

ULSTER MEN LOOK FOR FUTURE UNION

Might Accept Home Rule if They Could Keep Commercial Lead in Ireland.

BUSINESS THEIR CHIEF AIM

Observer Finds Them Tolerant of Catholic Neighbors When Left in Peace.

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LONDON, Aug. 5.—All the world knows of the sterling worth of the Scots in Ireland. Perhaps the circumstances of their coming across from their native land will hardly bear examination, but once they landed in Ireland they began to "scratch gravel" in the way characteristic of the race to which they belong. With every respect for their fine qualities, I am frank to say that if I had to choose a place of residence, I would prefer Dublin with all its shootings to Belfast with its grimness and monotony.

The best hotel in the place is over a block of stores, and is of the class that one might find in Eighth or Ninth Avenue in New York. An intelligent waiter with whom I talked said that there had been a big hotel before the war on the opposite side of the street, but the British War Office had taken it for one of its departments, and the proprietor had been immensely pleased, as the hotel had been much too big for Belfast. The waiter said that the commandeering of the hotel had been a mistake. It was intended to take a hotel at Birmingham; but the particular official charged with selection put his finger on the list of cities beginning with "B" and it slipped; hence the selection of the Belfast hotel. My informant continued that there would never be another big hotel in Belfast because visitors didn't come there in sufficient numbers, and the home people did not patronize hotels or restaurants.

Little Bitterness Toward Irish.

When it comes to the industrial side of Belfast there is a very different story. The two great industries are shipbuilding and linen. A leading linen merchant with whom I talked, after telling me that linen was a peculiarly Belfast industry because of soil and weather conditions, added that there was nothing on the material side that justified the existence at Belfast of such a large development in shipbuilding. When I asked him why the industry was so successful he replied: "A Belfast-built ship is a good ship." I wanted to get to the bottom, and after pressing him I drew out the fact that a genius, Sir Edward Harlan, had founded the shipbuilding industry. The success that he established did not disappear with him, because he planted traditions that went on working after he was dead, and that are working today. Belfast builds all her ships under contract and on the percentage basis. This enables builders to put excellence into all their work. There is no temptation to skimp.

Another Belfast leader, when asked to comment on conditions beyond the Ulster pale, replied: "Irishmen don't know what they want, and won't be happy till they get it." I found among the Belfast men whom I met an unexpected freedom from bitterness, at least on the surface. The Catholic Church was discussed in terms of tolerance and even friendliness. The farmer in Southern Ireland was described as a pretty right-thinking man, at bottom. Perhaps the conclusion was not altogether warranted, but I was left with a strong impression that the shrewd and canny Ulster mind entertained a hope of Irish unity with Belfast as the commercial capital. And I had still another thought which it would not do to stress too much in the absence of greater knowledge than I was able to acquire in my short visit.

Real Irish Union Foreseen.

I don't believe that Ulster is as eager for British rule as you might think after reading one of Sir Edward Carson's speeches. Ulster people do not want to have Dublin rule put upon them just at this stage, but they are looking ahead to a future when Ireland may become a great industrial kingdom, dominated commercially and financially by Belfast, the well-organized capital of Ulster. Indeed, it was often in my mind as I traveled through Ireland what great possibilities awaited Ireland when permanent order should come.

How much do Ulster and the other three provinces need each other? What a splendid man would be produced by the mixture of the hard common sense of the Ulster-Scots, and the imagination and temperament of the rest! It will come in time, regardless of the antagonisms and commotion of the past or the present. Indeed, it is coming already. One of the Belfast men said to me: "The people of the South and West are becoming, in constantly increasing numbers, property owners. Money is plentiful. Wealth is a great conservatizing influence. The manifest mutuality of the interest among all of us in Ireland will bring us together when our friends of other parts of the country begin to think in terms of business and reality instead of in terms of romance and religion."

While I was in Belfast there came the news of the action of the Presbyterian General Assembly at Philadelphia. I had encountered previously a criticism with a flavor of grievance in it because of the show of American sympathy with the Irish rebellion, especially the resolutions adopted in Congress.

American Influence in North.

For the time being Belfast received the action of the Presbyterians, not only as indicating American friendliness, but as a public acknowledgment of kinship. They had been deeply depressed by the feeling that their own people across the sea, with whom they had everything in common and on whom they looked as natural allies and sharers of the same ideals, in civic as in religious matters, were not standing by them in their hour of trial. The Presbyterian pronouncement gave them back their confidence that the United States would not be run away with by Irish-Americans from the South and West of Ireland.

On the whole my visit to the North gave me a different idea of the state of things in that section, and I was encouraged to think that when the time came for permanent settlement of the Irish question there would be no unreasoning or perverse opposition from Belfast.

On my way back to Dublin, I stopped in Armagh. This little town of 7,000 people, as everybody knows, is the ecclesiastical headquarters of both Catholicism and Protestantism (Church of Ireland). In the County of Armagh there is an almost equal division between the two denominations, and comparative quiet has reigned. I talked with some of the shopkeepers, whom I found to be mainly Unionists, and with the editor of the local Protestant newspaper, who said that people in the town, as well as in the country district, enjoyed comparative immunity and that on the whole they lived on terms of good neighborship. He published in his paper whatever he thought without any fear of reprisals. While I was with him he was writing a piece for his paper pointing out that Cardinal Logue, who lives in Armagh, had been indicating at Rome his open sympathies for the Irish Republic.

Armagh is a rich and prosperous county in which fruit-growing has become a great industry. Land sells freely at £100 an acre.