

Liberal Unionists ought at this moment to be called Liberal Disunionists—(cheers)—for there were among the seventy or eighty members so many factions that there was hardly a statistician or sociologist who could properly class them. (Laughter.) Mr. Chamberlain was a clever man, and the Liberals were sorry to lose him; but Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan could not be classed together—those two Knights of the Round Table who were going to take part in this new Round Table Conference on the 13th. Mr. Labouchere had been hard upon Mr. Chamberlain. Some time ago he said that that gentleman should be received back into the party, but that the fatted calf should be on the sideboard. He supposed the table would contain the fatted calf now; and they would welcome Mr. Chamberlain back after he had partaken of it largely; and at the same time, if they regarded Mr. Labouchere as his elder brother, Liberals must subscribe for a kid, that he might make merry with his friends. (Laughter.) When Mr. Chamberlain did return to the party, some of them would probably smile, and possibly recall the story of Sheridan and his servant. Sheridan heard a great noise and clatter, and his servant came running into the room, saying, "Please, sir, I have broken nothing at all," and Mr. Sheridan answered, "Then what have you made all that infernal noise for?" Lord Hartington, too, still remained in the Liberal Union ark. He sent out Mr. Goschen in the form of a dove to see whether there were firm ground among the Conservatives. While Mr. Goschen went on protesting that he was a Liberal Unionist, it seemed he was going to return to the ark when he liked. (Laughter and cheers.) Then there was another set of Liberal Unionists, who, he gathered from the paper that day, had called a ball at Barnsley; but he thought his hearers would agree that the aid they were likely to give to the solution of the Irish question lay more in the powers of their feet than in the powers of their heads. (Loud laughter.) It was clear they had a considerable variety of opinions within the Liberal Unionist party, and therefore they might reasonably ask friends of theirs like their chairman to join the Liberal party, which was almost nearly the most united party which existed at this moment. (Cheers.) He would not say the task before Mr. Gladstone's supporters was an easy one, but yet he would say that in the bill presented by Mr. Gladstone was to be found the principle that would animate them in the future. (Cheers.) All of them had decided that matters could not be left alone. He had read with immense interest Professor Dicey's book called "England's case against Home Rule," and hoped that any one who attempted to study the Irish question would make a point of reading it carefully through. A great quantity of Professor Dicey's closest and ablest reasoning was to a certain degree invalidated by such a passage as this, found towards the end of the book:—"Any possible course open to English statesmanship involves gigantic inconvenience, not to say tremendous perils. We have nothing before us but a choice of difficulties or of evils. Every course is open to valid criticism." He should say that Professor Dicey looked to only three possible modes of dealing with the Irish question—the maintenance of the Union as at present, Home Rule, and national independence. The admission here made showed there was only a choice of difficulties. He had personally concluded that in the direction of a large measure of some form of Home Rule lay our only chance of dealing satisfactorily with the question; and as far as he could gather, their Chairman also believed in that being the only method. The Irish Parliament did not appear to be a matter of insuperable difficulty. Much the more awkward matter was the agrarian difficulty. As far as he could gather, Mr. Gladstone was reconsidering the question, and there was no doubt that any bill presented to the country by the Liberal party would omit a great number of the defects which existed in the bill presented to Parliament last April. On the agrarian question, he sympathised in a great degree with what had fallen from the chairman. There was no doubt that the Irish at Westminster were a different body from the Irish in their own country. If anybody asked him if he agreed with the statements made by Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Dillon, and others in Ireland during the last few weeks, he should say emphatically "No." It was a class of language never heard in England. But how were they to regard the wild talk in Ireland?