

the law—you know I never did, sir," he whimpered in a feeble whine, instinctively plunging his long bony fingers into the pyramids of gold, and drawing them silently towards him as if they clung to his flesh.

(To be continued.)

## Evening Memories

(By WILLIAM O'BRIEN.)

### CHAPTER VIII.—BACK TO THE WILDERNESS (1886).

There followed three weeks, every waking hour of which was one crowded with glorious life for the unsuspecting mass of the Irish Party and of our countrymen, but for those who knew how the battle was really setting brought an ever darkening certainty of defeat. It was no longer a question of imposing our own terms, but of how much of the Cabinet's lightened cargo could be preserved from the winds and waves or whether it was indeed worth preserving. There were almost nightly assignations between Parnell and myself in the almost lightless corridors at Westminster when all but the policemen were gone, or at some late supper-house where black-avised foreign revolutionaries were rattling dominoes or high-colored beauties awaiting or returning from their turn at some of "the Halls" close by.\* Parnell kept a gallant face, but there was always some fresh tale of Liberal defections, of new waterings down, of this or that member of the Cabinet smitten with tremors which he mistook for conscientious scruples, of Gladstone himself showing signs of turning bridle, of a Liberal Party no more fitted to outride a General Election than a scuttled ship to face the ocean in an equinoctial gale.

Customs and Excise once for all went overboard to keep Harcourt. The enormous Land Purchase scheme, to buy off the landlords, was patched together at haphazard a night or two before its introduction. A solicitor's clerk in Dublin would have turned out a more creditable legislative proposal. The only excuse for it was that it was never to pass. But it did much to ensure that the Home Rule Bill was not to pass either. Parnell's ingenuity was tasked for a plea of even decent toleration for a Bill which would have compelled the tenants to pay a minimum of twenty years' purchase of an unreduced rental, while the British taxpayers, for whom an Irish Parliament was but an airy abstraction, were worked into a white terror by the spectre of a colossal liability—he boldly and most falsely swelled it to £300,000,000—which Chamberlain agitated before their ignorant eyes. Then came Stead's oracle: "This won't do!" in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, proclaiming from his own Pythian three-legged stool, that the departure of the Irish members from Westminster, hitherto the most tempting Home Rule bait for English eyes, must be given up if red ruin was not to swallow the Empire or Gladstone and his Bill to be torn limb by limb by the last ragged regiments of his Party. Last of all there arose the whisper and then the clamant demand that the Bill must be indefinitely hung up, if by hook or crook the sterile victory of a Second Reading could be secured for it.

Upon both these latter points Parnell was not to be shaken. If there were to be two Parliaments competing

\* A detail not without significance. At the Café Royal, where we sometimes met, Parnell had many months previously entertained a distinguished American—Senator Jones, of Florida, if my memory does not fail me—to a sumptuous Party dinner, the bill for which he had, with characteristic inattention in such matters, long overlooked. To the proprietor, who had several times approached me in shady corners with sugar-coated hints on the subject, I replied: "Why not speak to Mr. Parnell himself?" To which his startled "Ah, Monsieur!" with gentle elevation of the eyebrows, was as pretty a tribute as French politeness could frame to Parnell's power of inspiring awe where he was himself least conscious of it. When for my own comfort's sake I jogged his memory, he laughed. "What, the Senator again? Would you mind settling it with your own cheque? I hate to give my signature to people I don't know. There is sure to be a Scotland Yard man among the waiters." And he was instantly reabsorbed in State affairs, as though duns were the least obtrusive, and indeed the most obsequious, of acquaintances.

for Irishmen of ability, the more splendid Imperial one would have an easy victory, and the little assembly in Dublin would sink into contempt and beggary. Or else the moment Irish public opinion realised the consequences, men would be sent to Westminster for the one purpose of claiming the repeal of the new Constitution or re-opening the war between the two countries in a more envenomed spirit than ever. If the experiment was to succeed, it could only be by concentrating Ireland's best brains and purest ambitions in Ireland for the service of Irish ideals.

There was room for more anxious debate when it came to be a question of purchasing Chamberlain's assent to the Second Reading on condition of the subsequent "hanging up" of the Bill. The panic-stricken Ministerial Party and all but two members of the Cabinet were known to be thirsting for the compromise. To Parnell it was plain enough that the nominal victory of a Second Reading would really mean the abandonment of the Bill, in submission to its implacable enemies, and with a loss of prestige to its author from which, at his age, no recovery was to be looked for. One night his mind was all but made up to throw out the Bill on the Second Reading, to expel Gladstone's caitiff party from office, and trust to some new clash of English factious interests or some nobler impulse of free democracy for the triumph of a principle now for ever consecrated by Gladstone's high authority. When, at the meeting of the Liberal Party at the Foreign Office, Gladstone himself was forced to appear in penitential garb with an offer of surrender to the rebellious powers of Birmingham, arrangements to call the Irish Party together to authorise this grim decision were actually being concerted between us, when a message from the Irish Office called Parnell away. When we met the next day his stand was definitely taken. Our discussions of the previous night proceeded upon the assumption that Chamberlain would accept the concessions humbly proffered to him and go through the form of supporting the Second Reading. In that event Parnell would not have flinched from the responsibility of putting a summary end to the imposture. There arrived now some astounding confidential information that Chamberlain was taking the obeisances of his party and the self-abasement of his old leader with the hauteur of a conqueror, and would be content with nothing less than the unconditional destruction of the Bill in the voting lobbies. The Liberals were still keeping up their courage by whistling the old tune that the Second Reading was safe, that Chamberlain would at the last moment relent, or that next to nobody except the Hartingtonian Whigs would follow him. The delusion did not for a moment impose upon Parnell. "I dare say the old man is not to blame, but nothing can save the Bill," he said. "It would be madness for us to relieve Chamberlain of the responsibility of giving it the finishing stroke. We've got to see this wretched debate out with the best face we can. Above all, not a hint to any human being, or we shall have a stampede."

In essentials, my memory is, thank God, as firm as the outlines of a Flaxman drawing, but the minor curves have a way of fading out. Hence the relief of being able to turn to a few memoranda in shorthand which have by some accident come down amidst the flotsam and jetsam of those tempestuous times. They begin on the 24th of May, and break off as abruptly on the 4th of June. The idea may have been that we had reached a stage at which interesting things might be noted without any longer dreading seizure by the police, and that by the later date it had become evident that the days of immunity from police aggression were again coming to an end. The value of the few extracts which follow is that they give a glimpse such as only the emotions of the hour can give of the dangers thundering about the Irish leader's path while our sanguine countrymen were disporting themselves in the high heavens in an ecstasy.

(To be continued.)

'Tis most amusing! and most absurd,  
The most astonishing thing I've heard,  
Sane people who never heard, they're sure,  
Of world-wide Woods' Great Peppermint Cure!  
Resigned to suffer from year to year,  
Distressed with colds and obsessed by fear,  
These be the people who most endure,  
And most need Woods' Great Peppermint Cure.

**E. S. Robson**

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