Harcourt, dated December 25, and the other from Harcourt to his son, dated December 27, 1901 which give some support to this theory, but they are not conclusive.

49 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41,226, Rosebery to C-B, Jan. 13, 1902.

50 Ibid., C-B to Rosebery (copy), no date but probably either Jan. 13 or 14, 1902.
I have just found your letter on my return from Cowes. I gather from it that I completely misunderstood the character of our conversation.\textsuperscript{51}

There was no further correspondence between them until 1907.\textsuperscript{52}

The rupture was not publicized for the moment. But this could not long be delayed. On February 14, Rosebery spoke at Liverpool and again called for a clean slate and repudiation of Home Rule.\textsuperscript{53} Campbell-Bannerman replied to this in a speech at Leicester on February 19. He refused to repudiate Home Rule, although he admitted that the party might have to adopt a different policy from the past on the question of implementing it. Then he commented on Rosebery,

I do not know down to this moment of speaking whether Lord Rosebery speaks to me from the interior of our tabernacle or from some vantage point outside.\textsuperscript{54}

Rosebery's answer was written the next day and published on February 21.

Speaking pontifically within his "tabernacle" last night, he anathematized my declarations on the "clean slate" and Home Rule. It is obvious that our views on the war and its methods are not less discordant. I remain, therefore, outside his tabernacle, but now, I think, in solitude.

Let me add one word more at this moment of definite separation. No one appreciates more heartily than I do the honest and well-intentioned devotion of Sir Henry to the Liberal party, and what he conceives to be its interests. I only wish that I could have shared his labours and supported his policy.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., Rosebery to C-B, Jan. 14, 1902.
\textsuperscript{52}James, p. 436.
\textsuperscript{53}Liberal Pamphlets: 1902, #9, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{54}Liberal Magazine: 1902, X, 98-100.
\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., pp. 100-101.
The breach was now public. How the other imperialists would react remained to be seen. On February 23, Gladstone wrote to Campbell-Bannerman expressing his doubts that it would come to a formal split with the imperialist M.P.s. They might give some expression of support for Rosebery but would not leave the party. Should the worst occur he proposed that an appeal for support of the regular leadership should be made to the constituency organizations. Campbell-Bannerman agreed with this assessment; "they will remain and plot and sap." Confirmation that the imperialists would not leave came from Asquith. He wrote to Gladstone on February 24, that "I, for one, do not mean either to leave the party of my own accord, or to be driven out of it by others." He added that it was impossible to ignore what had happened and "we cannot have real political co-operation on such terms as these."

Three days later, the formation of a new Liberal imperialist organization was announced. This was the Liberal League. Rosebery was president and Asquith, Grey and Fowler were vice-presidents. Some of the other members included Perks, Haldane and Munro-Fergusson. The announcement stated that the members of the League had no intention of leaving

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56 C-B Papers, Add. Ms. 41216, HG to C-B, Feb. 23, 1902.
57 HG Papers, Add. Ms. 45988, C-B to HG, Feb. 24, 1902.
the party. The purpose of the new organization was to promote the policies advocated in the Chesterfield speech. Although the timing of the announcement seemed to imply that Asquith and the others had decided to announce their support for Rosebery after he had publicly broken with Campbell-Bannerman, this was not the case. The imperialists had been discussing the formation of the League since January. At most, the break between the two men only accelerated their plans. Final details had been worked out at a meeting on February 24 at Rosebery's residence in Berkeley Square.

Although the formation of the League created a stir, it also represented a partial defeat for the imperialists. Speaking in Glasgow on March 10, Rosebery implied that one purpose of the League was to prevent the imperialists from being "drummed out" of the party. It was an admission that they were in the minority. This was a very different situation from the opening months of the war when they believed that they could count on the support of the majority. Just after the Chesterfield speech Haldane had admitted to Milner that in recent months "wirepullers" had rallied much of the party

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60 Haldane Papers, Add. MS. 5905, Rosebery to Haldane, Jan. 6, 1902.

