

"unauthorised programme" by which he made history that year in Scotland. But he only succeeded in recalling the Old Parliamentary Hand from his yachting tour in the dreamy company of the poet, Tennyson, to reassert his creative vitality by setting out upon the Home Rule crusade himself with all his banners spread and with all the multitudinous forces of his genius in full array. We who took the risks of making our choice between the two men found reason to console ourselves for missing in Ireland the speeches of a sparkling rhetorician who was, after all, only an inspired commercial traveller in the English Radical line, when there was produced in the following Session a Home Rule Bill with the thaumaturgic name of Gladstone on the back of it.

Chamberlain, I think, never quite forgave Ireland for the *spectae injuria formae*. I know of no other offence on our part that could account for the change from the fearless Minister who was not to be daunted by any amount of ignorant jabber about daggers and dynamite from extending a hand of welcome to a young Irishman only notable because he was cordially hated, to the cankered Unionist politician who, many years after, when there was a heaven-sent chance of peace between the two nations, delivered this final *obiter dictum* to Captain Shawe-Taylor: "The Irish question I regard as I regard my gout. They are both equally detestable and both absolutely incurable." It must never be forgotten, however, that if Chamberlain erred in plotting his Irish tour without consulting Gladstone, Gladstone had his scarcely more tactful vengeance in committing himself to Home Rule without taking his most powerful colleague into his confidence. Nor can we who remember what it was to discern a not altogether unsympathetic eye on the Ministerial Bench, while the hate of an all but unanimous House was hissing in our ears, refuse Chamberlain's memory the justice of recalling that, even in the crisis of his conflict with Gladstone, he offered to let the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill of 1886 go through, if it were to be remodelled on the Home Rule of the Canadian Provinces. "O world! thy slippery turns!" A quarter of a century of Irish disappointments elapsed, Gladstone and Chamberlain were dead, and the Home Rule Act at long last "inscribed on the Statute-book" by an all-potent Home Rule Ministry offered Ireland essentially a Parliament of the same type as that of Quebec or Saskatchewan, which was rejected when the offer was made by Chamberlain, and—ghastlier irony still—was never to materialise at all until six pounds of flesh nearest to the heart were first cut from the fair body of Ireland. Did the Chamberlain of that day under the Clock see so much further than myself over the ocean of horrors and mutual injustices the two nations were destined to traverse in the same ill-omened ship in which Pitt launched them? I wonder.

The only other Englishman who approached me on the cross-bench was Henry Labouchere. He sniggered at the notion that Chamberlain was a man to be scandalised by a sniff of dynamite. "Joe is a good deal more likely than you to carry a nitro-glycerine cartridge up his sleeve. But it's only intended to be exploded under the coat-tails of his friends." Labouchere himself, before I had seen him, we regarded as our trustiest of allies among Englishmen, and that because centuries of naturalisation could not flatten him into an Englishman. The mobility, springiness, and delicacy of his figure might have suggested the graces of a dancing master, if they did not still better suggest the sprightliness of a French *piou-piou* on the march. And again, it must be owned, there was that in his grimace which needed but a daub of red paint on the cheek, and a pair of baggy white breeches, with his hands in the pockets, to equip him to set a circus in a roar. His was the clarity of thought, the turn for scintillating epigram of the finest French models, but his was also an incurable addiction to *persiflage* such as it used to be the English fashion to consider as inseparable from the Frenchman as the hair of a scrubbing brush, or the flat rim of his *haut-de-forme*. (England has since discovered with a comic amazement that the France of Foch is not quite the France of Béranger's Lisette.) In the words of a witty Irish judge, "Labby" went dam near being a man of genius." The fact that friends and foes combined to call him "Labby"

ought to have been sufficient to explain to him why Gladstone refused to take him more seriously than he took himself, when the refusal to him of high office in the Ministry of 1893 once for all banished this exquisitely (in the French sense) malicious scoffer to his cloister of Thélème in his Florentine villa.

But by an Irishman, at least, his instinctive siding with the underdog, his wholly sincere tenderness for human weakness and pain, his chafing under the eternal mystery of the world's misery, will not be forgotten, while the circumstance that it was his wit that disabled him in a dull Puritan world for greatness will be readily condoned. No cloud of winter showers ever drove him from the Irish cause. In years when the mention of Home Rule at a London dinner-table would have been nothing less than a shocking solecism in "Society," Labouchere performed the miracle of making *Truth* a tremendous financial success as a fashionable Gazette, while it weekly preached the most extreme views of the Parnellites with an effrontery which took away the breath of the fine ladies and choleric club snobs who took it in. Everything was forgiven to a style that cut like a diamond and a *bondiable* that never lost its knack of amusing. Not that he was not able to mock at the funny side of Irish affairs, as well as at the pomposity of their English critics. One night a youthful colleague of ours, by whose grave England is now ready enough to drop a tear, was addressing the Saxon in one of youth's fine frenzies, theatrically thrusting his fingers through his chestnut hair while he roared out the prophecy that "the Cossacks of Russia would yet stable their horses in the House of Commons." The Saxon, most of whom had profusely dined, were expressing their alarm at the prospect with yells of laughter. Labouchere sidled up to me with the pained remark: "What sort of young man is this new Mr. — you've sent over to us? It isn't that he's against law and order—we're all against law and order—but, but you know, he's such a blawsted awss!" To himself every audacity was permitted by a House which is never ungrateful to those who brighten its boredom. I remember his once diversifying a speech on the Budget by turning to an Under Secretary, who combined a large general grocery trade with statesmanship and addressing to him the unexpected query: "If you add this tuppence in the pound, I ask my right hon. friend what will he be able to do me a good sound tea for?" It was peradventure some obscure suggestion of atavism that made him end his days among foreigners less foreign than those who would have forgiven him any disqualification for office but a pretty wit. Many years later, I found the British Colony in Florence in high dudgeon at Labby's resolute refusals of cards to his own nationals for his fairy fetes at the Villa Margherita. The conjecture may not be altogether a wild one that his bones rest more at home in the cemetery where San Miniato looks down over the all-golden sunsets towards Pisa, than if respectably tucked away in some post-mortem dwelling-place of the British Philistines.

My "maiden speech" came off a few days afterwards under every condition that could for ever blight the ambition of a newcomer with any respect for English opinion. The occasion arose quite unexpectedly in the debate. The air was black with the revelations in Dublin at the trials of the band of desperadoes, styling themselves the Invincibles, who had murdered the Chief Secretary and the Under Secretary in the Phoenix Park. The principal villain of the piece was a member of the Dublin Corporation, James Carey, who had added to the infamy of his bloody part in the conspiracy the still deeper damnation of turning informer upon his younger dupes in a paroxysm of terror for his own vile carcass. It was in a crisis of hungry anti-Irish fury such as this, I was called upon to answer the charge, just then disclosed by the evidence in Dublin, that I had been a sponsor of this atrocious villain in his candidature for the Corporation. To the speechless horror of my listeners I acknowledged that I had published a letter of recommendation in Carey's favor in *United Ireland*, and that, in the same circumstances, I should feel it a duty to do it again. The prosaic truth was that I had never in my life seen Carey, nor so much as heard of his existence until he became a Labor candidate for the ward of which I was a burgess, in days when a Labor

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