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EVENING
MEMORIES
WILLIAM O'BRIEN

Being a Continuation of
RECOLLECTIONS
by the same Author



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CHAPTER XVIII

"REMEMBER MITCHELSTOWN"

(1887)

Our landing in Ireland was marked by one of those episodes which are more fatal to England's pretensions in Ireland than would be the loss of pitched battles. As we disembarked on the quay at Queens-town in the grey dawn, a regiment of Tipperary Militia (the 18th Royal Irish) had just been landed also from Spike Island where they had been in training. The moment we were recognised, the entire regiment of red coats broke their ranks to rush around us, waving their rifles about their heads, and more than half the audience we addressed at that uncanny hour was composed of soldiers "in England's hated red," shouting their wild Tipperary whoops. The rest of the day passed in mad festivities in the city of Cork following the ceremony of conferring the Freedom of the City, and the next day was spent in the most extraordinary series of glorified agonies it has ever been my lot to undergo in one day—a succession of quite frenzied welcomes home at every one of the twenty-three stations stopped at by the slow Sunday train to Dublin, culminating in a tumultuary progress to "The Impayrial," consecrated by a sacramental something of which military conquerors for all their feathers and salutes of big guns, never quite partake the secret. The Freedom of the City of Dublin was an appropriate last word of the welcome home.

It was all very moving and very terrifying. The country was, I suppose, stirred to the core by the human spectacle of perils in an uneven battle wondrously overpassed, and by the growing conviction that the same carelessness of consequences, akin to desperation, was the only hope of safety in the new perils with which the Perpetual Coercion Act just passed into law menaced her existence. Parnell's Paladins had never figured to more advantage than in their resistance to this infamous measure. In any work purporting to be a history of the movement as a whole, a chapter might be richly filled with the record of the eloquence, daring and resource devoted to the losing battle by Mr. Dillon, Mr. Healy, Mr. Sexton, Mr. T. P. O'Connor and others. For almost the last time the Party appeared on the Westminster scene in the plenitude of their power and comradeship, each supplementing the others—this one with fiery passion, this other with Swift's biting irony, still another with an intellectual agility that mocked at the most ruthless fetters of debate—in encounters which were the pride of their race, and extorted cheers from the ranks of the Tories even as they stabbed. And that though they were depressed by the absence of Parnell, upon whom the attacks of Bright's disease had returned, and who could only intervene once or twice in the debates, although always with the effect of an Homeric demigod descending from Olympus. But the results were of a character to show that the old methods of Parliamentary obstruction had passed away. Discussion was cut short by a closure which destroyed the old Parliamentary institutions of England more brutally than Cromwell's armed raid. At a given hour on a given night, the guillotine fell, whole groups of clauses enabling the Government to suppress the people's organisations by a stroke of the pen and try men by specially packed juries or without any

jury at all, as they pleased, were hustled through Committee without a word of discussion, and nothing better was left to the Opposition, Liberal and Irish, to avenge their expiring liberties than to quit the chamber. Finally English misgovernment presented its most hateful face when the Forged Letters were printed by the *Times* in collusion with the smug Leader of the House, Mr. W. H. Smith, in order to render the smallest resistance to the Coercion Act odious in England; and Parnell's own exposure of the Forgeries which afterwards horrified all civilized men, was received with jeers and laughter by the triumphant Unionists.

Westminster might still be the vantage ground from which to fire an effective shot for Ireland, but the ammunition could only come from Ireland herself. The new Chief Secretary was going over with the powers of a Tsar, and with the unconcealed determination to use them ruthlessly. Every man who stood up against him was to be struck down with whatever weapon promised to be most deadly. Every official who executed his decrees was to be defended and rewarded on a scale rising with the unscrupulousness of his deeds. There was but one answer, if Ireland's claims were not to be ingloriously given up. It was to meet Mr. Balfour with a will-power as steel-clad as his own; to respond to his every act of tyranny by redoubling the people's resistance, and never measuring the sacrifices that might be required to prove he was dealing with a nation that might be tortured till all the world cried out, but could not be conquered. Nor was this policy of Thorough so forlorn as it might seem. We had won the unquestioning allegiance of the English Party, whose ministries had often failed, but its programme never, and of an English leader of a moral value which made his party count twice over. Never was Mr. Morley less happy as a prophet or even as an observer

