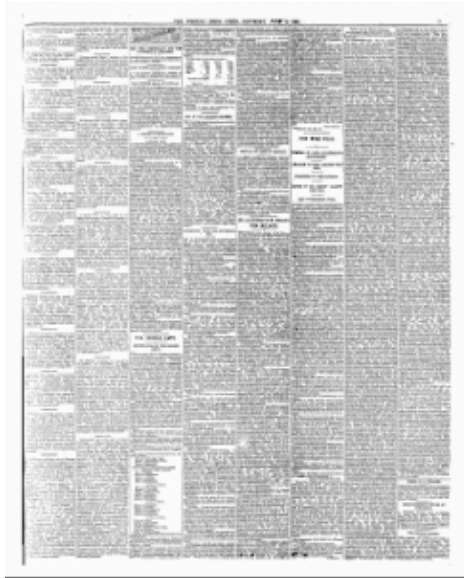


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INTERVIEW WITH MR. DE COBAIN,

M.P.

MR. W. DE COBAIN, M.P., was for five years the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge at Belfast, and is at present a Deputy Grand Master for Ireland. He was elected as member for the East Division of Belfast by a decided majority over both the old Conservative candidate and his Liberal competitor. He is a devout man of Wesleyan origin, and is a fair representative of a type of the militant Orangeman.

"What do you think, Mr De Cobain," inquired the representative of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, "of the muster roll of the Orange army?"

Mr De Cobain did not reply at once. He scanned the columns of the muster roll with great care, and examined the description of the organisation, and then said slowly—"Your representative seems to have acquired a great mass of detailed information."

"But is it information, or is it all bogus?"

"It certainly is not bogus" said the member for East Belfast. "I should say that it is not quite up to date—that is all. The total his figures amount to is about seventy-three thousand men, but in many cases the returns are omitted as being incomplete. If these returns were included and the muster roll were brought up to date the number of men enrolled for the protection of the province of Ulster would be found to be nearer one hundred and twenty thousand than seventy-three thousand."

"But, Mr De Cobain, do you mean that these are actually enrolled and armed for the purpose of acting as a field army against the rest of Ireland?"

"Certainly," replied he; "but for defence not for offence. The work has been in progress for a long time. We have made no parade of it; nor do we now wish to make any sensation. We know exactly what will happen if Ulster is handed over to the tender mercies of a statutory Parliament in Dublin, and we are taking precautions beforehand."

"Then you mean to fight?"

"By all means. There are no two opinions in the Orange lodges in the North. We see our rights, our liberties, our privileges as British citizens threatened by a most unconstitutional surrender, dictated by the meanest of party motives to a gang of men whom Mr Gladstone described as little better than brigands and murderers. We entirely deny the moral competency of the Imperial Parliament to subordinate a loyal portion of the Empire to the authority of murderers, assassins, moonlighters, and the rest. The State exists for the maintenance of law and order. The men to whom you are now handing the reins of Government in Ireland have risen into prominence by the success with which they have defied both law and order. You now say that you are going to place the one law-abiding and orderly portion of Ireland under the control of the men who have filled Ireland with outrage and bloodshed for the last four or five years. We, Protestants of Ulster, declare that such an act is *ultra vires*. You have no right to do that, and if you insist on doing wrong we shall know how to defend ourselves."

"But, Mr De Cobain, is not that flat rebellion?"

"Not in the least. We merely ask for the maintenance of the *status quo*, for the maintenance of the Empire, for the maintenance of the rights and privileges of British subjects. No doubt it is rebellion against Mr Gladstone, but Mr Gladstone is not the British Constitution. The alternative is simple. We must be false to the British Constitution and the Empire, or be true to Mr Gladstone. We prefer to be true to the British Constitution and to oppose Mr Gladstone."

"Then you regard this seventy-three thousand or one hundred and twenty-thousand, as you say, *bona fide* fighting men?"

"Decidedly so," said Mr De Cobain. "We have at least that number in Ulster alone. That is by no means a muster roll of all the Orangemen. All the elderly and infirm have been eliminated. The figures which you have represent the actual fighting men capable and fit to take the field, and who would take the field in defence of the Protestant cause."

"But are they armed?"

"Most of them are," said Mr De Cobain. "I do not say that they have arms of precision of the latest fashion; but most of these men who are down in the list will be found, upon examination, to have a very trust-worthy and efficient breechloading rifle with which they can be relied upon to do execution against those cowards whose only idea of warfare is to lie behind a hedge and put a landlord in the back. We shall fight in the open, and our arms, if not precisely of the best, are quite good enough when backed by a stout heart and a cool head. I am not in a position to state exactly how many stand of arms has been distributed through the North of Ireland, but my opinion is that the information in the hands of the Organising Committee as to the number of Orangemen who are still in want of weapons will show that a very small quantity of rifles would suffice to complete the equipment of the whole force."

"That may be so in regard to the infantry, Mr De Cobain, but what about the cavalry? They may have the sabres and muskets, but have they horses?"

"Certainly. If you look at the return of the cavalry in that list you will see that most of them are in country districts, and most of them have horses of their own: I should say decidedly that all the men on the active list would be able to come to the muster properly mounted and equipped, but in the reserve, which you will see is largest in the towns of Derry and Belfast, there might be a difficulty at first in finding horses for all the men who need them, though that would soon be managed."

"How about the artillery? You certainly have no batteries in the Protestant hands, and how can your men be regarded as artillerymen when you have no cannon with which to drill and train them?"

"You forget," said Mr De Cobain, smiling, "that Orangemen have always been very strongly represented in all branches of the British army, and since short service was introduced there has been a continual stream of time-expired artillerymen working their way back to their homes in Ulster. Everyone of these men, I should say,