

A Mayoral Chain

It is only fitting that the most ancient Corporation, not alone in Ireland, but in the three kingdoms, should have the proud distinction of possessing a Mayoral chain of a most unique character. Limerick received its charter so far back as 1197, from King John, when Lord of Ireland. In 1582, by charter of Elizabeth, Limerick was raised to the dignity of a city so that it must have been a very important place in those bygone days. It was about 1193

THE INSIGNIA OF OFFICE.

But it was long years afterwards that the Mayors of this ancient Corporation initiated the custom of wearing a chain as the insignia of office. Limerick's Mayor wears two chains—one, which is the "official" chain, is small and of plain pattern. As seen in the subjoined photograph of the present Mayor (Alderman Joyce, M.P.), it is V shaped when worn round the neck in conjunction with the second or larger chain. It is this latter which is unique of its kind. As will be seen, it is formed of a series of disc links of various sizes, each one being gold. As each Mayor retires from office he adds a gold disc link, recording on one side his name, date of accession, and duration of office; and on the other side are recorded some of the principal events that took place during the term of office, both locally and otherwise. In this way it is a historic record in itself. Though the smaller or "official" chain (which is usually worn each day inside the coat by



Alderman Joyce, retiring Mayor of Limerick.

that the title of Provost, or head of the Corporation, was changed to that of Mayor, one Adam Savant, a large portrait of whom hangs presently in the Limerick Council Chamber, being the first elected to the office



Alderman F. Riordan's Link.

the possessor when attending to official duties) is very old, so old, indeed, that the record of its age is lost, the second or larger chain dates only from 1822.

ORIGIN OF THE DISC LINKS.

It appears that in the year just mentioned the then Mayor, Mr. D. F. G. Mahony, attached a small disc link—a little larger than a shilling piece—to the "official" chain, and his example being emulated by his successors, it was found to be more convenient to detach the gold disc links and form them into a separate chain. Part of the plain wire links of the "official" chain were used at first for con-

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necting the discs, but it is now no longer encroached upon. The very earliest of the disc links, as stated, are about the size of a shilling piece. As years went on the added links became larger, those of late years having been made as large as a crown piece. An idea, therefore, of the money value of the chain may be gauged from the fact that for each year since 1822 a link has been added, with the result that this unique insignia of office is now about nine feet

the occasion of the visit of Alderman John Daly, the well-known Fenian, to the United States during his Mayoralty. What would be the consequence had he happened to lose it, goodness only knows, but he brought it back in safety.

SOME INTERESTING LINKS.

One of the most interesting of the many interesting links that compose the chain, is that provided by Alderman Daly at the conclusion of his three years of office. On the side that is shown are a pike, gun, sun-burst, and a pair of handcuffs; and on the other side, Alderman Daly records in Irish that he was a Fenian prisoner in Portland Jail, the date of his incarceration and the date of his liberation. Another link, that of Alderman P. Riordan, records the death of Parnell, and bears a bust in relief of the late Chief. The link added by Mr. Thomas Walnut, who was Mayor in 1847, records the death of Daniel O'Connell, at Genua, 15th of May, on the one side, while on



Councillor Kerr, Mayor-Elect of Limerick. Photo, Mahon.

in length. It is kept in the custody of the Mayor for the time being during the term of his office, and is publicly handed over to the successor at the moment of his election to the civic chair. Only in one instance has it been taken outside this country, and that was on



Alderman John Daly's Link.

the other is mentioned the return of the Liberator's son, J. O'Connell, and J. O'Brien, as members for Limerick at the General Election in the same year.

"Judges of Assize attended Mass in state, with the Mayor and Corporation in their robes, being the first occasion of the kind since the Reformation. Protestant Church disestablished in Ireland," are the interesting records on the link presented by Thomas Boyce, Mayor, 1860. Thus, in each link, are the records kept of some of the most notable events that occur in these countries from year to year.