than in his dictum that "in England the effect" (of the Plan of Campaign) "is wholly bad; it offends almost more even than outrages." True, it did offend men in England, "almost more than outrages," but the offended were the enemies of Ireland, who laid their last stake on Coercion, and whose disgust knew no bounds to find that Ireland's resistance was accompanied with a crimelessness which deprived governmental brutality of every rag of excuse in the eyes of Englishmen. Gladstone saw deeper into human realities, when, reserving his liberty of appreciation of the technical illegality of the Plan, the Old Parliamentary Hand sagaciously limited himself in practice to the query: "The question is rather how much disapproval?" The "how much" turned out to be just a peppercorn.

As a matter of fact, most even of the purists or chicken-hearts of the Liberal Party, and all their men of action were already won over to the conviction that in substance and in truth, the Plan of Campaign had an irresistibly just case, both against the exterminating landlords and against their savage Unionist abettors, and that moreover the plain-spoken British commonalty were rapidly coming to the same conclusion. Dozens of the best men and women in the upper and in the humbler stratum of Liberalism were every week pouring across to Ireland, seeing for themselves the barbarisms and sheer villainy of the Glenbeigh and the Bodyke evictions, and ready to attest their sincerity by throwing their own bodies across Mr. Balfour's car of Juggernaut. Their names still sparkle like stars in Irish memory—Members of Parliament like Shaw Lefevre (now Lord Eversley), Brunner, John Ellis, Joshua Rowntree, Labouchere, Schwann, Philip Stanhope (now Lord Weardale), Conybeare, Rowlands—women who were the pioneers of all that women have since done to humanize public life: Lady Sandhurst, Lady Byles, Miss Amy Mander,

Lady Winifred Robinson, Miss Norma Borthwick, Miss Cobden, Lady Anne Blunt, Mrs. Rae, Miss Skeffington Thompson, Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Holiday—publicists of far reaching power in the world of democratic thought like W. T. Stead of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, W. P. Byles (afterwards Sir William Byles) of the *Bradford Observer*, and John McDonald of the *Daily News*—poets and idealists like Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. Their reports of their experiences in Ireland enkindled such a reaction among the British masses that Liberal partisans were beginning to look out for bye-elections with eagerness and the Unionist Party managers with dismay. The more Mr. Balfour's logical ferocity was met with a no less logical resistance at all costs, the sooner England would be compelled to decide between the alternatives of government by consent or government by sheer savagery. If the decision went against us, there would be nothing for it but to abandon the last hope of reconciliation between the two islands and trust to the immortal purpose of a race that thinks in centuries to assert itself in some distance far away. But the omens were, on the contrary, all pointing to the certainty of a complete turning of the tables at the General Election, if a busy and materialised British public were in the meantime kept alive to the lesson that the coercion of Ireland "to amuse Arthur Balfour" (it was Lord Salisbury's own phrase) could bring nothing but shame to its ministers and pain to all men with the instincts of liberty and humanity. Hence the resolution not to shrink in presence of any excess of misgovernment, but on the contrary to go out to meet it. As it was Mr. Balfour's wise plan to single out the ringleaders for his first victims in the belief that to dispose of them was to dispose of their followers so the ringleaders of set purpose closed with his challenge with the confidence that their being the first to tread the path of suffering and foul treatment

would be the surest of all ways of engaging their nation to follow.

The writer had the honour of being selected for Mr. Balfour's first prosecution under the new Coercion Act. That Act, as we have seen, was accompanied by a Land Act conceding the relief sought by the Plan of Campaign, but administered with the statesmanlike design of wreaking vengeance on the men who had won the concession for their brother tenants. Upon the Countess of Kingston's estate, at Mitchelstown, the new Act had only to be allowed to operate to decree compulsorily the abatement of the judicial rents at the figure at which the tenants proffered payment. The leaseholders whom it admitted to the Fair Rent Courts must have secured there (as, in fact, afterwards happened) abatements considerably in excess of those demanded under the Plan of Campaign. But those who had induced Lord Salisbury to recant the vows to regard the Judicial Rents as inviolable with which his Land Act was first prefaced had committed the unforgivable sin. The first stroke of statesmanship of the new Chief Secretary was to hurry up the eviction campaign on the Mitchelstown estate before the Relief Act should come into action. The redoubtable Captain Plunkett, whom Sir M. H. Beach had employed a few months before, with Sir Redvers Buller, in forbidding evictions by the practical refusal of the forces of the Crown to the evictors, was now ordered to Mitchelstown with all his bayonets to precipitate the eviction of the men whom the Act must otherwise save, and of the justice of whose claims the Act was an official attestation. Against this iniquity I went down to protest in a speech which put an end to the evictions, but no doubt violated the letter of the existing law in the process, by exhorting the tenants straightly to resist the evictors by force pending the relief the new law must