61 Rosebery Papers, Box 106, Memorandum, Feb. 24, 1902.

62 Liberal Magazine; 1902, X, 179.
behind the regular leadership. For Haldane to complain about "wirepullers" was ironic since Wemyss Reid was writing to Rosebery that even some of the imperialists disliked the continuous maneuverings of Haldane, Perks and Munro-Fergusson. After the formation of the League, Rosebery's intimate friend, Hamilton, noted that the League might have "quality" but that it lacked "quantity." The bulk of the party was not behind the leaders of the League. Gladstone's plans to appeal to the national party certainly implied a confidence that the appeal would win widespread support.

This did not ease the situation for Campbell-Bannerman. Although he belittled the importance of the League in a letter to Harcourt, its formation emphasized more emphatically the disarray in the party and made his task in the Commons more difficult. Asquith, the next ranking Liberal in the Commons, had identified himself with Rosebery within days after the latter's separation from Campbell-Bannerman. Asquith might inform his constituents in East Fife in a public letter that there was no intention of creating a party schism. Yet

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63 Haldane Papers, Add. Ms. 5905, Haldane to Milner, Dec. 12, 1901.
64 Rosebery Papers, Box 45, Wemyss Reid to Rosebery, Jan. 28, 1902.
66 Harcourt Papers, C-B to Harcourt, Feb. 27, 1902.
the letter was a strong defense of Rosebery's views. In these circumstances it was not surprising that consultations among the complete Front Bench were sometimes scanty. Late in April, Asquith angrily wrote to Gladstone:

I hear this evening from Harcourt (1) that it has been decided (by whom, or when, or how, he does not say) that the 2nd Reading of the Education Bill shall be met by a 'six months' amendment .... But I should like to know by whom "it has been decided." I can only say that neither I, nor Fowler, nor Grey, have had the slightest voice in the matter ....

It is not at all a personal matter, but that in a question of this kind no consultation of any sort should be held with several of the members of the late Lib. Govt. appears to me to require some explanation.

Please let me know exactly what is, & what is to be, the situation in these respects.

When Campbell-Bannerman did propose Asquith to give the main speech for the party on the Finance Bill, then he was criticized by Morley for ignoring Harcourt and for offending his supporters. Even Gladstone, faithful to Campbell-

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67Liberal Magazine: 1902, X. 101, dated March 1, 1902. Asquith was very careful not to explicitly repudiate Home Rule in this letter, although he stressed the difficulties it posed for the Liberal party. Hence he did not go quite so far as Rosebery on this issue. This was a minor point in the context of events in 1902. But it later made it possible for him and Campbell-Bannerman to work out a compromise on Home Rule in 1905.

68Spender, II, 37.

69HG Papers, Add. MS. 45989, Asquith to HG, April 30, 1902.

70C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41223, Morley to C-B, April 27, 1902.
Bannerman but on friendly terms with all sections, could not avoid giving offense. Campbell-Bannerman was astounded and hurt when he learned that Gladstone would appear at a public party meeting in Leeds where Rosebery was speaking.

I am getting alarmed by the reports in the newspapers as to Rosebery's long threatened visit to Leeds . . . . If they were true, it would amount to this, that he who has proclaimed his definite separation from me & my policy, is to be supported by the President of the National Liberal Federation & by the Chief Whip of the Liberal Party.  

Gladstone replied that Rosebery was to speak on the education bill and the corn tax and that he and other party officials had been asked in order that the occasion would not be regarded as an imperialist gathering. Campbell-Bannerman was not appeased. He consulted Spencer and then replied to Gladstone:

He strongly holds that it would not do for you to be there unless (1) R. declares his willingness to work with us, and . . . withdraws his repudiation, or (2) you declare that though glad to co-operate with every Liberal you stoutly support us & our policy. These are his latest words, and I must say I agree.

