

Belfast a City of Broad Industries But Narrow Interests

Belfast is a city of splendid achievements, and of equally notable limitations. No article ever written of Belfast fails to mention the fact that it possesses five of the largest individual concerns in the world in various branches of industry. These consist of the largest shipbuilding yards, rope works, tobacco factory, distillery, and linen mills. To lead the world in all these industries is truly something to be proud of.

It must, however, be born in mind that Belfast possesses facilities denied to most other large cities. Land was originally purchased under exceptionally favorable conditions, the poverty of the Chichesters enabling manufacturers to secure 99-year leases at very low annual rentals. Also, the clay, which abounds in the vicinity, is of the very best for brick-making, and as a consequence, you get in Belfast

the cheapest brick in the empire. The cost of building (expense per cubic foot), coupled with the fact that there is a slightly lower rate of wage paid in the building trade, is about 15 per cent. cheaper than the cheapest place in England.

It was an accident of circumstances that planted the shipbuilding industry in Belfast. Young Edward Harland had originally applied for a site at Birkenhead. The commissioners of that town were slow to accept the proposals of a comparatively unknown man, and while considering the matter Harland opened negotiations with the harbor commissioners at Belfast. These men were quick to recognize the possibilities of the situation, and with little delay closed with the deal. Their foresight in this matter must ever stand to their credit. Mention must also be made of the preponderance of

the Scotch element, which has admittedly much to do with the commercial success of the city.

Its Educational Facilities. In educational facilities Belfast is in no way behind any city of equal importance, and it can point with pride to not a few distinguished men who received their early education at its institutions or city offices, notable amongst these being Lord Kelvin, Viscount Bryce, and Lord Russell of Killowen.

Of its technical school Dr. Robertson of the Canadian Technical Commission says: "There is nothing even in Germany to equal it," which is equivalent to saying that it is the best of its kind in the world.

On the other side it is a truism to state that for many years the Ulster capital has been the centre of an unenviable notoriety. Today it is even more so. That good name which it bears on account of its linen and other great industries, has been somewhat discounted by the evil odor which attaches to it in respect of its political and religious extravagances. It is a mistake, however, to say that Belfast is in any sense a political centre. The Belfast man is deplorably ignorant of all political questions outside the home rule controversy. He is obsessed with one idea, and that idea has become a fetish. He is not so much a lover of his country as he is a hater of his Catholic fellow citizens as witnessed Sir Edward Carson's recent reference to "that majority which we loathe and detest." History with him began and ended with the Battle of the Boyne. Of its historical setting, and of its then political incidence he knows little or nothing. To him it has simply resolved itself into a historical battle between Protestant and Catholic, the Catholic having been happily defeated, and the country saved. William of Orange has since then been the patron saint of the north, his portrait hangs over every workman's and collier's mantel shelf, just as that of the Pope hangs on the wall of his fellow Catholic's home.

Blind To One Act. It is the Roman Catholic of the middle ages that is feared should home rule become law, the period of the thumb-screw and the pillory. A man tolerably sane in most other matters, is intolerably unreasonable in this, that he deliberately blinds himself to the fact that he is living in the twentieth century, when certain conditions are impossible, and can never be revived. He forgets that many of the abuses he fears were common to both sides, and depended entirely on law, period, to impose them.

The continued self-centring of the mind, over a long period of years, on one question has had the effect of dwarfing the intellect, both from a political and a religious standpoint. The earnestness with which they have striven "to keep the faith" from the crusades of Roman Catholicism, has had the effect of shutting the mind to new ideas from other quarters. That is why the Belfast man is so painfully orthodox, and is usually intolerant of anything in the way of a broader outlook in politics or theology. The pit of the city is eminently "safe," and the application of modern ideas to Biblical questions is regarded with suspicion.

Where Belfast ails. As a consequence there is nothing of breadth or largeness in his composition. Anything outside of his business interests does not greatly concern him. With a population of close on half a million Belfast possesses neither an art gallery nor a Dublin museum, and these will compare unfavorably with any in the principal cities of the United Kingdom. Its public library, in its lending department is, perhaps, as insufficiently equipped as such an institution could well be, and there is little attempt at keeping its shelves up-to-date. This deficiency would be the more noticeable were it not for the fact that there is a splendidly equipped subscription library, run by a board of governors, but without either civic support or control. When Belfast is lightly spoken of, the critic is dismissed with a reference to its great industries. This is obviously true and very creditable to the city, but most of these have been built up in a manner not creditable to the masters, who too often have enriched themselves at the expense of the employee. The born Canadian will scarcely believe that in the linen industry, for example, the girls—and girls are spoken of generally to include those up to a workable age—receive wages of from less than a dollar up to five dollars. It would be quite within the mark to say that three dollars is above rather than below the average wage received.

Low Wages Prevail. A lad after serving an apprenticeship of five years, during which time he usually receives \$75.00 for the whole period, if his services are retained at the end of that time, will probably be offered \$200 per annum. If he is particularly bright or capable he may be fortunate in getting \$250 or \$300 per annum, but these are exceptional cases. One could cite instances where in large concerns, the mechanic is the highest paid employee, and this because he is obliged to receive union wages. In heads of responsible departments in these cases received less than \$750 per annum.

