

SIDELIGHTS ON NOTABLE PEOPLE BY THE MARQUISE DE FONTENOY

Lord Wicklow, who has just delivered his maiden speech in the House of Lords, sits in the upper chamber as a representative peer of Ireland. He is married to a daughter of the Duke of Abercorn, and makes his home at Shelton Abbey, situated in that lovely "Valley of Avoca" immortalized by Ireland's great poet, Tom Moore. The present building is built on the site and on the foundations of an ancient monastery of the Cistercian Order, founded by Theobald Fitzwalter, who lies entombed within its walls. It was purchased in the seventeenth century from the Duke of Ormonde by Dr. Ralph Howard, president of the College of Physicians in Ireland, and founder of the family of which Lord Wicklow is now the chief. The doctor's son was Bishop of Elphin and his grandson, the first Lord Wicklow, is on record as having been the first to introduce the beech and chestnut trees into Ireland.

The Wicklow peerage has been with living memory the subject of one of the most remarkable causes celebre in modern times. In March, 1869, the fourth earl died without male issue, and on his demise Charles Francis Howard, son of his younger brother by the latter's second marriage, was recognized officially as the fifth earl, but soon found his title to the honors and estates contested by a claimant who furnished a certain amount of testimony to prove that he was a son of the new earl's elder half-brother. It is perfectly true that the fifth earl had an elder half-brother of the name of William George Howard, a dissipated and disreputable individual, always in straitened circumstances, who died in 1864, leaving as widow a woman of the maiden name of Richardson, and of extremely questionable antecedents. His marriage to her was always understood to have been childless, until her alleged son appeared upon the scene as a claimant to the Wicklow earldom and estates.

After long and costly proceedings the House of Lords eventually decided against the claimant, on testimony being furnished of the fact that he had been born in the workhouse at Liverpool as a foundling and had been purchased there from his real mother by Mrs. William George Howard, nee Richardson. The evidence went to show that Mrs. Howard had never in her life given birth to a child. With a view of confirming or disproving this she was asked to satisfy the physicians appointed for the purpose by the House of Lords whether or not she had been a mother, but she absolutely declined to submit to any examination, and was in consequence thereof committed to prison for contempt. There she remained for a considerable time, the case going meanwhile against her pseudo son. Ultimately she was set at liberty, and to this day it remains a mystery why she and her confederates should have escaped subsequent punishment for the conspiracy and flagrant perjury of which they had undoubtedly been guilty in connection with the affair.

Let me add in conclusion that among the most interesting features of young Lord Wicklow's home at Shelton Abbey are the antique chairs rescued from those ships of the Spanish Armada which after its lamentable rout and flight were wrecked on the coast of Ireland. They retain their original coverings of old stamped leather, which in spite of its age still remains beautifully fresh. Shelton Abbey has harbored many famous guests, notably James II., who found refuge there for a night or two, after his defeat at the battle of the Boyne.

Lord Haldon, a peer of such stormy antecedents and of such financial embarrassments that he finds it prudent to avoid letting people know where he lives, being set down with "residence unfixed" in the various standard "peerages" and works of reference, has blossomed forth as a promoter of patent medicine concerns of doubtful reputation. He is sending out circulars, some of which have reached this country, asking people, on the strength of his being secretary of an enterprise known as the "Artificial Teeth Aid Society, Limited," to buy \$250 debentures in this precious company, which he recommends "conscientiously" as "an absolutely safe and bona fide investment."

The company in question consists of a man of the name of F. S. Kennedy, who has been on several occasions exposed by Henry Labouchere in the pages of London Truth, in which he warns his readers against having anything to do with Kennedy, whom he denounces as "notorious."

It is a question whether the same designation might not be applied to Lord Haldon, who, owing to his insolvency, is debarring voters from sitting in the House of Lords, nevertheless dates testimonials thence on note paper bearing the royal arms and the heading of the House of Lords, in which he professes to have been "cured of gouty eczema, after eminent specialists had failed, by the Chemical Blood Manufacturing Company," the "company" being the same F. S. Kennedy of the Artificial Teeth Aid Society.

