

SAOIRSE IRISH FIREARMS

No. 4.] [PUBLISHED 15th OF EACH MONTH.]

FEBRUARY, 1911.

[Price One Penny.]

NOTICE.

Owing to the success of our paper, and especially in view of the growth of the Dublin circulation, the Committee have found it necessary to move to more central offices, at 5 Finslander Place (off O'Connell Street), Dublin.

NOTES.

Pay! Pay! Pay!

It is unfortunate, to put it mildly, that the flourish of trumpets with which the Parliamentarians have begun their new campaign should be marred by the persistent jingle of the collecting box. A pledge-bearer party cannot, of course, exist on air, but if every step forward is to be accompanied by a fresh appeal for funds, even devoted admirers may be unkind from feeling a little restless. The unkind suspicion gathers force that it is less a question of money being required to achieve big results than that big results are promised in the hope of raking in more shekels. And the manner in which the dollars were lavished during the last election does not encourage thrifty souls to their eager open purse. You cannot win a contested election without spending money, any more than you can make an ornate meeting without breaking eggs; but a big difference exists between the money-fighting and the money-expending. It would be an illuminating contrast could one know how many pounds were spent in an effort to further the cause of Home Rule, and how many more would gratify party hate and private feud. The train-loaders of "good lookers-on" who came flocking from every part of the country to smash O'Brienism and Healyism, the baskets of champagne, the splendid array of property, the whiskey that flowed like Shannon in flood; all these sent up the election expenses to record figures. Now it would seem that the cupboard is bare again, and the old expedients are required to fill it. No doubt, the leaders will get the money, or at least enough to go on with, for the people have been hypnotised into the belief that this time there is at least a sporting chance of something happening. Yet to those who read between the lines there is a good deal that is ominous in the unanimity with which the English Liberal press has begun to talk of the claims of Wales and Scotland to local autonomy. Hints are being out, too, that with proper handling the Conservatives might be induced to give their blessing to the scheme. We are told that it marks the beginning of a new era, when the old animosities will be buried out of sight and forgotten, and the golden age will come again. One would like to believe it, but one has an idea that by the time the Home Rule banding has its wings clipped and its spurs trimmed to please all these parties, it will be a very poor substitute for the eagle of freedom that screams so loudly in patriotic speeches.

~*~

A Phantom Army.

We commented last month on the fact that all the news as to the proposed rebellion in Ulster had come from anti-Unionist sources. The same ingenious journalists who massacred the garrison of the Pekin Legation and re-wrote the telegrams from the front in the South African campaign, set themselves to sell their editions on the dull days of the Parliamentary recess by conjuring up a vision of Ulstermen from Malin Head to the Boyle drilling by the light of the moon, running cargoes of rifles and anti-Unionism into every creek along the coast, and breathing fire and fury in the very vein of Ancient Pistol. The raw-head-and-blood-boots business was surprisingly well done; even pantomimes could not present a more thrilling, and it was too unkind of the *Daily Mail* to pour a douche of cold water on the whole affair. Of course, it was a mistake on the part of the promoters of the entertainment to leave the *Mail*

out of it at the beginning. When it became a monopoly of the Pearson press, the *Harnsworth* Press, the *Standard* to get even some of its revenge has taken the nasty form of proclaiming the Army of the North a phantom. Its Special Commissioner, after ranging the province up and down for weeks could not discover any weapons of war more formidable than the broomsticks of the Boy Scouts. "The reports that large sums of money have been subscribed," he says, "and large quantities of arms purchased with the view of concerted military measures—are merely reports. No arms are being imported, either openly or surreptitiously, beyond the normal demands of the trade." The real joke, however, lies not in the giving away of this "secret of Polichinelle," but in the manner in which the loyalist leaders have rounded on the apologist who sought to wipe out this serious implication on the loyalty of Ulster. When the *Daily Mail* wrote of the horrors of boy-cotting and cattle-driving every word was treated as a new revelation from above; now it is said the paper could only tell the truth by accident, and masters of Oranje holden ask, as Nationalists have been asking for the last half century and longer, what on earth does an English journalist know of Ireland, which he sees only from the windows of a railway carriage, or side-ways from a jangling car!

