

# Irish News

## OUR IRISH LETTER

(From our own correspondent.)

Dublin, January, 1906.

For a whole month we have read elections, talked elections, thought elections, breathed elections; nothing else has been in the air to breathe, so that it is now a comfort to have the atmosphere free of them and mind at rest as to results.

In England the excitement has been intense, while the upheaval brought about by the swing of the pendulum is almost unprecedented in Parliamentary history. But all the hubbub makes very little difference here in Ireland where, as far back as my memory of politics goes, there has been but one ruling idea, one purpose amongst the mass of the people, come Tory, Whig, Liberal, Conservative, what not: 'Who's going to let us mind our own business?' ...

This idea has, as of course you knew long ago, returned 83 Home Rule members to Parliament and 20 anti-Home Rulers, the latter including two from Dublin University. This is the whole General Election work, as far as Ireland is concerned.

The Elections were tame, very tame. The days of O'Connell and Vesey Fitzgerald, cracked heads and faction fights are gone for ever, and with them, somehow, all the wit and fun of old election times in Ireland. The candidates of rival politics and the voters of rival Home Rule or Orange colors are as sweet and polite to each other as if they were not in deadly earnest at all; all the hard knocks (and they really are not many) are given on paper, and it is no longer worth a man's while to make a bitter but witty joke at his opponent's expense. Business is business, and the Irish electors just vote as they have done now for a generation, let parties change and play see-saw as they will in England.

### The Late Chief Secretary.

After West Belfast, which Mr. Devlin wrested from the Orangemen of that city, the most interesting contest we have had was that in South Dublin, where a bitter Orange faction whipped up every power Unionism could muster to insure the election of Mr. Walter Long, late Chief Secretary for Ireland, a man who was rejected by three constituencies in England and whose brain-power may be gauged by the too truthful want of tact shown by him in an electioneering speech made by him in Dublin when addressing a Unionist audience: 'I am not,' he said, 'ashamed to confess that I found, during my tenure of office, not alone that there were interesting problems to be solved, but that to live in Ireland, as the Minister responsible for the Government, was to spend a very pleasant and agreeable time. I do not wish to blow my own trumpet—but while I managed to do a good deal of work, I also managed to get a great deal of fun, and I regret very much that I am no longer able to follow; an Irish pack of hounds or to travel over Ireland and meet Irishmen in various conditions and positions in society and spend, as I have spent, many pleasant days and evenings. . . . As Chief Secretary I have had the privilege of enjoying a delightful residence in the Phoenix Park; it has been my privilege to have sumptuous apartments in Dublin Castle; it has been my privilege, and a very important one, to draw a very fat salary out of the Imperial revenue as Chief Secretary.'

Mr. Long's candid definition of his idea of a Chief Secretary's duties in Ireland, in return for a delightful residence in the Phoenix Park, etc., did not hinder the Dublin Conservatives from voting for him to a man and returning him by a large majority.

The principal matter to be noted in these General Elections, as far as they regard us, is that before and during the fray in England and in Ireland the Conservatives hammered at one assertion, namely: that every man who voted for a Liberal candidate, that every man who voted for Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman gave a vote for Home Rule in Ireland, and a fortnight ago the 'Times' wrote: 'Let there be no shadow of doubt about it, Home Rule is an issue of the General Election of 1906.'

Now, we are told that what is logically plain to every mind must be true, ergo, as, after such an appeal, the English electors have returned such a vast majority of Liberals to Parliament, it must follow that they have returned them in order that they may give Ireland Home Rule. Yet we all know well that it is not so; we know that the English have voted Liberal because they want free food; because they are sick of

the Ministry that made the South African War, and because they love to play see-saw and are tired of Conservatism; they want change, in fact. But, be this as it may, the Home Rule herring failed to draw, neither did it provoke any sign of disapproval.

### A Sad Event.

There was one very sad event at the election for North Galway, where Colonel Nolan was opposed by a Mr. Higgins, a Nationalist. Just before the close of the poll, Mr. Higgins was taken ill, and a few minutes after the Sheriff had proclaimed him elected by a large majority he expired. The incident, so strikingly illustrative of the vanity of human ambition, the awful nothingness of worldly things, made a deep impression on the public.

### Revival of an Old Industry.

An effort is about to be made towards the revival of a once flourishing trade in Ireland, that of glove-making. Fifty years ago there were in Cork alone 500 glovers and 40 master-glovers: to-day there is one master-glover who employs just a few hands in his factory. And yet, the articles produced by this factory are quite equal to anything we get from France: they are durable, fine in quality, well cut, and no dearer than the same class of foreign gloves. It is hoped that means will be found to bring back the old prosperity to the trade by once again teaching the country people to value and care their goats and to properly flay and preserve kid skins, by opening workshops for the various processes of the glover's trade, and last, but not least, by encouraging the sale and purchase of the home-manufactured article. The matter is being taken up by a prominent member of the Board of Technical Instruction, so that probably some State aid may be at first forthcoming for preliminary encouragement and help.

In days gone by, 'fairings' were a great custom in Ireland, and a favorite fairing for gentlemen in Counties Limerick and Tipperary to bring to their lady acquaintances was a pair of Limerick gloves. These were marvellously fine chamois gloves; so fine, in fact, that they were sold enclosed in a walnut shell, tied with a true lover's knot of pretty riband. The contents of the little walnut cost five shillings. I happened to possess two pairs of these now rare gloves, and it is through this fact becoming known that I have learned that the old industry is again to be fostered.

### Picturesque and Historic Old Dublin

is fast disappearing, at least the picturesque and historic parts associated with the old city that grew around Christ's Church, the Castle, around St. Patrick's Cathedral, the famous 'Close' where Dean Swift was in by-gone days a familiar figure; Patrick street, the Coombe, the centre of our once famous tabinet, or Irish poplin, weaving, Kevin street, where Curran and his 'Monks of the Screw' held revel; Fishamble street, in whose theatre, Handel produced his great 'Messiah'—all these classic localities fell so low, grew so poverty-stricken, that—though picturesque in very truth, from quaint architecture and the vivid coloring given by innumerable old clothes shops—the tottering gables became a danger to their swarms of inmates, and the red, blue, gold, white, violet, green, all colors and shapes of draperies that hung out and fluttered on the breeze gave a disease-laden odor to the zephyr that came along, wafted from the Liffey. And so, in spite of the sighs of artistic-souled citizens, who lived far from the scenes and only came now and then to revel in the scenic; in spite of the sighs and real heart-burnings of the denizens of the old houses, it was decided by the modern improvement men amongst the City Fathers that the picturesque must go, must give way to soap and water, baths, small parks, model lodging houses, and all the rest of it, and going it is, with a vengeance. Yes, with a vengeance, from the hordes of the very poorest of the poor traders who catered for their kind on 'The Stone Counter' (the flags of Patrick street), on which goods of every kind were laid out and sold by general auction on Saturdays—a rare sight too. Whither the poor souls thus rooted and routed out have slunk away to I have asked, but, so far, cannot find out; but I pity them. And I sigh, too, for the picturesque, the gaudy rags and tatters that made my streets in Cairo of old St. Patrick's street, Wine-tavern street, and so on.

M.B.

### COUNTY NEWS

#### CLARE—Death of an ex-Asylum Official

The death is reported of Dr. Richard Phillips Gelston, aged sixty. Deceased was Superintendent of Ennis Asylum, and resigned in 1899 on pension.

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