



A PARADE OF THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY IN THE BARRACK YARD, DUBLIN.



### THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY.

The force was founded in 1823 by Sir Robert Peel, when Mr. Drummond was Chief Secretary: and from that day, in spite of many hardships, it has remained absolutely loyal to the Crown and people of Great Britain. In 1853, when the Queen reviewed a large body of troops in Dublin, 2,000 constables took part in the march-past, every man of whom was over 6 feet in height. And as for their mental capacity it is sufficient to say that there are regular crammers in Dublin who prepare the constables for their different examinations. So that, in comparison with the R. I. C., poor Tommy Atkins, with his scanty knowledge of the three R's and his 5 feet 4 inches standard, is a mental and physical dwarf. The need for this high standard is obvious when one comes to consider the duties, civil and military, which the Irish constable is called upon to perform. To begin with, he is a trained soldier, and when on military duty—which means chiefly eviction work and the suppression of occasional riots—carries a rifle and bayonet, with eight rounds of ball am-

munition and two of buckshot. The part which he takes in carrying out evictions is often misunderstood. His duty is solely and simply to protect the civil authorities—the sheriff and his emergency men—in enforcing the law, and generally to prevent rows. And when there is a row it is curious how every class instinctively turns to the constable for protection—protection being the watchword of his military duties. Whether it is emergency men and evicted tenants, or Orangemen and Catholics, or Parnellites and McCarthyites who are pining to break one another's heads, each faction naturally look to the constable to prevent their own heads from being broken.

The civil duties of the constable are too numerous to be mentioned here in detail; they are far more extensive than those of his English rival, and demand a considerable amount of intelligence and education. All manner of returns—for instance, those connected with the census, agriculture, fishery, and licensing—come within his province. He has to test weights and measures, to carry out the provisions of the Food and Drugs Act, and to distribute relief, besides all the ordinary work of an English policeman. At every railway station in Ireland—there are about as many as there are members of the House of Commons—the traveller will see a constable awaiting the arrival of the train. If he is a person who is "wanted," he may be tolerably certain that the said constable is in possession of his photograph and could give a fairly accurate history of his past life. He will then naturally take a back seat. If he escapes the constable at the station, he will find a large supply of his comrades in the street equally conversant with his person and history; and if he has a fancy for a moonlight ramble in the country, he may chance to run against yet more on night patrol duty.

The recruits for this permanent force of hard-worked men, the smallest of whom must be 5 feet 9 inches in height, come from almost all classes of society. The district inspectors—that is, the officers—are recruited in exactly the same way as officers for the Line, and are much the same class of men.