in a few days bring them. The Northwich election was on the point of coming off. A determined stand now would knit the issue, whether there was to be any hope from England. That my exhortation would not be unavailing, was made sufficiently plain by the grim preparations for the defence visible that day in the centre of the town of Mitchelstown itself, where one of the principal business houses, that of Mr. Maurice Sullivan (afterwards famed as "Campaign House") was prepared for action, the doors front and rear barricaded, the window-frames removed, a garrison of strapping men posted in readiness inside, and across the front a great green streamer bearing the inscription: "Evictors, come on!" In the feverheat of the moment to proceed with the evictions would without any doubt have been to provoke one bloody encounter after another, all over the estate. Fortunately, Captain Plunkett, the author of the official watchword of the new policy—"Don't hesitate to shoot"—hesitated to evict: The evicting force evacuated Mitchelstown the next morning; the Government was beaten at the Northwich election; the estate was saved, and its stalwart people are now the proprietors of their own holdings under the Purchase Act of 1903, and the thud of the crowbar of the evicting brigade will never jar upon the peace of their golden plains again.¹

¹ The point was put thus in the writer's "Here-we-are-now-face-to-face" speech in the House of Commons:

"On my own responsibility, in the open square and in the presence of the police, I did tell the people that, if the evictions were carried out before the Land Bill, which was within two days of being law, could become law, it would not be a vindication of the law, but an outrageous evasion of the law, and they would before all civilised men be justified in defending their homes by every honest effort in their power. . . . I have no doubt it was technically illegal for me to save the people, and that it was still legal for the landlord for two days more to ruin them. I dare say it would be a breach of the law to hold the arm of the executioner,

With an inaccuracy unusual in his fine narrative Mr. Morley (*Life of Gladstone*, Vol. III., p. 380) states that the incidents which made Gladstone cry out: "Remember Mitchelstown," were "not connected with the Crimes Act." They were, on the contrary, the direct result of the first prosecution under the Crimes Act. John Mandeville and myself were summoned to appear before the first of the new Crimes Act Courts on the 9th of September for the speeches which averted the evictions. With a view to avoiding the scenes attending the conveyance of prisoners through the country, the Act gave traversers the option of attending on simple summons in the first instance. In conformity with our settled purpose of obstructing the Act at every stage, by every means by which inconvenience, odium, derision and contempt could be heaped upon its administrators, it was decided that I should decline to facilitate the prosecution, and should disobey the summons to make a voluntary appearance. I announced my intention at a lecture for a charitable object which I delivered in Dublin on the night (8th September) before the Court was to sit in Mitchelstown. The Most Rev. Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, who was in the Chair, had just made a proposal for a joint treaty of peace between landlords and tenants, such as was eventually arrived at by the Land Conference of 1903, after sixteen further years of undiluted misery for both sides. The subject of the lecture, "The Lost Opportunities of the Irish Gentry," seemed to announce some final vow of irreconcilability against the class at whose instigation the morrow's prosecution was being instituted, and the country launched into a new era of clearances and dragonnades; and the fiercer the vow the more madly even if you knew and he knew that a reprieve was actually arriving at the gates. That was precisely the case of these people. A reprieve was coming and the reprieve has come."

that audience would have re-echoed it. How far the expectation was disappointed may be judged by an extract or two from the lecture: "Your Grace has quite correctly anticipated that I intend to speak only of the opportunities the Irish gentry have lost, and madly lost, in the past, and that I do not speak—I shall not say even that I despair—of the opportunities that may yet be within their grasp. The hour is never too late for Irish forgiveness—even for the class whose hands, I am sorry to say, are to this hour red with evictions and whose voices are still hoarse with the clamour for coercion."

