

Irish News.

OUR IRISH LETTER.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

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The Late Lord Dufferin.

Dufferin and Ava. February 12, at Clandeboye, County Down, Frederick Hamilton Blackwood, first Marquis of Dufferin and Ava. This was the simple announcement in the obituary columns of our daily papers that told a host of admirers and an unusually large number of truly affectionate friends that a brilliant statesman, a gifted Irishman, worthy of his race, and—best of all—as kindly-hearted a nobleman as ever breathed, had passed away, and that, unless in future generations the family genius revive, the last, and not the least gifted, of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's descendants passed away in the person of Frederick Hamilton Temple Blackwood, Marquis of Dufferin and Ava.

All Irishmen know that, on his mother's side, Lord Dufferin was the great grandson of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the author of 'The Rivals,' 'The School for Scandal,' etc., and no descendant of the Crusaders of old was prouder of his ancestors than was the Marquis of Dufferin of his descent from the brilliant Irish writer. On his father's side, he belonged to the family of Blackwood, of Ulster, raised to the rank of baronets in 1763, and at the time the Union was first proposed a forefather to Lord Dufferin. Sir John Blackwood, staunch to his country, refused to sell that country, though twice offered an earldom. His eldest son, however, voted for the Union and was created Baron Dufferin in 1800.

The late Marquis's father died in 1841, when his son was only a lad at Eton, and from that hour, as boy and man, the son's devotion to his poet mother was an absorbing passion, the bright guiding star of his youth and of his manhood, a beautiful devotion that has been responsible for all that has been good and noble throughout his long life.

Lord Dufferin was noted at all the Courts and in the brilliant literary circles of the last generation for his wit, his eloquence, his courtly, well-bred and manly bearing. As a diplomatist, there has, perhaps, never been any man that had such wide experience, and such a successful career. In 1849, while quite a young man, he became Lord in Waiting to the Queen. Some years later he spent a long time in foreign travel, studying life, history, and politics in many lands: Greece, Turkey, Egypt, the holy Land, and countries away in the far North. In 1859, he went in an official capacity with Lord John Russell to Vienna, and there first gave proofs of his great gifts as a diplomat. In 1860, Lord Dufferin was sent as British Commissioner to the East, and was the chief means of bringing peace to the Christians suffering under Turkish atrocity. In 1864, he was made Under Secretary in India. In 1866, he returned home to be Under Secretary for War in England. In 1869 he was Paymaster General and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Ten years later he was appointed Governor-General of Canada, and, after a most successful administration of nine years, went as Ambassador to St. Petersburg. In St. Petersburg Lord Dufferin spent two years, and his next appointment was to Constantinople, where he was entrusted with most difficult negotiations. We next find him, in 1882, the British Commissioner-General of Egypt. On leaving Egypt (1884) Lord Dufferin was made Viceroy of India. From 1888 to 1891 he acted as Ambassador

and Plenipotentiary to the King of Italy, and was British Ambassador to Paris from 1891 to 1896.

In a short sketch of the deceased Marquis, published in the Dublin 'Freeman's Journal' (from which I extract above dates), in referring to his marvellous success in the interests of England and to his popularity amongst those to whom he went as ruler or as emissary, the writer says: 'The essence of the diplomatic side of political life is secrecy; tactful dealing takes the place of flamboyant oratory; the success of tomorrow demands absolute reticence as to the means by which success was won to-day. To estimate the mental force, even to appreciate adequately the actual achievements of a man like the late Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, requires the intimate knowledge possessed only by a series of Cabinet Ministers and by the diplomat himself. That he achieved many of the victories of diplomacy is certain; he has left a deep dint in history; but his methods, in which his merit lies, cannot yet be known.'

I do not think I am very far out in stating, as the result of a brief, but never to be forgotten personal insight into this nobleman's nature, that Lord Dufferin's great secret was that he consulted his own heart. He possessed a great fund of Irish kindness, honest straightforwardness, and cosmopolitan tact; he had a warm and sympathetic heart, and his consulting that heart was, I have little doubt, the secret of his success as a statesman in many countries and amongst a vast variety of peoples. His mother's constant care and companionship throughout his youth and the companionship of his wife, the granddaughter of that warm-hearted Irishman, Rowan Hamilton, will have a large share in influencing Lord Dufferin's character, for his devotion to both, especially his touching love for his mother, has always been the subject of respect and admiration, and few ever visit the County Down without paying their tribute to that filial love by visiting 'Helen's Tower,' a tower built by Lord Dufferin in the Clandeboye grounds as something like what the ancient Irish kings and nobles built expressly for the ladies of their households, a 'Grattan,' or 'Sunny House,' where, apart from all, they could enjoy those hours of happy quiet always so dear to women.

