

Irish News

OUR IRISH LETTER

(From our own correspondent.)

Dublin, August, 1903.

The Royal Visit.

The visit of the King and Queen has been a perfect success. Be it well understood, they did not receive the welcome that is in store for them if ever the day comes that we hope for, when his Majesty will come as the wise peacemaker, with power in his hands (willing hands, very many believe) to re-constitute Ireland a nation. The welcome he would get in Dublin then would astonish even a King. But King Edward and the Queen were received respectfully, kindly, and gracefully by the entire capital; more so, in truth, by the Catholics and Nationalists than by the Protestants. As a matter of fact, while the Catholic people are thoroughly loyal to Ireland, they know how to appreciate and reciprocate the goodwill that has been hitherto shown towards them by this King, and they are willing hopefully to credit him with sincerity in the manifest effort to propitiate them he has made. The Protestants, on the contrary, cannot rid themselves of their deep-rooted antipathy to any act that might lead to such freedom of education and government as would place the Irish Catholics in full possession of whatever power they could honestly and fairly gain under equitable laws that would simply mean—the fittest man foremost, without any favor. A long course of forcible possession of all that gives power is apt to dull the sense of justice, and, rightly or wrongly, our Protestant, and even such of our Catholic fellow-countrymen as have won place and power by concession of principle, secretly dread a King who seems to have been keeping his eyes open for years past, and who appears to have learned the wise lesson that it is better to be loved than feared. We did not 'enthuse' gushingly, but we gave a self-respecting, kindly, and sympathetic greeting to our Royal visitors that was probably more appreciated than any other greeting would be under the circumstances, for the good will expressed was sincere.

Queen Alexandra.

Dublin and the eight miles of road that lead to the capital from Kingstown looked their prettiest. The whole route was lavishly decorated, and the way lined by spectators, many of whom were in half mourning on account of the news received from Rome, the tidings of the death of the great Pontiff, Leo XIII. It was gratefully noted that Queen Alexandra and her daughter wore mourning colors, an act of good taste that was appreciated by all Catholics. The King looked thoroughly well pleased; a rather handsome and very gentlemanly man, but I think all the women had eyes only for the Queen, who is not only every bit as youthful-looking and beautiful as her well-known portraits, but, better still, very earnest and sweet-looking, though at times she appears exceedingly nervous and grave. The Princess Victoria is very like her mother, but has not her beauty, and is somewhat stolid in appearance, as if she had no part in or took no interest in the proceedings that so closely concern her father and mother.

The same compliment was paid to the Dublin people on this Royal entry as was paid when Queen Victoria last visited Dublin: the guards rode at a long distance from the Royal carriage, which means that the visitors trusted the people. At the same time, wherever the King and Queen subsequently drove about Dublin, it was noticed that two or more plainly-dressed men on bicycles preceded and followed the cortege. These were private detectives; though of what use they could be, were there any foreign anarchists in the streets, I cannot imagine, for in Dublin all who chose to do so could remain in line within about a foot of the carriages, one policeman only to about a thousand spectators, so that nothing would have been easier than to do mischief had anyone been so inclined. Strange to say, enormously strong wooden barricades were brought over from England to Belfast, and were erected all along the route of the Royal progress, a proceeding which caused a great deal of painful overcrowding and likewise much comment uncomplimentary to his Majesty's loyal Orange subjects, who were the only people in Ireland so penned in. In Belfast, also, most gruesome preparations, of a kind undreamt of in Dublin, were made, as if for wholesale slaughter: there were no less than fifty poles marked with red crosses, and near these fifty stretchers, with surgeons, nurse-tenders, and medical appliances, all ready for the fray.

A Contrast.

It appears that when Queen Alexandra was young, the loyal Orangemen of Belfast were so roughly enthusiastic in their reception of her and the then Prince of Wales that she was terrified, almost to fainting. The scene was almost as wild as if the Belfasters mistook the Princess for a Papist and meant to murder her. She had never before, in love or war, encountered a Belfast Orange mob, so doubtless the Queen would not return to the northern capital of Ireland unless she could be safe from even the over-heartly welcome of the Lodges. It was curious, too, that the visit to Belfast occupied just three hours, and that every function was carried out with absolutely lightning-like rapidity. But in Dublin things went on more pleasantly, and were strictly in accordance with the tolerant character of the King. The present Lord Mayor (Mr. T. Harrington, M.P.) could not consistently with the political views of the majority of the Corporation and his own pledge on taking office, present a formal address of welcome to their Majesties, as to do so would be to forswear a promise he is under to accept no honors from the monarch so long as our legitimate demands for self-government are uncomplished with. But it was plainly understood that every party welcomed the Royal visitors as the honored guests of the Irish people, and everything was done to show this so plainly that the King appears to have been thoroughly pleased with his reception.

The Queen at Catholic Institutions

The visit of her Majesty to the Hospice for the Dying was the most touching incident of the week. This Hospice, the only institution of its kind in the world, was the thought of an Irish Sister of Charity, and is under the care of the Sisters of that Order in their convent at Harold's Cross, a suburb of Dublin. Here none come but those for whom there is no place in an ordinary hospital. Into the latter only those are admitted for whom there is some hope of cure. For the actually dying, whose days are numbered, there is no admittance into hospitals. There are hospitals for such as have incurable diseases which may drag on for months or years; but there was no haven for those who are passing away in the midst of crowded, noisy, poverty-stricken homes: tenements often so thronged that, even with the best intentions on the part of the inhabitants, there can be no privacy, no peace, no quiet hours, no bodily rest or care for the poor dying man or woman, no hours of silent preparation for the weary soul about to face its Creator. For such as these the Sisters of Charity opened a Hospice in what was once a Quaker gentleman's country residence. At first a few beds, whereon a few tired-out hearts at last found comfort for soul and mind, then passed away peacefully amid holy surroundings, a nun's gentle hand closing the eyes that had done for ever with scenes of human misery. Now a magnificent hospice stands in the midst of trees and flowers, whither hundreds annually come to die in peace. This was the one Catholic institution visited by the Queen, who, attended by his Grace Archbishop Walsh and two of the Sisters, went from bed to bed in certain of the wards, giving flowers and speaking a kind, womanly word to each dying inmate. From Harold's Cross her Majesty went to the Hospital for Incurables, which is both for Catholic and Protestant patients.

Dublin Urchins.

Of course it would not be Ireland without some good scenes here and there during the Royal visit. One of the most amusing was during a review in Phoenix Park, when a number of urchins, perched up in the branches of a tree, saluted their Majesties with a lustily sung 'Ireland a nation once again!' and then, to show they bore no personal grudge to their visitors, they struck up 'God save the King,' his Majesty laughingly and cordially waving his hat to the little fellows, and the Queen evidently enjoying the scene heartily.

At night the illuminations, which were on a magnificent scale, were viewed by such vast throngs that the one subject of surprise is how such traffic could have been carried on without a single accident. Nothing but universal order and good humor on the part of both people and police. Where all the tram cars came from, no one could tell; where so many carriages, cabs, drags, and outside cars were found is a mystery; on went four streams, vehicles and foot passengers, the latter in serried ranks, and under the very horses' noses, all, even the horses, in such good temper that no hitch occurred, and I heard of ladies, who had failed in securing vehicles, walking through the whole city at night just as safely as if it were mid-day.

M.B.

COUNTY NEWS

CORK.—A New Zealand Visitor

At a meeting held recently at Crosshaven with the object of starting a branch of the Gaelic League, the chair was taken by the Rev. Father Golden, of Kai-