

Irish News.

OUR IRISH LETTER.

(From our own correspondent.)

Dublin, September 15.

Death has carried off two distinguished Irishmen—Sir William Stokes surgeon in ordinary to the Queen in Ireland, and Lord Russell of Killowen, Lord Chief Justice of England. Lord Russell was the son of a gentleman in business in Newry, and spent most of his early youth in the village of Killowen, on Carlingford Lough, whence he took his title when he was made a Law Lord some few years since. As he practised altogether at the English Bar, Lord Russell was scarcely known outside his family circle in Ireland. Much better known and sincerely loved is his warm-hearted and gifted brother, the Rev. Matthew Russell, S.J., who for 26 years has been editor of the *Irish Monthly*, a magazine in which from time to time many writers who have since made a mark in literature published perhaps the very best of their productions, notably *Lectures of a Certain Professor*, by the late Rev. Joseph O'Farrell, and *Cromwell in Ireland*, by the Rev. Denis Murphy, S.J.

Sir William Stokes died of a chill contracted in a hospital in South Africa, whither he went as a specialist. Sir William Stokes's fame as a surgeon was purely local, but his name is curiously connected with a strange incident in latter-day Irish history. At the time of the Fenian outbreak, a spy of the name of Talbot was in the pay of the British Government. A part of the work of this notorious man was to pretend to be a Fenian, to go amongst the young men of the people to urge them to become Fenians, and actually to swear them in as members of that secret society, then betray his unfortunate dupes to the authorities. The better to accomplish his ends, Talbot, who was a Protestant, pretended to be a most pious Catholic, went to Mass, acted the devout Christian most successfully, and went so far, it is said, as to receive the Holy Communion on more than one occasion, thus throwing the simple-minded people off their guard.

Of course Talbot's real character and mission as spy and informer became known. He was shot, died of his wound, and the man who fired the shot was tried for his life, but was acquitted on that count upon a curious technical quibble. The late Isaac Butt was the counsel for the defence, but got a hint upon which he founded his whole case. He set to work to 'grind' under a Dublin surgeon, studied night and day, had even a skeleton brought to his chambers, worked for a fortnight as no medical student was ever known before or since to work, and at the end of the fortnight he was ready with his plea. Stokes was the surgeon who had been employed to extract the bullet. Butt had the surgeon upon the witness table, put him through such a searching surgical examination as could not have been surpassed by the whole College of Surgeons put together, and finally and triumphantly established his point: that Talbot had died, not from the actual wound inflicted, but from Surgeon Stokes's careless handling of the wound in extracting the bullet. I have heard the story from a person who well remembers the occurrence and the sensation created at the time by Isaac Butt's brilliant exploit in thus qualifying in one fortnight to become as clever an examiner in surgery as men who had spent years in the necessary studies.

HOLYWOOD.

A lovely spot is Holywood, where I am spending the autumn holidays, just five miles from Bays of Belfast, and so called from the saints of old who once dwelt by the shores of what is now called Belfast Lough, where they had a church as early as the fifth century, exactly where the remains of an old Protestant Episcopalian church stand at the very eastern end of the long High street of Holywood town, at the western entrance to which now rises a beautiful Catholic church in the midst of beautiful grounds, its graceful spire overtopping every other spire around.

May I try to paint the scene I looked upon on Sunday afternoon—a genuine Sunday such as that holy day should be, sunny, genial, the air bliny, the sky blue, the sea unruffled, the boats asleep and nodding up and down on the waters, the sound of sweet bells coming now and again up from the valley or across the water; fathers, mothers, children, rich and poor, scattered over hills and hollows, the children blackberrying in and out the trees, their elders stopping here and there to rest on the greensward and enjoy the weather and the exquisite view; birds circling overhead, dogs frisking around and playing with the children; Sunday everywhere, Sunday such as I always fancy does not exist anywhere out of Ireland.

We strolled up the Downshire road (you see I am talking over it with some of those old natives of Holywood): it is all built along now, down from Moffat Terrace and Sunnyside, and brand-new villas, with gables and red-tiled roofs, stud the fields on every side; but still the Ards are there as of old, with their woods and quarries and little dells, and in that beautiful green valley in behind the old Newtownards road are the town waterworks, laid out in beds, like an old-fashioned English garden, only that where flowers are in the garden water fills the grass-bordered squares here.

Well, having strolled to the head of the Downshire road, we wandered up the hill and on to a part of its crest where it is bare of wood and the sod is short and velvety—just a spot for sitting down, where the prospect is wide, the views glorious; on such a day Killarney itself might almost feel a generous rivalry with 'the Black North.' Down below, for about a quarter of a mile, Holywood town spreads along the very shore, backed by thick groves of trees, from out which peep innumerable gables and tall chimneys, showing where villas on the 'Croft' (farm) road and many other branching roads are nestling in shade. To the left lies Belfast, near enough to let us see the glimmer of sunlight in glass roofs and windows and the

haze of smoke that is never quite lifted, but is gilded and softened by such a glorious sun as shines to-day over Crag Hill. All along the opposite shore of the Lough run the Antrim hills, with villas and factories and little towns studding their base: White Abbey, where a white spire now marks 'The Star of the Sea'; old Carrickfergus, its grey castle walls standing out clear on the brink of the water, a monument of various ages, each age from its very foundation marking some sad epoch in the history of the great chieftains of the Irish clan O'Neill. A silvery line of smoke marks a train creeping along under the hills until it rounds Blackhead and is lost in the sudden turn into one of the many bays of the Antrim coast. But look well. There, where there is sea space at the extreme end of the Lough, a dim, solitary mound, like the top of a volcano, rises sheer out of the water; that is Ailsa Craig, one of the flanking towers of the Scottish coast which is so near the Irish coast just here that, of a very clear day, we can distinguish the corn fields and cliffs of Scotland quite plainly. Then our eyes come home to the County Down, and rove hither and thither from hill to hill.