Again (and it is curious to remark this was in the hearing of Mr. Dillon): "If in the morning the Irish gentry proposed frankly to draw a wet sponge over the past, there is not a prominent politician in Ireland who would answer with a churlish or contumelious word. They would be welcomed. They would be honoured. Irish forgiveness is to be had to this hour for the honest asking. . . . There will be false gods no more in Ireland, but for good men and capable men who have a heart for the miseries of their countrymen and the will to labour for their alleviation, there is still, and there will always be, welcome, honour and gratitude, no matter what their class, or from what race they may have sprung."

It is, perhaps, pardonable to recall that on the night of all the nights of his life when his heart might have been most full of bitterness for the Irish minority, the speaker of that night proclaimed to their full extent, and to the most red-hot of Nationalist audiences, those principles of Conference, Conciliation and Consent, which half a generation afterwards he braved the hard words, and the subterranean workings of disappointed politicians in order to bring to their fruition in the Act which abolished Landlordism, and which might have been the sure

forerunner of an Act abolishing alien rule with the same universal good will.¹

But the hour was not yet for anything save the clash of arms. The next evening in the dining room of the Imperial Hotel, Charles Lawlor, the proprietor (fondest of friends under the mask of the most genial of cynics) put into my hands the *Evening Mail* announcing that the sitting of the Court at Mitchelstown had been signalled by a desperate encounter in the streets ending in a murderous fusillade by Captain Plunkett's police. The people could not be dissuaded from flocking into the town in thousands to enjoy the chagrin of the Coercion Court at the collapse of their day's arrangements. Their meeting on the Square, attended by a number of English Members of Parliament and Englishwomen, was burst in upon by armed policemen, under pretence of protecting a police notetaker, for whom accommodation could readily have been obtained by less aggressive methods. The interrupters were without violence pressed back to the edge of the crowd and the speaking proceeded. Suddenly, a solid phalanx of policemen with truncheons and carbines rushed from the police barrack at the bottom of the Square, and wedged themselves right into the heart of the meeting, flourishing their clubs and the butts of their guns about their heads. This was too much for mountaineers from the Galtees not accustomed to take aggression with meekness. The blows of the batons and the clubbed carbines were returned with blackthorn sticks and stones, and in a twinkling the broken ranks of the assailants were flying back down the Square to their barracks in a highly disgraceful state of panic. The evidence of

¹ Those who care to investigate for themselves how the Policy of Conciliation of 1903 was thwarted, and with it the most hopeful of all opportunities for a peaceful Irish settlement, will find the facts set forth in *An Olive Branch in Ireland and its History*, by William O'Brien (London: Macmillan).

Mr. Dillon, who acted with coolness and gallantry throughout the proceedings, made it clear that the bulk of the meeting remained where they were, and that the irresponsible stragglers who pursued the flying policemen were few in number and never dreamed of attacking a barrack garrisoned by thrice their number of armed men. Only one of the policemen was seriously injured; there was no pretence of proof of any actual assault upon the barracks; two of the three civilians who lost their lives were shot while they were standing far away on the Square, where the policemen had to thrust their shoulders through the windows and aim sideways in order to reach them. This mythical invasion of the barracks was, however, the only official excuse that could be invented for the demoralised mob of policemen who, in blind terror and panic, fled to their fortress helter-skelter, and when no attack came rushed to the windows, and twisting their rifles so as to reach the Square, since assailants in the neighbourhood of the barracks there were none, slaughtered three men by way of vengeance for their own cowardly behaviour. Mr. Balfour's attitude to the assassins tells the whole story of his theory of "firm and resolute government." A transaction in reference to which the Coroner's jury returned verdicts of wilful murder against five police officers after a prolonged public inquiry was dismissed by the Chief Secretary in the House of Commons three nights afterwards, when it was not possible for him to have sifted the evidence for himself, with the verdict that the police were in no way to blame, and the responsibility lay with those who exercised the right of public meeting. The three murders remained unpunished. The only inquiry even Gladstone's scathing denunciations could succeed in getting the Chief Secretary to institute was a secret police investigation into their responsibilities, not for the murders, but for the untimely

panic of the police—not for their over-zeal, but for their want of zeal sufficiently prompt to interpret their commission: "Don't hesitate to shoot." It was brutality, but frank brutality, and it was logic, and Mr. Balfour was to be thanked once more for leaving Englishmen in no doubt what their rule in Ireland must in the nature of things be.