Lord Haldon is chief of the ancient Devonshire house of Paik, the members of which are portrayed by Thackeray in his novels under the name of "Porkers." When he succeeded to his father's peerage he was in jail at Pretoria, in South Africa, charged jointly with two disreputable companions in endeavoring to defraud a man named Cowley by offering him a parcel of glass crystals, alleging them to be diamonds. Ultimately he was acquitted, on the ground that he was the tool rather than a confederate of the gang of swindlers with whom he has associated himself, and that he was not primarily

responsible for the attempted fraud. Lord Haldon was acting as a checker and conductor on the railroad at Pretoria at the time of his arrest there. It was a position which, though humble, he had been exceedingly glad to get, as he had been literally starving when he accepted it. He served through the Boer war in the imperial yeomanry, and after being mustered out was in a state of complete destitution at Johannesburg and Pretoria, dependent upon small gifts and loans of money.

Some years previous to succeeding to the title Lord Haldon had been in trouble in London. His mother, the dowager Lady Haldon, was sued by a money lender of the name of Brandon for money obtained by her son on a bill of acceptance purporting to bear her signature. She declined to pay, although the amount was relatively small, and based her refusal on a letter addressed to her by her son, in which he informed her that it was he who had written her signature on the note, impelled thereto by dire necessity. No prosecution followed, because there was a strong presumption in favor of the belief that the usurer who had discounted the note had been well aware of the time of the fact that dowager Lady Haldon's signature was fictitious, and that he only let Lord Haldon have the money with the view of being subsequently able to blackmail his family.

Lord Haldon's wife is an actress, who spent several years in America on the stage, part of the time under the name of "Miss Miska," and afterwards as "Mrs. D. F. Drew," the latter being the name of an American whom she married over there. She played here in Joseph Jefferson's company and in England with Sarah Bernhardt and under Sir Augustus Harris. She is the daughter of a Russian colonel of the name of Malchic, and has been returned to the stage in London West End Music Hall, in a comedy interlude by Arthur Branscombe, to provide for her own support and for that of her boy, to which nothing is contributed by her husband, the present Lord Haldon.

Miss Lucy Ellis, who has just through a judgment of the high court of chancery in London, come into possession of the superb pearls valued at near \$250,000 belonging to her aunt, the late Duchess of Sermonetta, is a daughter of the Hon. and Rev. William Charles Ellis, rector of Bothal, Morpeth, and her presumptive to the barony of Howard de Walden, and to the barony of Segrave, now held by his bachelor nephew, the present Lord Howard de Walden. The entailed property which goes with these peerages is great, comprising as it does the ground rents of some of the most valuable districts of London, and therefore, although the rector of Bothal is not particularly well off today, he is destined, according to present appearances, to become a wealthy man indeed. The legacy which his sister, the late Duchess of Sermonetta, left to his daughter was a perfect godsend, comprising not only a considerable sum of money, but also all her shawls, laces, and jewels in her London residence or at her English bankers. The jewels included a number of superb pearls, which have just formed the subject of a legal contest in the English courts, the plaintiff being the present Duke of Sermonetta, who unsuccessfully claimed that the pearls in question formed part of the family jewels of his house, in which the late duchess, his mother, had merely a life interest, and that therefore, she had no right to alienate them to her niece.

The late duchess was a great character in her way, and alone among all the English consorts of the great nobles of the old patriarchal houses of Rome had remained a Protestant. Not that this mattered much to her husband. For old Don Michael Angelo Caetan, thirteenth Duke of Sermonetta, was not only an unbeliever, but also one of the bitterest foes of the Roman Catholic Church, took a prominent part in bringing about the downfall of the temporal power of the papacy, bore to King Victor Emmanuel in Florence the result of that Roman plebiscite of 1870 upon which the reigning house of Italy bases its rights to the possession of the Eternal City, and actually went so far as to propose from his seat on the extreme left of the Italian chamber the expulsion of the papacy from Italy, and the destruction of the Vatican by fire as the best means of solving the Roman question. The Romans used to say that the old duke, who shortly afterwards was stricken with blindness, never dared to sleep again in the historic palace of his ancestors. He was already blind when he married, in his 71st year, as his third wife, Harriet Ellis, much to the disgust of his Roman relatives, who unkindly attributed his choice to the loss of his sight, intimating that if he had retained the use of his eyes he would not have married.