At the first point, a few miles east, is Bangor, now merely a seaside resort for Belfast folk, once, in Ireland's golden age, one of those great seats of learning for which this country was so famous. Who has not heard of that Monastery of Bangor, founded in 552 by Saint Comgall, where there were as many as 3000 learned and holy monks, and whence zealous missionaries went forth bearing the glad tidings of Christianity to all parts of Europe. 'This saintly place,' says Jocelin, 'so fruitful of saints, even as a vine increasing the sweetness of its odour, extended its roots into the sea and its branches beyond the sea, for it filled with monasteries and pious monks Hibernia, Scotia, and many islands, and even foreign regions.' Amongst those missionaries we may mention two who are world-renowned—Columbanus, the apostle of the Franks, the Lombards of Switzerland, the founder of Bobbio; St. Gall, from whom a canton and a town in Switzerland are named.

Not very far from Bangor we have the woods and fields, the glens and heights of Clanneboy, once owned by the kinsmen of 'Owen Roe,' now the property of the Marquis of Dufferin, who is great-grandson of Richard Brinsley Sheridan and very proud of his mother's descent from Sheridan. The late Lady Dufferin was the authoress of that plaintive ballad 'I'm sitting on the stile, Mary' that has brought tears to many an Irish emigrant's eye in far away lands. From this Lady Dufferin is named 'Helen's Bay,' and a tower on a hill behind, 'Helen's Tower,' is also named after her and is said to stand on the spot—commanding an exquisite view—where her famous song was written.

In the centre of Clanneboy is Crawford's Burn, a deep ravine, made beautiful by its wealth of pines, its three cascades, its flowers and ferns, its many winding paths and the graceful viaduct that spans the valley and the stream at one extremity. Here lives the descendant of that Sharmar Crawford of Crawford's Burn who was one of the very first advocates of Tenant Right for the farmers of Ireland. The present Colonel Crawford is just now canvassing his County in preparation for the coming General Election, and offers himself as an advocate for Tenant Right and Land Purchase.

Between Crawford's Burn and Holywood are Craigabad, Cultra, Marino, and villages, but little settlements of sea-side villas, bordered by the blue Lough and surrounded by a sweet rural country, rich in wood and pasture and mellow corn-fields, all interspersed with green lanes where it is so pleasant to wander up the hill sides to Cairngraver, and many another hill top, or down shady glades to where the tide softly laps the shore in its gentle, summer Sunday way.

Do any of your readers in far-away Dunedin remember the scene? Do they recall the long-forgotten neighbors? The old ways of the place? The Maypole in the village street, still there, at the head of Shore street, and now serving as a lamp post for four gas jets, right over which still hangs the big wooden ring for May Day garlands. Do they recollect the old Unitarian Pastor, who spent 37 years teaching and preaching to his flock, having a kind word and a merry joke for his friends of all denominations? He only died a few years since, but his good friend, the Catholic Parish Priest, whiteheaded now, but hale, hearty, loved by his own, respected by all, is to the fore and will celebrate his golden jubilee next year. A great scholar, antiquarian and historian, a great worker for his Church, few priests in Ireland have done more for their parishes, none have seen stranger changes than the good old Parish Priest of Holywood, the historian of Down and Connor, the Rev. Father O'Laverty, M.R.I.A., who tells us, in his history of the place, that in 1741 there was only one Catholic, a serving man, in the whole town, and he was such a curiosity that people ran to their doors to see him pass.

Is there any such sunshine in Dunedin as is at this moment lighting up this charming bit of Ireland, once the chosen dwelling place of saintly men from whose presence it received its name of 'the Holy Wood,' then and now as sweet and homelike a spot as any exile of Erin could wish to keep framed within his heart as 'home.'

M.B.

COUNTY NEWS.

CORK.—Presentation to a Priest.—On Thursday, September 13, the Rev. Richard Barrett, of St. Patrick's, Cork, was the recipient of a signal honor on the occasion of his silver jubilee. Over 30 priests of the diocese who were his former pupils in St. Finbarr's Seminary assembled at his residence and presented him with his portrait in oils and a large and handsome piece of silver plate. In the address which was read the highest testimony was given to Father Barrett's superior teaching and also to his kindness to students and young priests.

Silver Jubilee of a Nun.—On Wednesday, September 12, the community of the Bon Secours Convent, Cork, celebrated the silver jubilee of the Superiress, Mother Anastasia, and also of Sister Mary, sister of the Very Rev. Father Fogarty, C.S.Sp. The Rev.