Three nights after the massacre at Mitchelstown, when I went down to Kingstown to see Labouchere and Brunner off by the mailboat, the warrant for my arrest was executed by Superintendent Reddy, under the belief, in which the Castle was as absurdly astray as usual, that I intended to join them in debating the event in the House of Commons the following evening. In pursuance of the plan of countering the Coercionists at every step with obstruction, discomfort, and contempt, I refused to fall in with the official arrangement for lodging me in Dublin Castle for the night, without a physical resistance which would have raised half Dublin into an uproar, and declined to make any terms with my captors when they proposed to make me promise not to make any public speech on condition of taking me to the Imperial Hotel instead. The unfortunate Superintendent saw with dismay the great street in front filling with people as the rumour of the arrest went around, but was powerless to interfere while his prisoner stepped out on the balcony to harangue the multitude, and in the citadel of the Chief Secretary's power made the welkin ring alternately with execrations and derision of the despotism of which the Mitchelstown murders were the overture. It was a war *par petits paquets*, but it was the only one possible for a disarmed people struggling with a power to all appearance as overwhelming as it was ignorant and cruel, but it established from that night a standard of unbending resistance in great things or small, at every hour and in every corner of the country as opportunity offered

—*nunc, olim, quocunque dabunt se tempore vires*—which the history of the next three years proved, was not to be vanquished by any force of Statutable cruelty or of gunfire. The scene was repeated the next day at every stage of our progress through the South. By the time the portals of Cork jail closed upon the prisoner, amidst a final shower of not-to-be-reasoned-with paving stones for the escorting troop of dragoons, one knew that in Mr. Balfour's quaint confidence that his battle was already won, when he set out to terrify or stamp out three or four leaders, he had in reality set fire to a nation.

The scenes attending the formal reading over of the sentences dictated by Dublin Castle—for that was, of course, the plain English of the "trial" of John Mandeville and myself before the Removable Magistrates at Mitchelstown on September 24th—may be best described in a few extracts from the Diary of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt.¹ Mr. Blunt had come over under an irresistible impulse of duty to see for himself how Mr. Balfour was going to give effect to his intentions revealed to him in the conversations at Clouds in the first week of September that half a dozen men named "must be got out of the way," and that "we are not going to have any nonsense such as there was in Forster's time" as to any consideration for his prisoners. He was blamed without mercy in his own aristocratic world for thinking more of the lives of men, and of the fate of a defenceless people, than of his obligation to suppress the "confidential" conversation with a responsible Minister of the Crown in which this mode of warfare was divulged. Nobody seriously contested the good faith or the substantial accuracy of the revelation, which was, indeed, attested by the whole course of philosophic inhumanity pursued by the Chief Secretary in the

¹ *The Land War in Ireland.* London: Swift and Co., 1912.

next few years, and not least in the prison treatment of Mr. Blunt himself. It is bare justice to a high-minded English gentleman to acknowledge that if the project thus lightly entered upon did not produce many more tragedies, and was finally dropped under the pressure of a violent reaction in Britain, the credit is largely due to the fortitude with which Mr. Blunt brought the truth of the Government's designs into the daylight, and with which he supported their rigours in his own person. The historian of these times will find his book a storehouse of information rarely to be found as to the inner events and the personages of the last of the Irish Land Wars, and his evidence is all the more precious that his judgments are recorded with a candour which may sometimes be awkward for his friends, but invariably bears the stamp of sincerity and truth. A few of his Mitchelstown notes may still be read with the morning freshness of impressions committed to paper at the moment.

First, this characteristic incident (surely one only possible in Ireland) of Bridewell life in Mitchelstown:

"*September 23rd.* The last joke is that Mandeville and the prisoners in the Bridewell got hobnobbing last night with their jailor, who was so inspired by patriotism and whiskey that he threw them the keys of their dungeon and they availed themselves of his generosity to the extent of going out for a couple of hours' leave, returning to prison later so as not to compromise their friend. Dillon assures me it would be quite possible to get O'Brien out of nearly any prison in Ireland, for the turnkeys are generally their partisans in secret and O'Brien is universally beloved.