The present duke, besides being a statesman of international fame, who on several occasions has held the office of minister of foreign affairs of Italy, is likewise an archaeologist of much renown, and traces back his descent in an unbroken male line to Dominus Constantinus Caetan, the greatest territorial magnate of Gaeta in the tenth century, one of whose descendants was elected pope in 1118, under the title of Gelastus II., and another occupying the chair of St. Peter as Boniface VIII. from 1294 to 1300. The present duke's wife is, like his stepmother, an Englishwoman of the Bootle Wilbraham family, of which Lord Lathom is the chief. One of his sons, Don Livio Caetan, is in the diplomatic service, and was stationed for a time at Washington, another, Don Roffredo, is a successful composer of operas, while the eldest son is Prince Teano, a frequent visitor to America,

famous for his geographical explorations and his extensive travels, his wife, daughter of the chief of the house of Colonna, being equally well known as an enthusiastic aeronaut, and for her daring in ballooning feats.

Nugent is a name that figures so honorably in the history of Ireland and of England that it may be just as well to explain that the extraordinary legal proceedings which have been occupying the attention of the high court of justice in London for some weeks past have concerned the Austrian branch of this house, which has for its chief the Earl of Westmeath, formerly attached to the British embassy at Washington. The suit, brought by the division of certain property bequeathed by Princess Montleart to the late Count and Prince Albert Nugent for the benefit of his children.

These children include a son, namely: Count and Prince Laval Nugent, an officer of Austrian cavalry, and three sisters, who are, to say the least, on in the most extraordinary way in court, but they likewise furnished on the witness stand enough information of a dramatic character to afford materials for any penny dreadful novel. One of the sisters, Countess Anna Nugent, the defendant in the case, admitted that a few years ago she had shot at her brother with a revolver several times with the intention of killing him, and that if she escaped being sent to prison for this attempted murder it was entirely due to his forbearance and to the fact that he had only received a mere flesh wound.

Plaintiffs and defendant are grandchildren of that distinguished soldier, Laval Nugent, who, born at Ballynagowan, in County Wicklow, entered the military service of Austria, and had a large share in conquering Croatia and Istria for the Hapsburgs in the early part of the last century. He died as a field marshal of the Austrian army, as a captain general of the Neapolitan army, as a magnate of Hungary, an Austrian count, and a Roman prince, by the latter by the grace of the papacy. His wife was a daughter of Duke Rafael Stroz and of the duchess, a daughter of Prince Francis of Poland and of Saxony. Of this marriage there was but one son, the late Count and Prince Albert Nugent, whose children have been the parties to the recent case.

It was also brought to light during the trial that the late Prince Albert, the father of the defendant and of the plaintiffs, had, when close upon 80 years old, fallen into the hands of an English adventurer of the name of Ormonde, whom he had picked up in the streets of London one night, and who obtained an extraordinary influence over him, and induced him to convey to her most of the money which had been bequeathed to him by Princess Montleart in trust for his children. An attempt was made to poison her at Florence, and naturally she ascribed this to her elderly lover's children, and though completely broke the Montleart property unlawfully bequeathed to her, was nevertheless able, on the strength of this poisoning episode, to secure from the Nugent family a sum of about \$50,000, with which she married an Italian of the name of Nicolai.

The Nugents came originally from France to England in the train of William the Conqueror, and have been settled in Ireland since the reign of King John, when they obtained lands in Westmeath and Galway, which are still in the possession of members of the family. The earldom of Westmeath dates from King James I. The third earl died as a Capuchin monk, and was succeeded by his brother, Thomas as fourth earl. The eighth earl was created marquis, and on the second marquis dying without male issue, the marquise became extinct, while the earldom of Westmeath reverted to a distant cousin, descended from the second son of the second Earl of Westmeath, that is to say, from a nobleman who was created Lord Riverston by King James II. after his deposition, but whose title was never acknowledged.

The present Lord Westmeath, like most of the members of his family, is a Roman Catholic; and, while one of the Austrian Nugents married the late Lord Southampton and became a duke in waiting to Queen Victoria, another of them married one of the Baltazzi girls at Constantinople, and in this way became an uncle of Baroness Marie Vetsera, who played a leading role in the tragedy of Meyerling.

As for the late Princess Montleart, to whom reference is made above as having bequeathed large fortunes to the late Prince Albert Nugent in trust for his children, she was of Irish birth, and made the bequest to the Nugents in the belief, expressed in her will, that her husband had betrayed one of the Countesses Nugent and that therefore, as her husband's legatee, she owed such reparation as she could make to their heirs. For a time the Nugents hesitated about accepting the fortune on the ground that it would constitute an admission of the disgrace of one of their women; but ultimately financial considerations prevailed over family pride, and the money was accepted.

