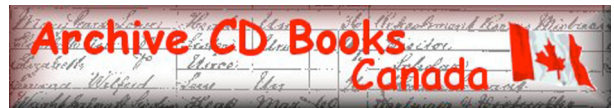


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Facts About Ulster.

by: John Hall

Original published by: Methodist Episcopal Church, South Barbee & Smith agents.

CAG086

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About this Gleaning:

Gleaned from:

The Scotch-Irish in America, Third Congress, 1891, Published: 1891

Content Description:

The author gives his impressions of Ulster during a recent visit.

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FACTS ABOUT ULSTER.

BY REV. JOHN HALL, D.D., OF NEW YORK.

Mr. President, Ladies, and Gentlemen: I want to say at the beginning that I have listened with the utmost satisfaction to that thoroughly able and learned, and, I think, instructive and conclusive statement that you have all heard in relation to the history of the making of this great nation; and if it were necessary for me in any way to indorse or commend one of the points made at the close, I should be glad to do it—viz., the point of the responsibility that rests upon American citizens to maintain the principles and to preserve the essential elements of that Constitution, which, as a Constitution, has drawn these elements from the inspired word of the living God.

Two things are vividly present to my mind at this moment. The first is a certain sense of danger to myself. You know that I am a preacher; I am a mere preacher. Many times I have to warn my people against their being tempted to indulge in self-satisfaction and vanity and pride and in all things of that kind; and I am free to confess that I realize the danger to myself at this moment, and in the position in which I find myself, of indulging in the self-satisfaction of belonging to the noble race of Scotch-Irishmen.

The second is of a somewhat different character, and I will state it very simply—that is, the great responsibility that all of us have in inheriting these benefits and advantages, and it is to be our care that we transmit them unimpaired to those who are to come after us, that we shall not be set down by them in time to come as unworthy of our great ancestry, and that we may not be charged by those looking into history in the time to come, as having forgotten the principles and turned away from the lofty standard set up before us and before the race by our forefathers of this Scotch-Irish community. I may here be a little autobiographical perhaps. I was born in Ulster, and in making that statement I sometimes think that there are a great many of the people (at least there are in New York) who would be better off for a little elementary geographical instruction in regard to Ulster. There are four provinces in that little island, and the whole island is

by no means large. Many times at meetings like this the wonder has existed in my mind how one little section of that little island has been able to turn out such a number of influential and illustrious persons as there have been in this country from that place. I was born in the province of Ulster, in the county of Armagh. It is the smallest of the counties of Ulster. I mention this because a great many people put to me this question: "What part of the north of Ireland do you come from?" I come from the same point that the Tennants came from. There are many distinguished Americans whose people in the old land are from that part. The Alexanders come from Tyrone, the Hodges from Donegal, the McKemies from Ramelton; and I would just state at this opportunity, concerning Ramelton, and touching distinguished Americans from that point, that a gentleman sitting on the platform to-night, Mr. Robert Bonner, our President, hails from Ramelton.

I would like to mention something of the province of Ulster. They are mostly farmers there. The average farm is very small, only about twenty acres; yet the good farmers living there, paying relatively high rents and taxes, are yet so reliant, industrious, painstaking, and so sensitive of the benefits of a good education that they send their sons to the best schools and colleges that they may be fitted for the best places of influence and responsibility, and do it without any outside aid from any source. And I believe that it is that love of education, accompanied by a sense of independence, which has in some degree contributed to the force and power that have characterized the Scotch-Irish over this continent as it has marked them elsewhere.