It was clearly becoming impossible for any Liberal to do anything without arousing suspicions or giving offense.

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71HG Papers, Add. Ms. 45988, C-B to HG, May 18, 1902.
72C-B Papers, Add. Ms. 41216, HG to C-B, May 21, 1902.
73Spencer had become leader of the party in the House of Lords in April. Kimberley, long in poor health, had died suddenly.
74HG Papers, Add. Ms. 45988, C-B to HG, May 23, 1902.
The party could not have survived this situation for very long. Fortunately it was not put to the test. The spring of 1902 was the nadir of Liberal fortunes and also the beginning of the Liberal revival. On May 31, a peace treaty was finally signed in South Africa. Even before that event, the Unionist Government had proposed two measures that aroused the opposition of practically the entire Liberal party. These measures were a duty on imported corn and a new educational bill. The South African war was no longer the most important issue in British politics.
That the conclusion of the South African war coincided with the controversies over the corn duty and the education bill was a fortunate combination for the Liberals. The end of the war meant the disappearance of the most divisive issue affecting the party. The corn tax and the education bill tended to unite all elements in the party. The corn tax meant a breach in the policy of free trade, one of the most fundamental principles of English Liberalism. The debates on the corn tax foreshadowed the far greater controversy that would erupt the following year when Chamberlain advocated a more comprehensive system of tariffs. The education bill represented a laudable attempt by the Unionist government to establish a more effective system of secondary education in England and Wales. What aroused so much opposition was the decision to include the voluntary or denominational schools in the system. Most of the voluntary schools were Anglican, and Protestant nonconformists were outraged at the prospect of these schools receiving large subsidies out of public funds. The nonconformist vote was a mainstay of the Liberal party. Liberal opposition to the measure was all but unanimous. Harcourt informed Morley that he was "preparing for a fight
to the death over the Education Bill."¹ Rosebery's speech at Leeds, which had involved Gladstone in a fracas with Campbell-Bannerman, had been an attack on the education bill. Perks, active in Methodist circles, kept urging Rosebery to make even stronger efforts on this issue.² The Liberal Magazine noted that Grey, Harcourt, Lloyd-George, Asquith, Bryce and Campbell-Bannerman had all given "admirable" speeches on the question in parliament and noted that on the second reading "the Liberal party was practically solid against the Bill."³ Haldane was one of the few exceptions. He believed that the overall merits of the bill outweighed any of its defects.⁴ Bryce believed that Haldane would alter his position once he realized his isolation on the issue. "No one knows better how to execute a curve within a small radius," Bryce commented acidly.⁵ He was wrong. Haldane did not change his view through the months long struggle.

Past differences were played down, Campbell-Bannerman instructing Gladstone to consult with members of the Liberal League in order to insure a "united attack."⁶ Asquith and

¹Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Morley, May 23, 1902.
²Rosebery Papers, Box 40, Perks to Rosebery, July 24, 1902.
³Liberal Magazine: 1902, X, 310-11.
⁴Sommer, p. 129.
⁵C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41211, Bryce to C-B, March 27, 1902.
⁶HG Papers, Add. MS. 45988, C-B to HG, May 4, 1902.
Campbell-Bannerman were both present at an Eighty Club dinner in June,\(^7\) the first time they had appeared together at a public function in months. In November they both spoke at a great demonstration against the bill at the Alexandra Palace.\(^8\)

The past was not completely forgotten. Gladstone wrote Campbell-Bannerman in September that Haldane was "all for conciliation just now."\(^9\) Campbell-Bannerman was skeptical. He pointed out that the Leaguers were very active in Scotland trying to win support for their group.\(^10\) Gladstone was worried by Asquith, Grey and Rosebery being "incessantly on the stump" and by the activities of Haldane in Edinburgh.\(^11\) The suspicion of Haldane was not ill-founded. He had just informed Rosebery that the Duke of Sutherland had agreed to join the League and help in the creation of a great center party which would offer an alternative to the present government and thus prevent Campbell-Bannerman from ever becoming prime minister.\(^12\)

Other Liberals were working in the opposite direction. Harcourt was pleased when Asquith publicly complimented him

\(^7\)Rosebery Papers, Box 45, Wemyss Reid to Rosebery, June 2, 1902.

