

Mrs. Pirrie awarded freedom of the city of Belfast

The Times

Thursday 21 April 1904

BELFAST, APRIL 20

The freedom of the city of Belfast, unanimously voted by the council some weeks ago, was formally presented to Mrs. Pirrie at the town-hall to-day in the presence of a large and distinguished company. The municipal flag floated above the hall in honour of the occasion, and the interior of the building was decorated. After the resolution of the corporation conferring the freedom had been read, the Lord Mayor, Sir Otto Jaffe, addressing Mrs. Pirrie, said the resolution was the official expression of the thanks of the city council, representing 360,000 inhabitants, but it could not possibly convey to Mrs. Pirrie the feeling of intense gratitude the citizens of Belfast and surrounding districts owed her for her successful efforts in

of the old Royal Hospital. The united effort of Mr. and Mrs. Pirrie had resulted in a well-conceived hospital, embodying the most modern ideas, utilizing every new invention, a noble structure answering in every way all modern demands. The building as it now stood was acknowledged to be one of the best-equipped hospitals in the world. Belfast had the honour of having the building opened last year by their Majesties the King and Queen. The Lord Mayor then presented Mrs. Pirrie with a casket containing an illuminated copy of the resolution, and requested her to sign the roll of honorary burgesses. Mrs. Pirrie, having accepted the casket and signed the roll, thanked the citizens for the high honour they had conferred upon her. The hospital was a standing monument to the generosity, philanthropy, and devotion of the citizens of that great commercial capital. Being so closely identified, through her husband, with one of their large industrial establishments and brought into contact with some of the great commercial leaders of their own and other countries, it was only natural that she should have learned to take a deep interest in the great developments that had taken place during the last two decades. Commerce was the life of a country, and Belfast afforded a worthy illustration of that spirit of enterprise and those qualities of industry, perseverance, and energy that had made our great Empire what it was. They knew that until quite recently---in fact, until the Prince of Wales after his colonial tour uttered his famous warning that "England must wake up"---commerce was regarded with little favour in some quarters. Even Cabinet Ministers looked upon it with apathetic indifference, but thanks largely to the Imperial instinct of the Prince, who dignified commerce by acknowledging its vital importance, public opinion was developing, and it was now generally recognized that this was the element upon which the Empire depended, and that, therefore, it was in progressive, industrial communities such as

Belfast that our country's hope for the future lay. When Mrs. Pirrie had resumed her seat the Lord Mayor called for three cheers for the first honorary lady burgess of the city of Belfast, a request which was cordially complied with.

Courtesy of Mark Baber

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