Princess Montleart's father's name was Fitzgerald, and he was compromised to such an extent in some conspiracy—if I remember rightly, it was the so-called Cato street plot to assassinate George IV., that he was obliged to flee for his life from Great Britain. He gave rendezvous to his wife and to her two children, a boy and a girl, at Vienna, but he failed to turn up, having, it is alleged, sought refuge in the United States, where, it was said, he was Lord Fitzgibbon and her boy died literally of hunger in Vienna, whereupon the girl

was adopted by a charitable lady of the name of Baroness Effinger, who brought her up with her own daughter, a girl of the same age.

In the fifties she made the acquaintance of Prince Maurice Montleart, who married her, and for about 30 years their life was one of unclouded happiness. When he died he left her his entire fortune, part of which, on her own demise without issue, went to the Nugents. The remainder was the subject of a good deal of litigation. It is surprising that no claimants for her money should have appeared from the United States, as in the event of her father having married in that country and had issue, the rights of his children or grandchildren to the fortune of the princess would have been superior to those in Austria, who eventually obtained possession thereof.

Prince Montleart's origin was almost as romantic as that of his Irish wife. His father was that Sardinian nobleman, Count Montleart, who is portrayed in most of the illustrated histories of the first Napoleon as the heroic cavalier who saved, at the peril of his life, the widowed Princess Charles Emmanuel of Savoy from the flames that devoured the Austrian embassy at Paris on the night of the Schwarzenberg, in honor of the marriage of Napoleon and Archduchess Marie Louise of Austria. It may be remembered that a number of people perished in the conflagration, including the ambassador herself, while Empress Marie Louise and the Emperor escaped with the greatest difficulty.

Count Montleart's rescue of the Princess of Savoy was even still more dramatic, as she had been forgotten and left in a faint on one of the upper floors. Her gratitude to her deliverer was so great that she married him, and he thus became the father-in-law of King Charles Albert of Sardinia, the great-grandfather of the present King of Italy. By this marriage the count, who had meanwhile received the rank of prince, alike from the King of Sardinia and from the Emperor of Austria, had several children, only two of whom grew up—namely, Prince Maurice, to whom reference has been made, and his wife, marrying Miss Fitzgerald, and Princess Augusta, an eccentric spinster.

This princess was quite as masculine in her appearance and in her dress as Rosa Bonheur, wearing top-boots, a short black skirt, a man's overcoat and hat, smoking cigars, and riding astride of her horse. She was in her day one of the most famous breeders of horses in Austria, had a celebrated stud farm near Cracow, and was found murdered some 25 years ago under the most sensational circumstances in the bedroom of her castle, with her throat cut from ear to ear, the crime having been presumably perpetrated by one of her retainers, who vanished at the same time with a quantity of money and valuables, effecting his escape to America, where all clew to him was lost.

No British tax devised in modern times, not even the income tax, is more unpopular with those who are called upon to pay it than the so-called death duties or succession tax, which enables the state to tax estates each time the latter change hands through death, sometimes twice within the space of twelve months, the amount of the tax being proportionate to the value of the estate and to the relationship of the heir to the deceased.

Of course, the unpopular estate and inheritance weight upon the old land-owning aristocracy, titled and untitled, of Great Britain, and it frequently happens that when a noble succeeds to the family honors and estates he is obliged either to close up or to let down his mansions and to cut down his expenses heavily in order to obtain the large sums of money needed for the payment of his succession duties. These people look upon this tax, which was devised by the late Sir William Vernon Harcourt, as a bit of unwarrantable oppression and as part and parcel of that persecution of the classes by the masses which they assert is the feature of the present age. They consequently seek by every means in their power to evade its payment, and men of the highest sense of honor in public and private life, as well as nobles renowned for the strictness of their morality and for their piety, do not believe that they are doing wrong when they adopt the most extraordinary and ingenious devices to "do" the treasury in the matter of succession duties.