—as the sober words of statesmen who were to govern Ireland in the future, or to look upon it as the theatrical property of bombastic actors used only for a particular purpose and time. Almost the same thing appeared to have occurred in 1831. Daniel O'Connell at that time spoke of "preserving only so much, or rather so little, of popular agitation as would continue the confidence of the people in the prospect of legitimate redress." Personally he should like to see a great deal less of this agitation, and not so much of Mr. O'Connell. In the House of Commons very different speeches were delivered by the Irish Members. These facts recalled the circumstance that in Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" Snug, the joiner, was to take the part of the lion, and Bottom suggested the language he should utter when before his audience—"I would entreat you not to fear, not to tremble. If you think I am come here as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such thing. I am a man as other men are." That was the language of the Irish in Parliament: they were men as other men: we were not to fear and tremble at what they said. (Laughter.) He hoped, at any rate, that the Irishman of the future would be like the Irishman who was to be found in the House of Commons. (Hear, hear.) He would leave it to the Conservative Government to settle the "plan of campaign." He totally abhorred it, as the Chairman did; it was utterly undeserving of the great cause in which the Home Rulers were engaged; it crippled the efforts of any anxious to benefit Ireland—and he was surprised that such language was allowed to be used when a large portion of the Liberals of England were doing their best to grant them a larger measure of self-government than was conceived to be possible three or four years ago. In future it would be somewhat difficult for the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer to place a loan for interest grabbers and land grabbers, as he would call them, or as they were called. One of the first necessities of a nation, as it was of a Liberal Club, was money; and if an Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer were only able to place say a 7 or 8 per cent. loan at 12, he would give a great deal of amusement to the London Stock Exchange, and it would be placing on the newspaper columns a stock which was midway between Honduras and Peruvian stock, and he would not be getting any money. They would not expect from him any denunciation of rent. He believed in 1649 it was considered unworthy of a Christian man to pay rent to a fellow-creature; but if that doctrine were held in 1887 he should greatly prefer the company of a pagan, though believing in a creed outworn, and should certainly hope in the future to dwell among the heathen. (Laughter.) He had seen it stated that rent was what was due to the landlords after everybody else had made a profit out of it. There was a great deal of rash talk about rent, but if they did away with rent they would drag down with those who had rent paid to them a large portion of the fabric of the present condition of England. He would not suggest what would be the outcome of the agrarian agitation in Ireland. He took it that the Conservative Government was holding its hand until it received the report of the Commission sitting on this and cognate subjects. The plan of campaign, they would remember, had grown up under a Conservative Ministry. He owned that nothing surprised him more last year than the fact that there appeared to be no general desire on the part of Irish landlords to close with the terms offered them by Mr. Gladstone. They were terms which if they had had more time to think over he thought many of them would have been glad to accept. He was not sanguine as to the future, and if they continued him as their Member, he thought he might be talking about the Irish question for very many years. Mr. Albany Fonblanque, an able journalist at the beginning of the century, likened the Irish question then to a Jack Snipe. There was a sportsman who regularly pursued a Jack Snipe that lived on his property and shot at it year after year; this was without success, and the snipe outlived him. (Laughter.) Ireland was a Jack Snipe to the Government at the beginning of the century, and it appeared likely to outlive us in the present century. Still we were bound not to tire of the matter. It was natural to say that "we want legislation for our own country; get rid of them and attend to our business." That would be unworthy of their or any representative. The question must be studied, and he must give them the benefit of the results he arrived at; he must ignore no just claim on the part of Ireland. At the same time he must see that the position England occupied with regard to her subjects in Ireland was that of a protector, just as it was with respect to her subjects in any part of the globe. (Hear, hear.) He regretted he could not tell them more about legislation on questions he mentioned in his election address, which interested them then and which he supposed interested them now; and he only trusted that when he next addressed them they might have obtained a long catalogue of legislation to the good. (Cheers.) The usual votes of thanks were passed.

