

OPENING OF COUNTY TYRONE PROTESTANT HALL.

(From the Belfast Weekly News, August 27th.)

OMAGH, FRIDAY.

The ceremony of opening this hall was proceeded with in presence of a vast assemblage of the Protestants and Orangemen of Omagh and the adjacent districts. From an early hour large numbers of the brethren began to assemble from the various districts in the neighbourhood. At one o'clock, there could not have been less than 10,000 or 12,000 people immediately in front of the platform, which was erected on the outside of the new hall. The platform was plentifully decorated with flags and banners, whilst in front there were upwards of fifty stand of colours in the field. The Strabane Band was in attendance, and discoursed some fine music. There was a good deal of excitement in the town during the day, but no appearance of rioting or disturbance 500 police had been drafted in from Derry, along with one company of infantry and one company of Carabiniers; but, fortunately, their services were not required.

Wm. Johnston, Esq., M.P., occupied the chair.

Rev. Mr. Flanagan having engaged in prayer.

Mr. Johnston, who was received with loud cheers, said—Brother Orangemen, I am deeply impressed with the sense of the high honour that has been conferred upon me in asking me to come to the County Tyrone, and to preside on this occasion at the opening of the Protestant Hall. (Hear, hear.) You have many worthy and estimable members of the Orange Society in high position and in high rank in this county, but I am sure you had no idea of slighting them in the smallest degree when you invited me to preside, but that you are ready on all occasions to do them that honour to which they are justly entitled for their maintenance of Orange and Protestant principles in this great county. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) At the same time, I cannot but feel indebted to you for the compliment you have paid me, and I take this opportunity of expressing my sense of the manner in which Tyrone, through its farmers, its artisans, and its gentry, has ever upheld the cause of Protestantism, and I trust that it will ever do so to the end of time. We are standing to-day at a most important crisis in the history of our country. We see on the Continent army ranged against army,

Emperor against King, people against people. Day after day the telegraph brings to us sad and melancholy tidings of death by thousands on the battle-field, deserted and ruined homes, all to serve the ambition of one man, who desires, for family or territorial aggrandisement, to wage war against those who desired to live in peace. In this country it is impossible but that affairs taking place on the Continent should be carefully observed and duly pondered; and we meet here to-day calmly and peaceably, not desiring to give offence to any, declaring that in our Protestantism there is no offence, but defence—(hear, hear)—that we, while resolutely determined to hold our own, and to defend our Protestant cause, yet as resolutely determined not by word or deed of ours to give just cause to those who conscientiously differ from us, and who have as good a right to hold their principles as we have to hold ours. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) We stand here once more a Protestant band manning the Protestant cause. You have observed how an audacious attempt was made to interfere with the rights and privileges of the time-honoured celebrations. Now, it is right that I should here to-day express my feelings on the calm attitude, the quiet determination, exhibited under trying circumstances by the Apprentice Boys. (Cheers.) An organized conspiracy, for I can call it nothing else, threatened to put down the celebrations of Derry, and to quench them in blood. The Government of the country, exercising that protective function which it is called upon to do in preserving the lives and liberties of her Majesty's subjects, sent down a force of military and police to preserve life in Derry. At the eleventh hour, just before the celebration, a challenge was sent to me asking me to join in requesting the authorities to withdraw the military and police, in order that those coming there with hostile intentions should be enabled to meet those coming with peaceable intentions, which would inevitably have been attended with loss of life. I should not be a consenting party to any such arrangement. The authorities stopped a special train that would have taken men from Belfast and Coleraine. They stopped a special train that would have brought sympathisers to the Apprentice Boys of Derry; and, this being done, it was their duty to protect the Apprentice