

Limerick Is Not

Short Of Elaborate

Civic Insignia

Limerick's famous mayoral chain — it is almost six feet in length and weighs six lbs. — is being taken to the United States to-morrow by Mayor P. Kelly. The chain, each link or medallion is of pure gold, is being specially insured to cover risk of theft while out of the city.

The Mayor, with ten other civic heads from Ireland and England, will be a guest of Aer Linte on the inaugural jet flight to New York.

Limerick has two Mayoral chains, one large, the other much smaller. The great Mayoral chain of 118 links is worn on very special occasions, but the other one is worn by the Mayor on all occasions as an emblem of his office.

For the past one hundred and fifty years it has been the custom for each Mayor to add a link to the great chain and, so, to-day it weighs approximately six lbs. Each link is inscribed with outstanding events that occurred during the office of the donor, making the chain an historical record.

SHERIFF'S CHAIN

The two chains that used to be worn by the Sheriffs on special occasions are also of considerable size, especially that of the High Sheriff.

Sir Thomas Cleeve added a link to this chain to signalise his period of office. It has the following inscription: "Visit of members of House of Lords and Commons, 29th May, 1899. Visit of Queen Victoria to Dublin, 4th Sep., 1900. Address from loyal citizens of Limerick presented at Viceregal Lodge. Knight-hood conferred. Death of Queen Victoria, 22nd Jan., 1901. Accession of King Edward VII proclaimed in Limerick by High Sheriff, 30th Jan., 1901. General Election, Oct., 1900. Unionist Govt. returned."

By way of contrast to this loyal "proclamation," let us quote the inscription on the link added by James O'Mara: "First National High Sheriff wearing this chain. Met Davitt in Cork on his return from America, 1st Feb., 1887. Meeting against coercion, 17th April. Pone's jubilee, August 9th. Return of Wm. O'Brien from Canada concerning Lugacurren tenantry, 18th June."

FOUR MACES

Other Mayoral insignia consisted of four maces, now seldom or never seen in public—for some years they

are showpieces in the City Museum. In the "good old days" the Mayor, on state occasions, was attended by four sergeants-at-mace, meaning that each of the four carried a mace.

The maces are 34 inches in length, surmounted with a car-shaped head, supported by four rampant lions and other ornamentations. According to Lenihan the maces, at some period or other, had a lot of extra embellishments which, he states, were stolen before the Reform (or "Popular") Corporation got control of civic affairs.

The maces—made of silver—are very valuable, though they have suffered considerable damage down the years. Another Mayoral emblem is a wand—first mentioned in 1543. This, too, has gone out of use for many years.

ELABORATE DECORATIONS

The maces are very rich in decoration. The flat of the heads is decorated with the arms of George II, surrounded with a floral or shell-like circlet. The decoration of the bowl is both embossed and applied. The top of the bowl has two roped rings with a panel between, decorated with lozenges, ovals and beads.

This is followed by an applied floral circle, broken by heads of cherubs, each with a stylised ox-head beneath. The body of the head or bowl of each mace is embossed with (1) the Arms of Limerick (2) the rose and thistle (3) the harp (4) the fleur-de-lis. A crown is also superimposed. Rampant lions and other lavish decorations are a feature of the maces, which are believed to have been made in 1739 by a Limerick silversmith named John Robinson.

THE CIVIC SWORD

A reference to the Civic Sword, another part of the Mayoral insignia, must not be omitted. A double-edged weapon, it was carried by the City High Constable (a functionary that went out of existence years ago) before the Mayor