## LIBERAL MEETING AT MIRFIELD.

### SPEECHES ON THE IRISH QUESTION.

Mr. C. G. Milnes Gaskell, M.P. for the Morley Division, and Mr. H. F. Beaumont, M.P. for the Colne Valley Division (who presided), attended the annual tea meeting of the Mirfield Liberal Club held on Saturday night in the Town Hall of that place. Considering the inclemency of the weather, there was a large attendance. Among those present were Mr. H. E. Beaumont and Mr. R. H. Beaumont (Whitley Hall), Mr. M. Fox, Mr. J. E. Walker, Mr. H. Roberts, Mr. H. Swift, and Mr. W. Wilson.—Mr. J. E. SOAEGILL (hon. sec.) read the annual report, which stated that the club was in a flourishing condition both numerically and financially. Last year there were 110 members, and notwithstanding the efforts of the Tory party to convert Liberals to Conservatism, there were now 157 members. Although improvements had been made at the club premises, they had a credit balance of £28 14s. Reference was made to the unopposed return of Mr. Milnes Gaskell at the last election, and also to the cordial support which Mr. Beaumont, M.P., had always given to the Mirfield Liberals. (Cheers.)

Mr. BEAUMONT, M.P., expressed satisfaction at the prosperity of the Liberal Club. As an old Member of Parliament of 20 years' standing, he asked the electors not to over-tax the energies of Mr. Gaskell, and not require him to be present in the House at every division. He knew that Mr. Gaskell would be in attendance on every important occasion, but they need not ask his presence at divisions which were of no virtual good. He (the Chairman) was anxious to let people know that his own opinions were still advanced. Many might not think them advanced, although in 1865 he was considered advanced. He had not drawn back one iota from the way he promised to vote then, nor had he neglected to vote in the way he had promised. He was no weaker now than he had ever been, although some of his constituents took a different view. There was a meeting the other day at Marsden, and the committee did not ask him to attend, no doubt from a laudable desire not to over-tax his energies. During the autumn and winter they had not been what the French called *exigeant*. He was anxious to tell them that the platform of the Liberal party—which would hold Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, Lord Hartington, Lord Spencer, Mr. John Morley, and Mr. Chamberlain—was surely large enough and broad enough to hold Mr. Gaskell and himself. (Cheers.) He must say a few words on the topic of the day—the Irish question. As an honest and honourable man, he felt bound at this his first public appearance for some time to denounce in the strongest terms possible what was called the "plan of campaign." (Hear, hear.) He was one of those who thought—using words employed by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P.—that it was a terrible and horrible thing. He cared not whether it had the direct support of the Irish Church dignitaries or of the notorious purveyor of *Truth*, or was patted on the back by remarks, which he could only call pitiful, made by one of the Members for Halifax. He believed the plan of campaign to be bad, and out of that which was bad nothing good could come. Many of them, having merely read the Irish view of the question, might say that the plan of campaign was a good thing, and that it would have a good end. By a homely illustration, he would show them the aim of this plan of campaign. Suppose the case of a grocer who at Christmas time allowed his customers to contract debts at his store. These customers took it into their heads, as the Irish did, that this grocer had been charging them 2d. or 3d. a pound too much for their tea and sugar. They then handed over the money for the payment of their debts to the Co-operative Society, so that this society could use it for fighting the shopkeeper in the County Court when he took action to recover the debts. This was what the plan of campaign meant, and therefore he denominated it a wicked and horrible thing. He would go further and say that if this plan of campaign was a sample of the legislation offered to Ireland by the so-called Nationalist leaders, surely Home Rule had better be postponed—at any rate till honest men had got their rights and the country was not at the mercy of a disloyal population and American dollars. He had spoken in strong language because he felt strongly on the subject. He did not think it possible for any man who had thought out the plan of campaign to think otherwise than he did. He did not believe that there were half a dozen honourable men in the House of Commons who did not think the same, and he believed that most of them would have the courage, when the time came, to say so. There were no doubt others who would gloss over the matter, and say nothing, because of having a large Irish population in their different constituencies. But ever since he had been a politician he had never been afraid of his opinions and of letting them be known, and he should take that course to his dying day. If he thought his seat depended upon him slurring over the question of the day, he should say, "Get some one else." He believed in an honourable man taking an honourable and a strong line. He had no wish that the Tory party should be in power long. He only wished to see the two sections of the Liberal party joined together hand-in-hand, and carrying a measure that would suit the case of Ireland. (Cheers.)

Mr. W. WILSON moved and Mr. H. ROBERTS seconded:—

That this meeting expresses its utmost confidence in the great Liberal party, and hopes that at no distant date the present unfortunate state of disunion may come to an end, and such a measure of freedom be passed by the Liberal party for Ireland as shall for ever unite the people of the two kingdoms in the common bonds of brotherhood.

(Cheers.) Mr. Wilson expressed pleasure at seeing Mr. Beaumont once more in his old place as leader of the Liberal party in Mirfield. Whatever might occur in another party, they at least could not forget the services Mr. Beaumont had rendered to the Liberal party in the past.—The resolution was unanimously passed.

Mr. MILNES GASKELL, M.P., then spoke, and was enthusiastically received. Having expressed his pleasure at the opportunity of addressing those who had always accorded him hearty support and kind consideration, both with respect to his actions and thoughts, he said he was glad that Mr. Beaumont had taken the chair. He believed that that gentleman was a member of the Mirfield Liberal Club, if he was not in high authority there; but, after all, it was desirable that members of a happy family should meet on the same platform, and that Liberal Unionists and Gladstonians should show that they could sit side by side without snarling at one another. Having referred to the two last general elections, and the circumstances under which the Tories came into power, he remarked that when that took place they were told that the Parliament elected in July was to last for six years; that the Tories were going to carry everything before them; and Liberals were almost led to consider themselves a discredited party, with no chance of holding office in the future. Where was now the great Tory party which was so triumphant last July? We must wait to hear from his own mouth what caused Lord Randolph Churchill's resignation. One thing, however, was extraordinary. How could any one believe he was in earnest in "starring" up and down the country and attacking the Gladstonian policy, when now he had thrown over the Government and brought it into a crisis almost unparalleled. If Lord Randolph were in earnest when he was opposing Mr. Gladstone, we should want different reasons to those given for his secession; and if he were not in earnest, then he must ask what a spectacle he had under the circumstances presented. As for the rest of the Tory party, the opponents of that party were inclined to ascribe to them a much higher degree of importance than they appeared to ascribe to themselves; but these gentlemen in buckram seemed to be moved from one position to another without any regard, apparently, to their feelings, and at this moment no one knew what to say about the Ministry at all. If the Conservatives were in this miserable position, what was that of their allies, the Liberal Unionists? The