"*September 24th.* The day of O'Brien's trial: the town is held by a battalion of the Guards, a troop of dragoons, and some fifty constables. Some eight

thousand men (not women or children) came in from the country round, but without banners or music. At ten we called on the minor prisoners at the Bridewell, and then walked on along the road to the cross-ways, where we waited O'Brien's arrival (from Cork jail). Here he presently appeared, escorted by a troop of dragoons and a number of pressmen in cars, and a deputation from Cork with a green banner. A single dragoon rode in front, but seeing our party in the road fell back upon the main body, apparently fearing an ambushade. Then they swept by in a cloud of dust through our cheers. O'Brien, arrived at the Courthouse, was a spectacle for Heaven, powdered with dust from head to foot! He was in high spirits all the same, and we were able to shake hands with him and wish him luck, and the ladies to present him with flowers. The Square was occupied by the Guards in their scarlet uniforms and shakos drawn up across each opening. . . . The proceedings of the trial were very interesting, both from the composition of the court—it was as much a packed tribunal as any in the Stuart days—as from the absurd nature of the evidence, got up by Captain Plunkett (a swaggering, loud-voiced fellow in a check suit) who also appointed the magistrates. . . .

"September 25th. We went early to the Bridewell to see O'Brien, whom we found in the highest possible spirits. He and his fellow prisoners had spent a merry evening singing patriotic songs, and his description of the jailor coming in to caution them was very amusing. 'Gentlemen,' the jailor said, 'I don't wish to interfere with your diversions, but I would remark that there is an echo (or as Luke pronounced it, 'ay-cho') in this place and I'm afraid you'll be heard in the street (by them bloody Bobbies outside)' . . . We then went on to the Courthouse and heard the trial out. Harrington having thrown down his brief, O'Brien was his own lawyer to-day,

and made a very vigorous defence. He has two tones in his voice, one low, soft and very touching, the other strident and declamatory. He began in the first, and standing before his judges he was the ideal of a martyr speaking to an unjust tribunal. His declamatory harangue which followed I liked less, and yet it, too, was very powerful.¹ Dillon sat next to him to advise, and on the other side sat the Dean (O'Regan) a white-haired old priest of the Douay school. It ended just as Harrington had all

¹ It may not be uninteresting to others, as it is assuredly interesting to myself, to add here two other descriptions of my peculiarities as a speech-maker. They are none the less valuable pieces of expert evidence because they come from brother pressmen of distinction. The first is from the *Recollections of an Irish Judge*, by M. McDonnell Bodkin, K.C. (page 149): "When I first met him on the *Freeman's Journal* staff he gave me the idea of being a student rather than an orator or agitator. He had a rooted repugnance to public speaking. . . . He was afterwards to become the greatest platform speaker of his day, the greatest that Ireland has known since O'Connell, an orator whose words could inspire his audience with an enthusiasm almost amounting to frenzy. . . . His fiery earnestness carried all before it. Absolutely fearless, he was ready for any sacrifice, and when he led all were prepared to follow, doubts and fears forgotten." The other is from *The Home Rule Movement*, by Mr. Michael MacDonagh, the author of the *Life of O'Connell*, which has now become a standard authority (page 171): "Lord Salisbury had declared that the true physic for Ireland's mind disease was 'twenty years of resolute government'; and that he had found the man to carry out that policy as Chief Secretary in his nephew, Arthur James Balfour. Ireland also found her man. . . .

"The man whom Ireland found in this emergency was that very remarkable personality, William O'Brien. He inspired and directed the Irish Nationalist Movements, agrarian and political, for the four stirring years, 1886-1890. He was acknowledged leader because of his ability, his passionate earnestness, his soaring faith in his cause. . . . O'Brien achieved greatness because he dared without any thought of the risk involved to himself. He dared, when in the early eighties during a strike of the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police, he planned to electrify the people and stupefy the Government by taking Dublin Castle by force of arms, himself leading the Fenians in the attack, with the object of carrying off the Viceroy, Lord Spencer, as a hostage

along predicted, in a sentence of three months imprisonment. Eaton, the chief magistrate, denied that he read the sentence, but I was just behind him and saw the paper he was reading."