Why Ulster won't Fight.

But the "loyalist" side does not possess a monopoly of bad logic. During the last few weeks Nationalist papers that ought to know better have been making the Ulster reactionaries thank them for their lack of respect for the decrees of the High Court of Parliament, and they trotted away in their leading columns to the tune of "Rule Britannia," and the old expedients of the sole justification of Home Rule was that it had been in a majority of the votes of British M.P.'s. Undoubtedly, there is a certain satisfaction in seeing those who made loyalty a fetish hold their own petard, and all the missiles they hurled at their countrymen for a century and more flying back at their own heads like homing-bats. But it is rank bad policy for Nationalists to compare Ulster to the loyalists in Ireland, and to England, and show an entire inability to understand the real facts of the case. If the Orangemen have no intention of making, as one of their Mad Mullahs put it, "every town a Derry and every river a Boyne," it is not devotion to England that restrains them. For British legislation that does not fall in with their views they have as scanty respect as the most extreme physical force man, and their allegiance is wholly conditional. It would be absurd to say that they are in the mass in favour of Home Rule; but they will accept it, not because it is an ordinance of Parliament, but because they don't think however objectionable it may appear, it is worth risking their lives in the tented field against it. The opposition has lost all the driving force it possessed in '86 and '92, when the working classes in the North were firmly convinced that if Gladstone's Bill passed they would be shepherded to chapel like the Jews in Brown-street's rescue, and Cornhill labourers could swing the riveters' hammers and drive the engines in every shipyard and mill in Belfast. The new generation has a shrewd suspicion that whatever form of Government is adopted it will still have to slave nine or ten hours a day for a living wage, and it won't make a penny difference in its pay whether a green flag or a Union Jack floats over Dublin Castle.

Playing the Enemy's Game.

Up to the present it is the political politicians, the office-seekers, and all who stand to lose directly by the change who are fanning on plat-

forms or blustering in the correspondence columns of the newspapers. They profess to speak in the name of the people, but the people pay scant heed to them; and Lord Londonderry, Lord Trenchard, and Sir Edward Carson, dancing a waltz with flourished tomahawks cannot refuse to action the beavers of the Shankill Road or Sandy Row. The once powerful spells have lost their efficacy, and however vigorously the bellows are applied, the fires of sectarian bigotry refuse to blaze up as in the good old days. The leaders prudence on themselves to generalise, but their followers take pains to dot the 'i's and cross the 't's.' Thus, one ingenious gentleman has urged that Unionist officers should dismiss every Catholic worker, and another argues that no priest should be permitted to walk the streets in safety. These frantic stupidities merely emphasise the failure of the crusade to rouse Ulster. The Orangemen played the game to the end of their resources; the middle-class in Ulster, as everywhere else, may talk, but will never lead a forlorn hope; and the mass of the people remain prone to the old error, without the active intervention of the artisan and labourer the heroics are no more than sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. The wild talk of rifles and barricades was designed to terrify the English politicians, and it was intended to stir up sectarian fury for the real demonstration against any measure of self-government would be made, not on the field of battle, but with paving stones and half bricks on the back streets of Belfast. Now it looks as if the intriguers were going to be robbed even of this far-flung. Nationalists and Unionists refrain from firing their thumbs at one another, the very mill girls cannot be induced to enter the most strenuous day with squabbles over the virtues of Oranje and Green, and there have been fewer processions for party expressions—not the worst gauge of how much pressure there is on the safety valve—than anyone remembers for a generation. It is little wonder that the reactionaries are in despair to have invoked whirlwinds, and failed to stir a leaf, or to irritate the most even-tempered of spirits. The only danger now is that some foolish spirits on the Nationalist side may be tempted to take these Cassandra more seriously than they take themselves. We notice that a Mr. Samuel Boyle, speaking at a meeting of the Irish Parliament Branch of the U.I.L. in London, put forward the argument that combinations of the A.G.O.F. and U.I.L. should be formed to protect Catholics from the antagonism of the Oranje groups. Mr. Boyle, no doubt, means well, but one can imagine the gleam with which Captain Craig or Mr. William Moore would hail his suggestion. The end and aim of their endeavours is to dig wider the gulf that separates men of both faiths, and could they bottle them up in water-tight societies they would the discord they have failed up to the present to provide would assuredly ensue. If Mr. Boyle was as well acquainted with Ulster as with London he would not talk such absurd nonsense about danger to Catholics and Nationalists. No doubt, from the U.I.L. Parliament Branch the sky above the North of Ireland looks very black, and the rolling peaks of thunder try timid nerves, but Ulster people are too tough to be scared by a display of summer lightning.