It is an affair of this kind that has brought the attorney general of England, acting on behalf of the Government, into grave conflict with the Duke of Richmond, and the latter's son and heir, the Earl of March. The case, which is occupying the attention of the King's bench division of the high court of justice in London, shows that the late duke, in conjunction with his son, the present duke, and his grandson, Lord March, disintegrated the estates to admit of their being hypothecated and then married the girl

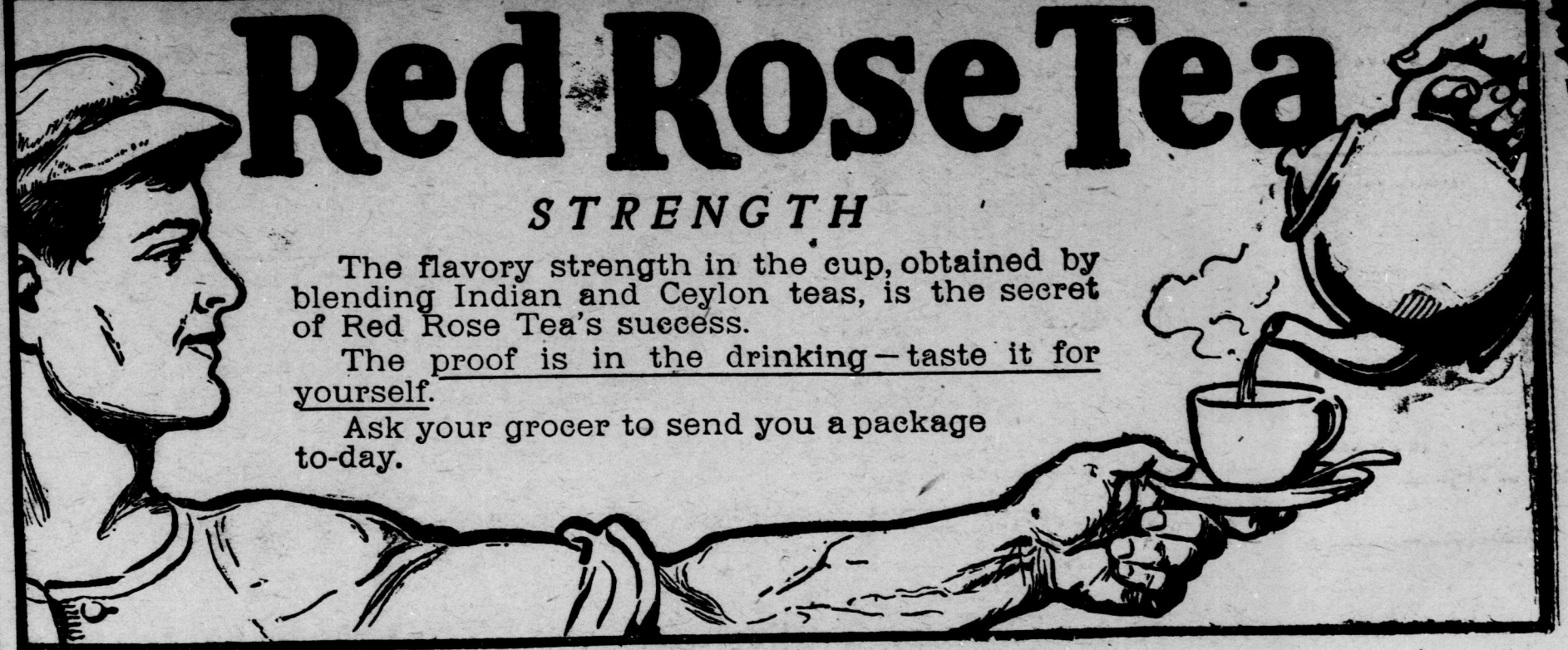
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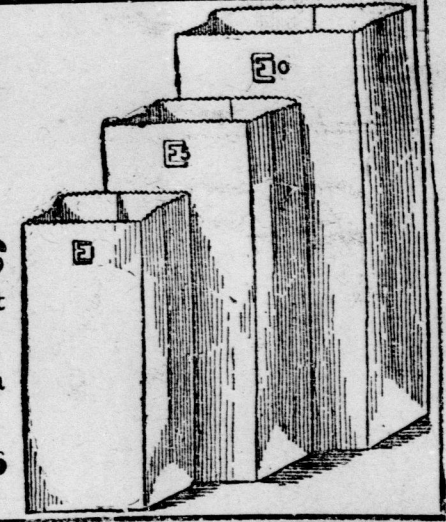
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