

A CHAT WITH MICHAEL DAVITT

The Noted Irish Patriot Recompensating at Oakland, Cal.

GIRDING HIS LOINS FOR BATTLE.

Home Rule a Matter of a Few Years—Parnell's Successor—Balfour—an Opportunist—Interesting Reminiscences.

Michael Davitt has been living in Oakland Cal., with his wife's people for a few months and is now going to return to his life work. He goes to no dinners, nor does he accept the invitations which have been showered upon him to speak in public. He went there for rest and he wants all the rest he can get.

"I must abide by the doctor's orders and live by his rule. You see why? It's an old tale, and it goes back to the time when I was a young man and thought that a spark of fire would start a conflagration. I thought that 'When did you begin to work for Ireland?' was the question."

"As a lad in Lancashire, I was during the Fenian rebellion in 1855. I thought with all the others that Ireland was to be won by force of arms. The Irish are among the bravest men in the world, but they do not estimate their foe. Only the later years have taught them to consider the odds."

"Why, I was arranging to send arms to Ireland after my release. I had sent already, when suddenly I was seized in London, in 1870, and hurried off to prison on a charge of treason and felony."

"Perhaps you don't realize that that meant oblivion for years, but certainly it did. I was thrust into Clerkenwell, and afterward into Dartmoor. For seven years and two months I was never allowed to receive any visit from my friends. I knew my sentence must last fifteen years, and that there was no help for me without. You ask me to describe my feelings in such a situation. How can I? They were as manifold as the shadows of dark day. To realize it all you must feel that you are fighting against complete despair. Prisoners in England are treated as if they had entered the gates. It means leaving home behind forever. But in the United States the prisoner is treated as if he might be made free by the term of his punishment. With us the food was wretched, and indeed in the four imprisonments that I have endured I have not found that it improved the better in the Irish prisons than in the English, strange as it may seem, although Ireland is so much the poorer and although there is so much less money there."

"Well, one day a keeper came to my cell and told me I was free. You can't understand what the word means until you have lived the life! I had kept count of the days of my bondage and I knew it was seven years and fifty-six days. The government of Great Britain had issued an amnesty to the Irish prisoners, it seems. Fancy the turmoil and rebellion that had grown within me during the seven years. Think of the joy to pass from prison into the free air and into the light of the sun. 'I didn't care where I was, but I had to get out. The intoxication of day and night and air was supreme. In three or four hours my eyes were used to the blink of the sunshine, and I found my way to London. There I communicated with my old friends and waited to hear from the living and the dead. I had learned to love the life of my prison life, and I listened to the news, good or bad, with indifference. My only thought was for the cause in which I had been engaged. Henceforth, I would devote my life to the plans which I had conceived in my cell in Dartmoor."

"I've been in jail many times since then, and altogether I've spent nearly ten years in jail, but the last three terms were lighter than the first, and I had with me the hope and courage which had grown with the cause of Ireland's freedom."

"What of Ireland, Mr. Davitt?" "How does she stand?" "She is on the brink of her freedom," said Mr. Davitt, his face lighting with a smile. "Home rule is only a matter of a few years. Parliament may be dissolved at any time, and there is so much discussion and difference in the political factions that Salisbury must call for general elections for next year, or at the latest for the following autumn."

"The people who surround him know that, and they know, too, that it is the knell of the tory party for many a year."

"What do you think of Balfour's policy in Ireland during the past few years?" "Balfour is one of the greatest opponents of the tory party. He has caught all the plans of his opponents and used them to the advantage of his own. The tory party of county government is just such an adaptation as Disraeli would have made from one of Gladstone's programmes."

"But clever as Balfour is, his game is plain. Believe me, the tory party never will pass the county government bill. Balfour made his greatest play when he made it a question of the purchase of estates for the benefit of Irish tenants. It was an idea stolen from his enemies, and he succeeded for a time in the passage of the bill. He never believed he is earnest in the county government bill—because he knows that its passage simply means the end of the tory party."

"No! I frankly believe that Salisbury will adopt a programme this year by which conservatives will get over the county government bill, adding and subtracting clauses until the end of the session, but without ever passing it. Then Salisbury will appeal to the country, leaving his enemies, even, under the impression that he is eager to settle the Irish question once and forever by an excellent county government system. But he forgets that the tory party have become wise through much tribulation."

"The next Irish leader?" "Who will be the next leader of the Irish party?" "Probably John Dillon. Justin McCarthy is one of the most charming men in the world, but he does not care to be a leader. For my part I would give the leadership to one of the great mainstays of the Irish party in all its vicissitudes. Parnell's day is over, and he can never hope to lead again. A general election would deprive him of his last adherent. He stands alone today through his own fault. He was spotted by the Irish party's mother, and he has been quarrel. They were eighty-six strong and they had resolved to band together for one name. Parnell deserves the credit. He can give him for the work that he did, but he can give him for his head was turned. He received his friends as ardently as he had deceived his enemies. Certainly he would have deceived Gladstone, and as for myself, I think I was generally agreed that there was a plan in 1886, you know, by which there should be two classes of members, with and without real property; but that was abandoned, and has been forgotten."

"Who will lead the liberal party if it comes into power?" "Gladstone, of course, and his courage and wisdom are undimmed by his years. Gladstone is a man who moves with the times. His foresight is his strength, and he can seize the drift of public opinion and he holds his words and actions accordingly."

"What will be the home-rule plan of the liberal government?" "O, a simple government, such as is in vogue in some of the British colonies. I hope I think it is generally agreed that there should be only one chamber in the Irish parliament, and I think also that there will be no property qualifications needed for the members. There was a plan in 1886, you know, by which there should be two classes of members, with and without real property; but that was abandoned, and has been forgotten."

"Gladstone in harmony with this idea of a single house of parliament in Ireland?" "Yes, I think you would find that his programme includes that scheme at least. Chicago, Sept. 14, 1891. SIR CHARLES RUSSELL. Here Mr. Davitt spoke of Sir Charles Rus-

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The fifth biennial reunion of the Twenty-first Iowa regiment, Iowa volunteers, will be held at Marion September 17 and 18. Return railroad tickets to all points in Iowa for one-third fare and certificates showing payment of full fare going and endorsed by the railway. Take such receipt or certificate for each ticket purchased in going. Thursday, September 17, will be devoted to enrollment and general sociality, response and camp fire on the evening. Friday forenoon a business session of the association with very interesting programmes in the afternoon and evening. Numerous officers and members of the regiment will attend this reunion for the first time, and the attendance of several very welcome guests is expected, including ex-Governor Kirkwood, General George F. McGinnis, Chaplain Sawyer of the Forty-seventh Indiana and Simmons of the Twenty-eighth Iowa. Every former member of the regiment is especially and urgently invited to attend.</