Curiously enough Mr. Blunt failed to notice at all the Crown Prosecutor, Mr. Edward Carson, whom I then saw for the first time, but was destined to encounter in many an eventful hour to come. Who, indeed, could discern in the liverish young man, with the complexion of one fed on vinegar, and with

to the mountains. . . . He dared just as much years afterwards when, as he thought, the hour auspicious for reconciliation having come, he promptly held out the olive branch to the landlords, and brought about a conference which led to the great land purchase scheme, and was within an ace of settling the national question also, had not the evil genius of the country—working this time mainly through political short-sightedness and perhaps political jealousies of other leading nationalists—brought his policy of 'Conference, Conciliation, and Consent' to ruin. . . .

"William O'Brien was thirty-four years of age, when in the winter of 1886, in answer to the pronouncement of the first Unionist Government that they would stand no nonsense from Ireland, he started the Plan of Campaign. . . . In the working of the Plan, O'Brien had John Dillon as his chief comrade-in-arms in Ireland, and T. M. Healy and Sexton as his chief lieutenants in the House of Commons. . . . O'Brien was a man of considerable nervous and spiritual force. For rousing popular passion at a public meeting he was greatest among the Irish leaders. He swayed the crowd as the trees of a wood are swayed by the storm. He was alternately menacing, mournful, prophetic, gentle, and appealing. As he spoke he trembled from head to foot, and panted under the stress of his oratorical outburst. He indulged in the wildest of gestures, face, hands, and arms, and the tones of his voice ranged from a piercing shriek when he was scornful and denunciatory, to a soft, murmurous whisper when he indulged in passages of tender pathos and the dreamy musings of his poetic imagination. I remember well, as a reporter for *The Freeman's Journal*, attending Plan of Campaign meetings, how difficult I found it to transfer his passion, invective, and imagery through the hieroglyphics of shorthand to my note-book, so attracted was I by the magnetic nature of the man, and so great was the whirl into which the sweep and sway of his eloquence put my mind."

This last is the prettiest compliment the heart of an old newspaper man could desire.

features as inexpressive as a jagged hatchet, other than the latest of the Dublin lawyers who in every fresh bout of Coercion swoop on their quarry by the instincts of vultures scenting a battlefield? Mr. Carson was at the time little known outside the circle at the Library fire in the Four Courts. It was his first brief in Munster, and he had probably never set foot in the Ulster of which he was to constitute himself the fanatical disturber. His sinister features, which were somewhat of a libel on the real man, at once gave him an exaggerated unpopularity which made his fame as one of the triumvirate who undertook to dragoon Ireland. Of them it might be said, as it was of the three revolutionary confederates of the French Terror, that whatever the three undertook, Balfour thought it, Carson said it, and Plunkett did it. The only one of his later qualities of which the young barrister gave any glimpse at Mitchelstown was the cold insolence which he was to tone down in larger days—the traditional truculence in word and manners which made the Irish Crown Prosecutor all but as unlovely a portion of the machinery of justice as the hangman. The one comment with which he dismissed my own poor defence was: "The usual blather!" Since a battle unto blood it was to be, I was only too well content that the principal officer of Public Justice should make a parade of so refreshing a gift of making himself and his cause odious. Much more inexcusable, because less valiant, was his contemptuous reference to my brother prisoner, John Mandeville, as some obscure village agitator, seeking notoriety by holding on to my coat tails—the man thus stupidly insulted being a gentleman freeholder with no selfish interest of any kind in the Land War, who lived in a delightful home with his devoted wife, who enjoyed a respect so universal in the community, that the very Bridewell keeper addressed him as "Master John," and who

was to lay down his life without a complaining word as a consequence of the sentence thus unhappily bespoken for him. It was, possibly, some haunting memories like these that, when I met Sir Edward Carson many a year later at a moment when, but for a stroke of Ireland's historic ill-luck, our old quarrel might have been closed for ever, caused him to remark: "You are the most forgiving man I ever met." My half-bantering, whole-earnest, response was: "Don't give me the slightest credit for it. You forget you were a much more useful man than myself in making England's rule detestable." There were only two breaks in his impassiveness at the Mitchelstown trial. One was his very perceptible annoyance, when I was leaving Court on the first evening, to see the Guards, lined at each side as I passed, hoist their shakos on the tops of their rifles and burst into cheers for their prisoner. The other was his almost too acid contempt for the hooting with which he was received himself by the populace. I have seen that yellow smile and demonstrative lower lip displayed to more advantage often enough since, before a hostile majority in the House of Commons, when he had no omnipotent Coercion Act at his back to cheapen the valour of his contempt.