\(^8\)Liberal Magazine: 1902, X, 627.

\(^9\)C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41216, HG to C-B, Sept. 23, 1902.

\(^10\)HG Papers, Add. MS. 45988, C-B to HG, Sept. 28, 1902.


\(^12\)Rosebery Papers, Box 24, Haldane to Rosebery, Sept. 22, 1902.
for his efforts against the education bill. In November, Tweedmouth urged Gladstone to arrange a meeting between some of "our great and wise" men. He wanted Spencer, Campbell-Bannerman, Rosebery and Asquith to meet and discuss the possibility of a rapprochement. To the alarm of Harcourt, Campbell-Bannerman accepted the proposal. Spencer made the approach to Rosebery, suggesting that the four of them meet for a quiet dinner at Spencer's residence. Rosebery declined, pleading prior engagements for the next several days, "But Asquith would answer all the purposes you mention better than I should." Spencer's reply did not hide his disappointment:

I am very sorry to find that your engagements for the present will prevent the small meeting to which I referred in my letter yesterday. I certainly shall not go on with the proposal until you can come. Pray let me know when that will be.

The idea of a meeting had failed, but during the autumn session of parliament, when the clauses of the education bill were discussed in the committee stage, the Liberal M.P.s had the

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14 HG Papers, Add. MS. 46022, Tweedmouth to HG, Nov. 2, 1902.
15 Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Lewis Harcourt, Nov. 21, 1902.
16 Rosebery Papers, Box 49, Spencer to Rosebery, Nov. 30, 1902.
17 Ibid., Rosebery to Spencer, Nov. 30, 1902.
18 Ibid., Spencer to Rosebery, Dec. 1, 1902.
opportunity to continue their day-to-day cooperation. This cooperation extended to other issues as well, with Harcourt suggesting to Campbell-Bannerman that a party conclave on another bill be delayed until Grey could return to London.\textsuperscript{19}

In all of this Rosebery was at a disadvantage. His refusal to rejoin the Front Bench of Liberal peers meant his exclusion from these conclaves which decided the day-to-day tactics of the party. He was isolating himself from the decision making process in the party. This was bound to revive the old suspicions that he had no serious intention of reentering party politics. Haldane was complaining to Hamilton about this as early as that September.\textsuperscript{20} Thus the fact that he was speaking in public more frequently did not make the impact that it might have. Rosebery was aware of all this. He blamed it on his followers who had convinced him against his will to resume public activities. In a long self-pitying letter written in November, he stated that he had yielded to the demands of his followers. They had assured him that he only had to speak out to acquire an enormous following. He had been doubtful and the results had confirmed his doubts.

\begin{quote}
If fifteen members of the H. of L., and fifteen of the H. of C. do not constitute political loneliness I do not know what does. I want nothing outside the L.L. . . . . Long ago I renounced all ideal of office.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{19}Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Lewis Harcourt, Nov. 6, 1902.
\textsuperscript{20}Hamilton Diaries, Add. Ms. 48680, Sept. 3, 1902.
\textsuperscript{21}Rosebery Papers, Box 45, Rosebery to Wemyss Reid, Nov. 14, 1902.
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In February 1903, Hamilton recorded in his diary that there was a growing conviction in the party that Rosebery was losing ground daily and that calculations must be made without him. Hamilton felt that there was no hope of reversing this unless Campbell-Bannerman and Spencer indicated that they wanted Rosebery and his policy to lead the party. He admitted that this was impossible.\(^2\)

