

Irish News

GENERAL.

The Most Rev. Dr. Harty, Archbishop-Elect of Cashel, in replying to letters and resolutions of congratulation on his appointment, received from the United Irish League and the Limerick County Council, said he was in complete sympathy with the Irish Party and that representative councils have proved Ireland can well manage her own affairs and have prepared the way for the Home Government which 1914 will see established.

'ULSTER'S' WOODEN GUNS: AN AMUSING EXPOSURE.

The *Daily Chronicle* says:—Among those who responded to the appeal issued by the 'British League for the Support of Ulster and the Union' last November was Mr. Alexander G. Stuart Webster, an ex-sergeant of the Royal Artillery, who left the army with the rank of army instructor. As an ardent Unionist who believed that the Unionists and Protestants of Ulster were a persecuted people, Mr. Webster offered his services to the League at their offices. He was sent to Belfast and Bangor, and has returned to London a sadly disillusioned man and as ardent a Home Ruler as before he was a Unionist.

Relating his experiences to the *Daily Chronicle*, Mr. Webster said he arrived in Belfast on Monday, December 8, and reported himself at the Old Town Hall, the headquarters of the Volunteer Force. He did not, of course, expect to find a state of war in Belfast, but he was somewhat surprised to find that there was no excitement anywhere, and that people he met outside the select circle of the British League were inclined to ridicule the Ulster Volunteer Force.

On the day following his arrival, Tuesday, December 9, Mr. Webster was asked to go to Bangor, where, he was told, the Volunteers 'were without an instructor.' 'I went to Bangor,' he said, 'and reported myself at the Old Lodge Hall, the headquarters of the force. I saw about 60 men on parade there, with their guns—wooden guns of no use to anybody. Some of these extraordinary weapons had wooden stocks with iron barrels and tin trigger-guards; others were all wood.

The men were of all sorts and sizes. Some of them were smart-looking enough, and they were about as well drilled as the average schoolboy. Of extended order or company formation they knew nothing whatever, and although they could "form fours," "right and left turn," and "about turn," that was all they could do. In the space in which they were being drilled it was quite hopeless for anyone to attempt to do anything with them.

On Wednesday I saw 50 members of the Ladies' Ambulance Corps at drill, and I am bound to say they were rather smarter and showed more knowledge of military evolutions than the men I had seen on Tuesday. On Thursday I went to the miniature rifle range and saw some of the remarkable shooting that has been so much praised in the Tory papers. It was indeed remarkable, but not in the sense meant by these newspapers. They were shooting at 25 yards, but if they had real rifles and fixed bayonets and had charged the targets I doubt very much whether they would have done any damage.

By this time I was thoroughly disgusted with everything I had seen and heard. I had gone to Ulster firmly impressed with the idea that the Protestants were being persecuted by the Catholics, but I saw nothing of it, and I had not been in Bangor 48 hours before nearly every Catholic in the town had been pointed out to me as a person to be avoided.'

Summing up his experiences, Mr. Webster declares that from his own personal observation he can safely say that the Ulster Volunteer Force 'need not be considered as a fighting force, for they are neither drilled nor armed, at least no better than the average

schoolboy. I saw wooden guns at Bangor, but no others, and even in the charmed inner circle I found no one who had seen or could describe any others, so I think it safe to assume that they have none.'

HISTORIC RELICS.

Lord Massereene has removed from the Irish National Museum at Dublin to his seat in County Antrim the Mace of the Irish House of Commons, and the Chair which was occupied by the Right Hon. John Foster, his ancestor, and the last Speaker of the Irish Parliament, both of which he sent five years ago to the Museum. Apropos of this action the *Dublin Evening Telegraph* says:—Alexander Pope once wrote a poem entitled 'The Rape of the Lock,' apropos of a gentleman cutting a lock off the head of a very pretty lady whom he admired, and has made the world laugh for two centuries over the business. Lord Massereene has just raped the National Museum. He has taken away from it to Newcastle in Antrim two relics of the Irish Parliament, apparently lest they might fall into the hands of felonious Nationalists, who are likely to occupy it in due time. Five years ago Lord Massereene lent the Irish National Museum in Kildare street, the Mace of the old Irish House of Commons, which used to be placed in front of his ancestor, the Right Honorable John Foster, the splendid and incorruptible Speaker of the Chamber, and the chair on which he sat, having inherited them as John Foster's lineal descendant. The gentleman in Pope's poem was not entitled to cut the lock off the lady's hair, but, apparently, from the legal point of view, Lord Massereene was entitled to take away to his private house these relics of Irish liberty. Seen by a representative of the *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, Mr. J. J. Buckley, keeper of the Art and Industrial Division of the Museum, stated that Lord Massereene withdrew the Chair and the Mace the other week to Antrim Castle, outside Belfast—for what reason he did not know.

The case in which the famous chair used to rest is now empty, but the case in which the Mace was contains some extremely interesting mementoes of our last Speaker.

Dublin Weavers' Tribute to Foster.

One of them is a shuttle, and the Museum's description of it is as follows:—

'Weavers' shuttle, gold mounted. The gift of the Irish weavers to the Right Hon. John Foster, last Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, 1804. Lent by Chichester Skeffington, Esq.'

The inscription on the shuttle is as follows:—'To the Right Hon. John Foster, the Friend of Ireland, the Protector of her Manufactures, the Encourager of her Agriculture, and the Promoter of her Trade, this token of gratitude is respectfully offered by the Corporation of the Weavers of Dublin, July 2, 1804.'

Foster was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer in Ireland in 1804, when this presentation was made, and the late Mr. C. Litton Falkner, who was a deep student of Irish history, took the view that the presentation of the shuttle was in the nature of congratulation on his appointment. At that time, notwithstanding the Union, Ireland kept her own bank books separately from Great Britain. Unfortunately for this country, the two Exchequers were united thirteen years afterwards.

The present Lord Massereene is a descendant of the Viscount Massereene of the creation of 1660. He is the twelfth Viscount. His name is William John Clotworthy Skeffington, and he was born in 1873. His residences are Antrim Castle, Antrim, and Oriel Temple, Collon, Co. Louth, and he is a member of the Kildare Street Club and the Carlton in London. His late father was a notorious exterminator, whose name will be linked in the history of the Irish Land struggle with that of Lord Clanricarde, Mr. Ponsonby, and Lord Barrymore.

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