

Ken Rohan reached Patsy Driscoll's yawl that evening, Harry was already there to welcome him.

In the meantime there hung over Drumshaughlin and the surrounding glens that mysterious silence which, among men, as an inanimate nature, is so often the presage of a storm. A Rising is (I may not yet quite say, used to be) a sort of Silver Jubilee in every generous Irish life. Young men look forward to their own Rising, and old men look back upon theirs; and the whole population, non-combatant as well as combatant, feel some such tender interest in the event as the whole public, even those least addicted to matrimony, feel in a Breach of Promise of Marriage case. It did not require any official premonition to tell a sleuth-hound of Head-Constable Muldudden's experience that there was something ominous in the very stillness of the people. If the foibles of the great may be faithfully confessed, Head-Constable Muldudden's zeal had been much stimulated, and his spirits much raised, by the breakdown of Mr. Flibbert's Napoleonic strategic arrangements for the capture of Ken Rohan. His eagle eye early darted upon certain whispering conferences at street corners, and certain ponies making for the mountains in different directions, and certain peculiarly fiery appearances about the eyes and nose of Dawley, and a certain filtering procession of young men passing into the chapel throughout the day, and into Father Phil's confession-box and out again with happy lighting faces—from all of which, and many other symptoms, Mul-D., as he was playfully called in the day-room, concluded, with swelling bosom and snuff taken in handfuls, that the Government's information was correct, and that the opportunity of his, Mul-D.'s, life had arrived.

(To be continued.)

Evening Memories

(By WILLIAM O'BRIEN.)

CHAPTER I.—MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCES IN "THE HOUSE" (1883).

By a whimsical coincidence the first acquaintance I made on the day I took my seat in Parliament in 1883 was that of Joseph Chamberlain. While the House was edifying the ungodly by listening to its prayers as the price of reserved tickets for the day, and next, like a troop of escaped schoolboys, breaking into the football-like frolics of "question time," I was left stranded on the cross-bench underneath the Distinguished Strangers' Gallery where new members are left stewing in limbo until they are invited by the Speaker to advance into the seats of the mighty. Immediately behind was the row of privileged visitors' seats "under the Clock," over the barrier of which the athletic Archbishop of Cashel one night later vaulted into the sacred enclosure without going through the formality of presenting a Sheriff's return. My only companion in limbo was Sir Charles Dilke, who was to take his seat on re-election after accepting office in the Gladstone Ministry. Chamberlain, who was to introduce him, crossed over from the Treasury Bench, while "questions" (and answers) were still hurtling through the air, and planted himself between his colleague and myself.

"I am glad to see you here, Mr. O'Brien," he said, cordially extending a hand, and before I could recover from my surprise sufficiently to decide whether shaking the hand of an English Cabinet Minister (even an ostentatiously friendly one) might not be a first surrender to the wiles of the tempter, my hand was held in a grip that might have been that of one of the vices manufactured by his own eminent firm of Nettlefold.

"My name is Chamberlain," he added, perhaps modestly inferring from my confusion that the explanation was necessary.

"You are very kind," I remarked, blushing with the violence which it still took me some years of wild wars with the whole official world to subdue. "I should have thought you English people would have as little welcome for me as for a dynamite bomb." (It was at the moment when England was horror-stricken by the trials of the Invincibles in Dublin, and when the Chief Secretary had more picturesquely than temperately described the leading articles of my own newspaper as "forming as essential a

part of the machinery of assassination as the daggers and the masks.")

"Not a bit of it," was his reply. "An Englishman is a fighter and despises any man who isn't. Ireland will have to send over a good many men like you, if you want to kick John Bull out of his easy chair."

Even in the glow of this friendly greeting in a house of enemies, Chamberlain left me under a first impression of uneasiness, as if in contact with something glittering, sly, even serpent-like. Enormous strength, resolution, masterfulness, a fascination which was not altogether reassuring—all these revealed themselves at a glance. In the well-compacted head, the close-set ears, the neck of a Centaur, the nose cocked up aloft in defiance of all comers, the clean-shaven jaw as hard as though it had been hammered out in his own steel factory, the eyes sharp as gimlets, to which the eyeglass seemed to add a third penetrating power, the alert, sinuous body and swinging arms which seemed always ready to plant some smashing blow, there was an uncanny suggestion of the guile of the serpent, but still more of the rejoicing vigor of the bruiser, ever keen to meet his man. If the first impression was rather one of ruthlessness than of charm, it was through no lack of friendly prepossession on my part. Chamberlain was then and for some years after, much more than Gladstone, the crescent promise of Parnell and his party. It was his antipathy to coercion—perhaps, also, his gift for candid friendship—that had unhorsed Forster, when the poor man had persuaded himself his policy of "Buckshot" had only to get a further three months' trial to convert the world to his pathetic faith. In our three-year "fight to a finish" with Lord Spencer and Sir G. Trevelyan, his aid was none the less effective because it took the shape of disheartening our antagonists rather than of openly siding with us. Chamberlain's famous hint to Parnell: "You can have an Irish Republic, so far as I am concerned, if you will only first help me to dish the Whigs,"* was spoken with the undress freedom of the smoke-room of the House of Commons, but was undoubtedly intended to convey his detachment from all the traditional prejudices of Englishmen in their dealings with Ireland. He was entirely in earnest in his public proposal to make Mr. Healy Chief Secretary. I have in my possession a letter to his friend, Mr. W. H. Duignan, of Walsall,† which was widely circulated among the Irish leaders at the time, and in which he declared: "I would not hesitate to transfer entirely to an Irish Board *altogether independent of English Government influence* the consideration and solution" of such organic questions as "the Education question and the Land question and the powers of taxation in Ireland for strictly Irish purposes," prefacing the proposal with a broad hint that he was only prevented from going further by the doubt "whether public opinion would *at present* support so great a change." This was, indeed, the first "unauthorised programme" which he proposed to launch by a campaign in Ireland early in 1885 under the joint auspices of himself and of Sir Charles Dilke, whom Parnell always regarded as the more considerable political force of the two. Had the Irish trip been persisted in, the current of events for the succeeding generation might have been changed in a sensational degree, for the better or for the worse. Gladstone might never have been a Home Ruler. Whether wisely or otherwise, we in *United Ireland* took the view that the effect would be to pin the fortunes of Ireland to those of Chamberlain, who, however daring he might be as an ally, could only bring us the adherence of a limited band of fanatical Radicals, while—such are the foibles of the most celestial politicians!—his instalment as the official British Champion of Ireland might have alienated from her service the far vaster genius of Gladstone, already being drawn to us by a thousand subtle currents of semi-Celtic magnetism, but still undecided and uncommitted. The veto of the Nationalists, at all events, involved the instant abandonment of the Irish tour. With characteristic nimbleness, Chamberlain exchanged "the unauthorised programme" which was rejected by Ireland, for the

*Meaning Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen, who were then the enemy.

†Under date December 17, 1884.

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