On May 15, 1903, Chamberlain gave an immense boost to the reviving unity of the Liberal party. In a speech at Birmingham he advocated that Britain abandon free trade and adopt a system of tariffs. This attack on the principle of free trade caused a sensation in Great Britain and aroused the Liberals as nothing else could. Ripon regarded it as the beginning of the "greatest political struggle even of my long political life . . . . We must be prepared to unite with any who will help."\(^23\) Asquith regarded it as wonderful news and told his wife it was only a matter of time before the Liberals would sweep the country.\(^24\)

Under the impact of Chamberlain's assault, the Liberals drew closer together. Harcourt informed his son that he had received a surprise visit from Margot Asquith who wanted to discuss with him the main issue of the hour.\(^25\)

\(^2\)Hamilton Diaries, Add. Ms. 48680, Feb. 26, 1903.
\(^23\)C-B Papers, Add. Ms. 43517, Ripon to C-B, May 30, 1903.
\(^24\)Jenkins, p. 137.
\(^25\)Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Lewis Harcourt, May 29, 1903.
Bannerman and Asquith were in frequent consultation. On May 28, when Asquith was unable to speak in the House because he had lost his voice, he sent a hurried note to Campbell-Bannerman asking him to come down to prevent eager backbenchers from upsetting the tactics agreed upon by the leaders. Campbell-Bannerman was unable to oblige since he was also ill. A few days later, Harcourt lamented to Spencer that at this critical moment the party leadership was nonexistent. It was a familiar cry, but now it had a new meaning. Harcourt was complaining because Campbell-Bannerman was ill, Asquith abroad, Bryce out of town, and he felt that there was a possibility that the government might fall. He warned Spencer that as Leader of the Liberal peers he might have to take charge in such circumstances. Harcourt was premature in his forecast. The government survived for two more years, but the letter does indicate two things. For the first time in years the Liberals believed that there was a real possibility that they might hold office soon. This encouraged them to minimize differences and ignore past quarrels lest they jeopardize their chances. The second point about the letter concerns Asquith. Harcourt had included him among the party leadership.

It was the tariff issue which completed the process of

26 HG Papers, Add. Ms. 45988, Asquith to C-B, May 28, 1903.

27 Ibid., C-B to HG, May 28, 1903.

28 Harcourt Papers, Harcourt to Spencer, June 2, 1903.
reconciling the regular leadership and Asquith. All the Liberals spoke out on this issue, but Asquith soon became the leading party spokesman on the matter. That autumn he embarked on a tour of British towns and in a series of speeches launched a devastating attack on Chamberlain's proposals. This aroused great admiration in the party. Campbell-Bannerman was especially pleased. "Wonderful speeches, how can these fellows have gone wrong," he wrote in November. The two were now working closely together. Asquith was due to take a well-deserved vacation in January. On the eve of his departure abroad Campbell-Bannerman took care to meet with him to insure that they were in complete agreement on party matters.

That November, Campbell-Bannerman even had a few words of public praise for Rosebery when the latter called for party unity in the face of the tariff issue. In private, he was still skeptical about Rosebery's willingness to involve himself very extensively in party affairs. This skepticism was confirmed when Spencer asked Rosebery to give the traditional party dinner which preceded the opening of the winter session of parliament. The request had the approval of Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon. Rosebery declined.

29 Jenkins, p. 136,
30 Quoted in Spender, C-B, II, 120.
31 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41211, C-B to Bryce, Dec. 29, 1903.
32 Spender, C-B, II, 127.
33 C-B Papers, Add. MS. 41211, C-B to Bryce, Dec. 29, 1903.
Rosebery's refusal was an exception to the trend of events. Campbell-Bannerman had restored working relationships with Asquith and with Fowler, through them with other imperialists. Not all the differences were resolved or the quarrels forgotten. Some imperialists still hoped Rosebery would be in a future Liberal government; the differences over Home Rule and the question of who would be prime minister should the Liberals take office would not be settled until 1905. Nonetheless, party prospects at the end of 1903 looked much improved. Bryce was not exaggerating when he wrote Campbell-Bannerman, "You will have ... a more united and loyal opposition behind you next session than since 1899."