But let me mention this: At the Congress at Pittsburg of last year, this resolution was read: "That we gratefully acknowledge the fraternal greetings of the Mayor and citizens of Belfast, and request Dr. John Hall to convey the expression of our undying sympathy and love to our Scotch brethren there, and finally that we cannot separate without humbly and reverently returning thanks to the Almighty God in, whom we all trust for the happy reunions of the Scotch-Irish race, and for his great goodness in providing us a home in this broad land of civil and religious liberty." It so occurred that I had been designated by the General Assembly to go as a delagate to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, which met in Belfast, holding meetings in commemoration of an event which occurred fifty years ago, in 1840, the Union of the Synod of Ulster and a large body known as the secession body. I was permitted to carry to this great body the cordial fraternal greeting of this Scotch-Irish Congress. There was earnestness in the meeting, there was enthusiasm, and it was impossible not

to see with what healthy thankfulness, just and legitimate pride, our countrymen and kindred in the old country looked at the conditions, and considered the aims and enterprises of their countrymen and kindred in this land. It was a pleasant duty for me to convey this greeting to them, and I endeavored to do it in a way that would commend itself to the judicious approval of the President and Executive Committee, under whose instructions I was commissioned.

Before sitting down I should like to add a few words. I am now in the twenty-fourth year of my residence in this land, and a citizen for these years of the United States; but I have been going back from year to year on various grounds to the old country, and I should like to tell those here who have some associations or memories with Ulster that I never saw the province present such a look of prosperity as it did last year. As I have said to you before, it is only one of the four provinces, and to follow largely on the line emphasized by the previous speaker, who used the word "Presbyterian" quite frequently, I will tell you more about Ulster. That province pays forty-six per cent. of the taxes of Ireland. Brewing and distilling prevails in some of the counties, but linen manufactories and other industries have raised this province to the condition in which it stands.

We have been told many times of the wretched, miserable, starving condition of the Irish people as a whole. I am bound to say that my observations and a careful statement of facts will not bear out the justice of these impressions. There never has been so much money deposited in the savings-banks of Ireland as during the past year; there was never so much money in circulation in legitimate ways among the people. I am sorry to say that the amount expended in drink, notwithstanding all we hear of the poverty of the Irish people, is as large as in former years, if not larger; but in industry and wide-spread education Ireland, I believe, never stood in a better position than she does to-day. And as to those Presbyterians, to whom reference has been made again and again, the Irish Presbyterian Church was never in a better condition, and, notwithstanding all that has been said of the station and poverty of the Irish people, the contributions to Missions and benevolent works are larger, and the fund of the General Assembly stands better to-day than it has in former years. In the willingness of its ministry, the earnestness and the fidelity, I do not believe that Christendom presents a nobler band of men performing ministerial functions than are in the Irish Presbyterian Church.

But I am deeply interested, of course, in the other Protestant Church of the land: the Protestant Episcopal Church. You know that what

was then the ideal of the American Constitution in this regard has been realized by dis-establishment in Ireland, and the Protestant Episcopal Church of the land is not weaker, but stronger, because of the work, and the ministers, as a whole, are faithfully and earnestly proclaiming the truth in Christ Jesus. They have many difficulties to encounter, as I know—I have been there enough to know all about it—I was educated in Belfast and lived three years in the province of Connaught. I brought from that country two things that would have a great influence on my life. The first of these is a pronounced conviction of the unspeakable value of a definite religious belief, and the second of these is a wife of whom I am bound to say here that for all these years she has exercised over me that kind of Home Rule of which—[Here the speaker's voice was drowned with applause and laughter]. I mention these circumstances to show that I have had opportunity to know Ireland. I was born there and brought up there, and I labored for years in Ulster as a minister. I know the whole land, and I tell you, my brethren, that I am not speaking of American politics, but of something in another land—that what is wanted is not to carry out the policy that has been advanced by one great and distinguished man, but to educate her people, train them, inspire them with the thoughts, purposes, and convictions that have made these United States, in the face of difficulties and discouragements what, through the blessing of God Almighty, these United States are to-day.

There is much more that it would be easy and excellent to say, but time does not permit of any thing further. I thank you for the attention you have given me, and pray God to bless you, one and all, so that in this great and splendid land the idea our fathers had before them, and for which they fought, struggled, and died, may be realized in our generation and the generations to come after us.