Helen's Tower rises high above the whole surrounding country and commands most lovely views of Irish inland and coast scenery, of the Channel and of the Scotch Coast. Here, some say, Lady Dufferin wrote the ballad, 'I'm sitting by the style, Mary, that has moved Irish hearts the world over; and here, on each return home, her son invariably made it his custom to spend at least one night, in memory of his mother.

Clandeboye House, where Lord Dufferin died, is a beautiful, home-like mansion, where are gathered the portraits of the Sheridans, of the beautiful Miss Lindley who married Richard Brinsley Sheridan, of 'The Three Graces,' and a long line of interesting family portraits, including those of the late Marquis, his wife, and their eldest son, whose early death in the present war preyed heavily on his father's heart. In Clandeboye House are also gathered souvenirs from all the countries in which the diplomat won the many honors that caused it to be said that he was the most decorated man of his time; his home is indeed a perfect museum of rare and curious treasures, including an immense richly-wrought silver casket, presented to Lady Dufferin by the women of India in recognition of her tactful courtesy and kindness as the Viceroy's wife.

The late Marquis's remains lie in a burial place within the grounds of Clandeboye, a richly-wooded demesne

covering a charming undulating country side, reaching some miles inland from Helen's Bay, a most picturesque little bay named after Lord Dufferin's mother and situate on the shore of Belfast Lough, within a walk of Bangor, that place once so famed for its great monastic school and for the learned monks who went forth from its walls to spread piety and knowledge throughout Europe in the golden days of the Church of Ireland.

The Land Question.

Let us turn to something else, and note what happiness would be the lot of the many in this sweet land of ours were the Compulsory Sales Act only allowed to become a reality. Speaking in the House of Commons last night on the work of preceding Land Purchase Bills (Ireland) the Chief Secretary furnished the following telling facts as to the fidelity of Irish tenants in fulfilling their obligations. Under the Acts of 1891 and 1896 there were 30,000 tenant purchasers, paying a rental of £171,000, or instalments of purchase. Amongst these there was not one case of bad debt; 69 were six months late with their payments, 12 were 12 months late, and only one man out of 30,000 was 18 months behind hand. The total amount of arrears was £643 out of the rental named. This statement so impressed the House that it was received with cheers on all sides.

This is but a story of the comparative few who have been allowed to purchase their holdings. Only think how many more happy homesteads there might be! And think, too, what a thrifty, honest lot 'these lazy Irish' are the moment hope really dawns in their hearts. Think of such results in times of poor prices and foreign competition in everything the country produces, saving and excepting bog—there is no foreign competition in that.

Temperance.

Lent has been kept this year with its old fervor, thanks to the fact that we have had very little sickness, no epidemic of influenza, as in many previous years. All over Ireland missions have been held, with most edifying results, very hopeful to those whose hearts are in the great temperance movement that would bless our people beyond all the temporary prosperity that could be showered upon them. If our magistrates could but be induced to curtail the granting of licenses, much would be gained, but the publicans and the shareholders in the drink business are wealthy and they bribe largely.

I do not know whether the individual is a Pro-Boer or the contrary, but we have a publican near one of our Dublin theatres who has named the whiskey sold at his bar the 'Paul Kruger' because it staggers humanity.

Wireless Telegraphy.

Every now and again we hear of some startling experience in wireless telegraphy, and then the name of the young Italian electrician is once more before the public. A recent notice of some experiment made by Marconi reminded me that he is, in reality, half Irish, as his mother was a lady from near Enniscorthy, County Wexford. In her girlhood, she gave promise of remarkably fine voice, her friends sent her over to Italy with a view of her adopting the musical profession; she married an Italian, settled down in his country, and is the mother of the clever young scientist whose work, some think, will eventually supersede the great Atlantic cable. The British Government will not help Marconi, because of the large sums invested in the present system, and America awaits some big convincing proof before investing largely, so shareholders in these parts who hastened to give premiums for shares in