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34 Ibid., Add. Ms. 41214, Fowler to C-B, Dec. 22, 1903.
35 C-B Papers, Add. Ms. 41211, Bryce to C-B, Nov. 20, 1903.
CONCLUSION

Campbell-Bannerman's relations with the Liberal imperialists between 1899 and 1903 varied considerably. He began his term of office with their goodwill and support. Although the uncertainty about Rosebery was a legacy from the past, Campbell-Bannerman was more fortunate than Harcourt. He and Rosebery were on friendly terms, and Rosebery approved of his appointment. At this stage a return to the party by Rosebery would not have implied an adverse judgment as to Campbell-Bannerman's effectiveness in office. This eased his relations with the imperialists.

Campbell-Bannerman was fortunate in having several months in office before the Boer War started. In this interval he was able to work with the imperialists without difficulty and to strengthen his ties with them. The appointment of Gladstone as Chief Whip helped because of Gladstone's friendships with Asquith, Grey and Haldane.

The outbreak of the war changed the situation. Campbell-Bannerman's role as leader became increasingly difficult as the party split into factions. His own center position on the war resulted from conviction and from a hope of maintaining some semblance of party unity. Rosebery's strong stand on the war, backed by Grey, Haldane and others, imposed a considerable
strain on Campbell-Bannerman's relations with the imperialists. Several factors kept these strains within manageable limits. One was Campbell-Bannerman's willingness to accept a measure of party dissent on the war. Also uncertainty about Rosebery in the imperialist camp worked to Campbell-Bannerman's advantage. Asquith's moderation was an important factor. He did not hide his views but he was as determined as Campbell-Bannerman to avoid a split. So long as these two men were able to maintain a working relationship there was hope. Asquith could influence the imperialists and Campbell-Bannerman had the support of the center group. Harcourt was another factor. He supported Campbell-Bannerman because he was determined to prevent Rosebery from returning. This helped keep the pro-Boers in line.

The duration of the war made it impossible for Campbell-Bannerman to maintain his center position. On certain issues, such as the role of Milner, he sympathized with the pro-Boers. He gradually became convinced that certain imperialists wanted to replace him with Rosebery. His own feelings about Rosebery were changing. By the autumn of 1901, he undoubtedly believed that a Rosebery return would not be in the best interests of the whole party unless Rosebery was willing to compromise on some of his views. Rosebery never gave any indication that he was willing to compromise.

The real turning point came with the "methods of barbarism" speech in the late spring of 1901. Campbell-Bannerman's views on the camps were sincere and heartfelt.
They were also a serious liability as far as the imperialists were concerned. In their view, he had sided with the pro-Boers. His relations with them, including Asquith, rapidly deteriorated over the next several months. His failure to respond enthusiastically to the Chesterfield speech was understandable, but the imperialists were alienated even more. Probably, it was only the arrangements agreed upon at the party meeting at the Reform Club the previous July that helped keep the party from irrevocably splitting. There was a complete break with Rosebery, but the severance of ties with Asquith and several others proved to be temporary. His relations with Asquith were gravely weakened, but Campbell-Bannerman always blamed Grey and Haldane for this more than he did Asquith. This view is open to question but it did make it easier for him to resume ties with Asquith later.

It was fortunate that the quarrel with the imperialists came in the final stages of the war. The war and the problem of Rosebery were the only issues really dividing the party. Other issues were still solvable. Thus, once peace was concluded and questions like those on education and the tariff came to the forefront, it was still possible for the party to unite again. This might not have been the case if Campbell-Bannerman and the imperialists had split earlier in the war.
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