With all the boasted pride of the north, it is not to Belfast, but rather to Dublin that we turn as the centre of an intellectual movement which has made itself felt the wide world over. So far as the old country is concerned we have been accustomed in the past to look to England for intellectual movements and schools of thought. Today we turn to Dublin for the finest nest of singing birds extant. W. B. Yeats is the foremost, and perhaps the best known of this school, and may be said to have fixed the style of those who came after. A story of him, never before published, as it is characteristic of the way told me by an old lady—happily still alive—who was an intimate friend of the poet's mother. She was telling Mrs. Yeats in the early Sligo days, and they were having a quiet talk together over the fire. Little Willie Yeats was sitting on the hearth, singing as a child will, and disturbing the conversation. His mother urged him repeatedly "to be still," when suddenly he turned up his little face and with humorous emphasis said, "Mother I must sing." He spoke a truth which they did not realize at the time.



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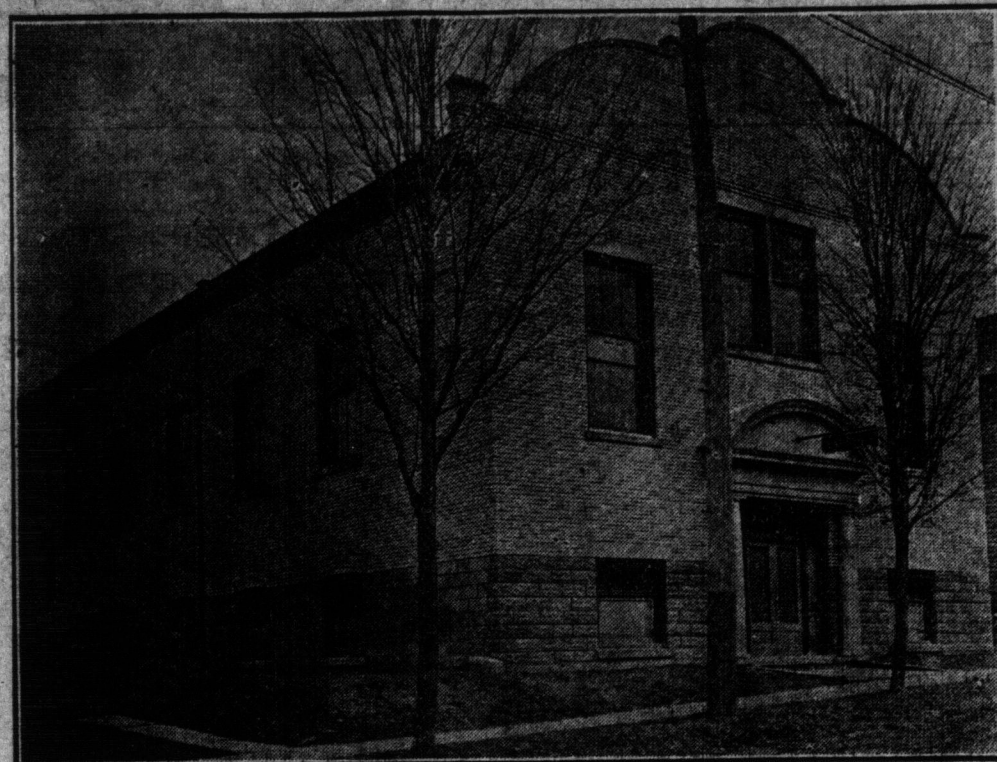


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Canadian Leaguers' Debut



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At the last election he was defeated by James Chambers, K.C., a resident of Dublin. One of the leading spirits of this revolt was Mr. Lindsay Crawford, now one of our leading Canadian journalists, and many of the principal merchants of Belfast identified

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themselves with the movement, notably Lord Pirrie, head of the large shipbuilding firm of Harland & Wolff. As to what the future will bring it is difficult to determine. Sacrifices on both sides may still be necessary. It is to be hoped, however, that when a settlement is arrived at—either it may not be so far off either—it will make for lasting peace and harmony. The spirit of goodwill which has been undoubtedly growing has received a temporary check, but it is only temporary, and when difficulties have been overcome that spirit will again be revived. North and South will yet meet on common ground, and both together work for the common good of Ireland.

MOTORCYCLE NOTES.

Don Johns, defeating a field of 11 riders, won the recent 100-mile motorcycle race at Phoenix, Ariz. His time was 1 hr. 26 mins. 50 2/5 secs. Pittsburgh, Pa., is arranging for the purchase of 14 new motorcycles, 7 for the use of the police department, and 7 for the health bureau. County detectives are also in the market for 7 motorcycles.

W. F. Beck, of Memphis, Tenn., has a motorcycle which has seen five years' service, and which he says is still in excellent condition. Beck says this machine has covered 135,000 miles.

Another recruit recently added to the ranks of women motorcyclists is Miss Lillian Nelson, of Nebraska City, Neb.

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