Post-Impressionists in Dublin.

It was a very lucky undertaking on the part of the United Arts Club to bring the Post-Impressionist pictures to Dublin. One hopes that during the time the art show there will be a worthy attendance, and that the promoters will not suffer in pocket for their daring. Whether one likes or dislikes the ideals of the painters, the works cannot be ignored by anyone who professes interest in modern art. They have their special message for Ireland, where we are making a beginning with so

many things, in the determination of the artists to achieve self-expression, no matter what bloody conversations result in the process. Mr. George Moore once recommended Maestri to Dublin, because his painting was "unshocked," and the Post-Impressionists possess that quality in an even higher degree. Whatever else their pictures lack, they possess enormous vitality, and when one contrasts their canvases with the works in the Municipal collection, one feels, however strong one's sentiments in favour of the latter may be, that these painters, despite the apparent crudity of their methods, have the true sovereign grace of strength. As Professor Holmes has pointed out, the Post-Impressionists have been misunderstood, because they are regarded both by friends and foes as ending instead of beginning an era. Their convention is as yet in its infancy; the best of them are groping towards an ideal not yet realised. But ideas cannot be learned, and the use of the dry bones of painting, and even in its primitive stage has given a rare stimulus to the rising generation. One was glad to see that the Dublin daily papers have been more than willing to take the occasion in art matters, avoided the pitfalls into which the London critics fell. Their comments were sane and well-balanced, and justice was done to the aims of the painters. As *A.E.* in the *Irish Times*, did, indeed, talk about decadence, &c., in a fashion that surprised most of his admirers. But it was clear that he wrote without any prejudice, and that he was not so much pre-occupied as so summarily, and one imagines if he has the courage to face the ordeal of inspecting the works that stirred his gall for an hour each day he would be able to give his views on the subject his hasty judgment. When a critic talks of decadence and insincerity it is quite fair to quote against him other critics who are at least as well equipped in technical knowledge, and have made a closer study of the subject under discussion. "A.E." would probably be the last to accuse Mr. Berenson or Professor Holmes of tolerating superficiality or ignorant pretensions in art; yet here he is, in the midst of his own discussion, saying "I found the great high road travelled by all the best masters for the last six centuries at least," while Professor Holmes says of Van Gogh that "the haunting power and beauty of his work is so great as to annihilate all minor objections."

Reafforestation.

It is announced by the Vice-President of the Department of Agriculture that a grant of £20,000 or £40,000 will be made by the Department Commissioners for the purposes of afforestation. This may lead to business at last, for up to the present little has been done but talk. Every body is theoretically in favour of re-foresting the forest in Ireland, but in practice timber is vanishing more quickly than ever. Along all the railway lines one sees monstrous loads of tree-trunks, and a stranger would imagine that we had in reserve hundreds of miles of virgin forest, instead of the land being pared almost down to the stumps. Among the innumerable provinces of the Irish Land is the curious fact that no one engaged in forestry in Ireland, had in practice timber to insert in place of every one cut down. This is the rule in practically every European country, and though farmers might have cried out, it would have been to their own profit in the long run. Despite Forestry Commissioners, Arbor Days, and experiments at Avonbeg, the mass of the people never seem to have grasped the necessity of afforestation; they treat it as a purely sentimental cry. The new grant may lead to the formation of a more intelligent policy; if it does it will be money well spent.

✱ If you want to assist our paper purchase from our Advertisers.

IV. OTHER PROSE WRITINGS AND
POETRY.[illegible][illegible][illegible]

☛ Don't forget the Emmet Anniversary in the Rotunda