The month between the sentence and its confirmation on appeal must be skipped over, crammed though it was with events stirring enough, such as three new prosecutions against me in the Dublin Police Courts, in which the tables were victoriously turned by Mr. Healy; the interview of Mr. Dillon and myself with Monsignor Persico, the Papal Envoy; and a series of insuppressible "suppressed" meetings on the fighting estates, the final triumph of which was the first of the Midnight meetings, when the Lord Lieutenant's proclamation was publicly burnt in Woodford, and Mr. Wilfrid Blunt gave Mr. Balfour his revenge by a prosecution of which more hereafter.

The month was spent in winding the country up to an open and scornful defiance of Coercion in all its pitiful shapes during the three months after I should have disappeared.

Two incidents of the last scene must not be omitted. A procession several miles long accompanied John Mandeville and myself to the Appeal Court at Midleton. When the proceedings commenced a telegram was handed to the Crown Solicitor, and was long and anxiously debated between Mr. Carson and himself. One of our innumerable friends in the Telegraph Service had got hold of the Government cypher and concocted a telegram from the famous Serjeant Peter O'Brien in Dublin, instructing Mr. Carson for urgent reasons which would be duly communicated to him to have the appeal adjourned to the next Sessions—a respite of three months. It would have been an immense joke, and it is now clear the Crown Council would have fallen without suspicion into the booby-trap. I had not been apprised of the design and spoiled the fun, while Mr. Carson was still painfully interpreting the cypher, by standing up to announce that I would take no further part in the proceedings, and proposed to quit the Court pending the completion of formalities. This, I was advised, was perfectly admissible according to the wording of the Act, and so the Recorder, who presided, declared; but the Removable Magistrate in command—a burly military man named Stokes—jumped madly on the witness table flourishing a heavy oak stick about his head, shouted that he would not let me leave the Court, whatever the law or the Recorder might say, and straightway provoked a riot between the police and the people, in which I was sufficiently rejoiced with this spectacle of the Coercion bullies in open insurrection against the law to submit with an excellent grace to be dragged back before I could reach

the thousands of excited people surging around the Courthouse.

The last touch was supplied on our transfer to Cork jail by road in the midst of an escort of Hussars. We rode in a two horse carriage in the company of the County Inspector of police and one of his subalterns, and a miscellaneous cavalcade of horsemen and cars of all descriptions galloped wildly in the rear. It was only as we neared Cork that we realized that the chargers of the hussars had quickened their pace to a gallop, and that our unfortunate coach horses were being flogged to a pace never rivalled outside the pages of Lever. We noticed also that a light trap driven by the Mayor of Cork, Alderman John O'Brien, was by this time engaged in a steeplechase with our escort, and was threatening to pass us on the road at full gallop. We were not long in surmising the explanation. A couple of miles from Cork, at Dunkettle, an opening bridge spans the road, and Mayor John O'Brien was racing to be first across the swing bridge in time to lift it and leave the Hussars and their prisoners on the wrong side of a yawning gulf of waters. For the last half mile the pace became so terrific I expected every moment our unfortunate steeds would drop and die in the shafts, but at the last a charge of the rearguard brought the Mayor's gallant chase to a standstill, and the troop of Hussars was safely across the swing bridge, their horses dead beat, but themselves chortling with victory. And so on to our destination at the jail gates where, as usual, an affectionate shower of stones fired as it were Rebel Cork's last volley over the bodies of their departed comrades.

One trait more to put us in a better humour with human nature. The next day the Captain in charge of the Hussar escort called to the jail to leave his card for me, and the Governor of the jail, Major Roberts,

brought it to me with the air of one who was risking his neck—or, what was the same thing, his place—to do his prisoner the courtesy. Wonderful old land of ours! Well may the bard sing—

Here's dear old Ireland, brave old Ireland,
Ireland boys, hurrah!