

BANQUET AT ATHEA TO THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY.

(From the Limerick Chronicle.)

On the 16th instant, the men of the Athea station of the Royal Irish Constabulary were entertained by the lord of the soil, the Venerable Archdeacon Goold, to a splendid banquet, in appreciation of their valued services during the late Fenian outbreak.

The barrack-rooms were most tastefully arranged for the occasion, under the management of Mr. Holmes, agent to the property, assisted by the Misses Gallwey.

Before proceeding to the dinner the men assembled in the ante-room, and marched into the dining-room, to the music of the "Roast Beef of Old England," and took up their places at table, the venerable chairman having at his right Mrs. Crosbie, wife of the constable, and the vice-chairman having at either side Mrs. Stenson and Mrs. Kavanagh.

Previous to sitting down.

The Chairman, having first invoked the blessing, read a letter of apology from the Rev. John Ryan, P.P., who regretted not being able to attend, in consequence of ill-health.

At the conclusion of dinner, and thanks having been given by the worthy Chairman, he proceeded to propose the health of her Majesty the Queen, and spoke as follows:—He remarked that Irishmen were ever famed for their valour, and devotion to the fair sex—how much more so, when the object of their devotion in this instance was not only a lady, but a Royal lady, and one who adorned in the most perfect manner every relation of life, whether as Queen or wife, or mother. Would to God! exclaimed the Chairman, that her gracious Majesty would be induced to reside occasionally amongst us. I am sure the more she knew of us the better she would like us. Would to God the minds of her responsible advisers were disabused of the idea that the Irish people were disloyal. He indignantly protested against this calumny, too widely propagated by designing demagogues and swindling agitators. Were the nobility disloyal, or the gentry or the middle-classes, or the farmers? No, ten thousand times no. Disloyal and discontented men were found everywhere, in Sheffield, in the neighbourhood of Windsor and Buckingham Palace, but was the heart of England disloyal. No. The same was the case in Ireland, disloyalty was confined to the scum and off-scouring of society. On rising to propose the toast of the evening, the chairman said—We have met here to-night to do honour to men who have been the protectors of our lives and properties during the late attempt at revolt in this country, and who have gained for themselves the honourable distinction of being now called the Royal Irish Constabulary. He then spoke in very eloquent terms of the courage displayed by Irishmen on every occasion from the time of the Dalgais down to the battles of Fontenoy, Waterloo, Meance, and the Crimea, and that the Victoria Cross had been won by vast numbers of his native countrymen, and though far from taking from the merit due to the British soldiery, he explained how the members of the Constabulary had on all occasions to contend with large numbers, and paid a high compliment to their judgment, steadiness, and skill. In alluding to the late outbreak, the venerable chairman described the great pluck shown by the Royals, who, though in small parties, successfully resisted the attacks of large bodies of Fenians, who greatly outnumbered them. Having spoken so much of Irish courage, he feared he might be accused of inconsistency if he did not explain why the Irish as rebels are so easily beaten, and he did so by saying that he believed their sense of their wrong-doing weighed them down, and quoted the saying that "conscience does make cowards of us all;" but he added, that he was sure if those poor fellows had been led, and, above all, fought, in a loyal and good cause, they would perhaps have rivalled many of their brethren in deeds of valour and daring. The chairman went on to say that the Constabulary differed from all other troops in the possession of high moral character, and reminded them that before entering the force every man should be proved to be of unblemished respectability, and in feeling and Christian-like terms alluded to their being composed of men of different creeds, and the *esprit de corps* prevailing in their ranks; and though, as the respected chairman said, they did their duty firmly and impartially, they did not forget the calls of humanity, for on a recent occasion, as the venerable chairman forcibly described, the men of the Athea station proved themselves humane. In one instance, where one of the party, at the risk of his life, saved a child from being drowned, and, in another instance, where they were mainly instrumental, under the kind hearted and charitable chairman, in consigning to hospital a fine young man, who was about to undergo amputation of the leg. In the course of his speech the venerable chairman alluded to the courage displayed by Mrs. Crosbie and the wives of the other members of the Constabulary, and said it reminded him of the Spartan matron who, on dismissing her sons to battle, handed them each a shield, saying—"Take this; bring it home with you, or be brought home upon it."

At the conclusion of the Rev. Archdeacon's address, which was listened to with marked attention, and received with much applause, Constable Crosbie, in the unavoidable absence of his officer, responded to the toast of the "Royal Irish Constabulary" in brief but heartfelt and appropriate language. He returned thanks for the great compliment paid by Archdeacon Goold to him and the men under his command, and assured all present if many gentlemen and landlords acted in the same manner as the venerable president had done, it would be a great inducement to the Royal Irish to redouble their efforts to well merit the great encomiums bestowed on them that evening.

The health of Mrs. Goold and family was duly honoured, and the venerable chairman having retired, the vice-chairman requested of all present to stand up and say, "May Archdeacon Goold long live as a credit to his church and his country," which sentiment was received with real Irish applause.

During the dinner Miss Gallwey performed many beautiful pieces of music at the piano, and after dinner, between the toasts, Mr. Gallwey, Miss Gallwey, and the Archdeacon sung some of the most admired of the Irish melodies and other popular airs.

On the Archdeacon retiring about nine o'clock, the Royal Irish Constabulary entertained at tea many of the Archdeacon's most respectable and loyal tenantry.