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# Lady Blessington.

By "CRUX"

Irishwomen were better known half a century ago than Lady Blessington. Her extraordinary beauty, her prolific mind, her vast contributions to literature, her association with all the leading litterateurs, politicians and statesmen of her time, her patronage of art and letters, her wonderfully attractive receptions, her palace-like home, and her connection by blood and sympathy with some of the noteworthy, the great, and the memorable victims of persecution in Ireland, all tended to make her name a household word during almost the entire three score years of her active and attractive life. She lived exactly sixty years. She was born in September, 1789, and died in September, 1849.

The leading events of this lady's life constitute almost a history of the struggles of Ireland and of the triumphs of literature during the whole first half of the nineteenth century. And in all great movements she had her part. She was the friend of Moore and of Byron, and her home was the meeting place of all the celebrities, many of whom have gone down to comparative oblivion, since the advent of another and different generation. Lady Blessington was a Miss Marguerite Power. The family of the Powers, especially those of the County Waterford, has played a most important part in the history of Munster, Bishops, heads of religious houses—male and female—landed proprietors, public officials, men and women of letters have all been the offspring of this great family. Marguerite was born, as we said, in 1789, at Knockbrit, near Clonmel, in the County Tipperary. Clonmel is on the bank of the river Suir, which divides the counties of Tipperary and Waterford. Gurteen Castle, the princely residence of the Powers, is within a short distance of the historic old city. Her father, Edmond Power, although a Catholic, was one of the magistrates most active in 1798, in hunting down and prosecuting the rebels. This fact was one to which she, in after life, never cared to make allusion. Her deep patriotism seems to have come to her more fully from her mother's side. Her mother's name was Ellen Sheehy; she was Edmond Sheehy, who was executed for rebellion in 1766. Her cousin, the lamented Father Nicholas Sheehy, was hanged, drawn and quartered at Clonmel, in 1766, for political offenses, and his head was spiked on the West gate of Clonmel, the face looking out upon the suburbs called the Irishtown.

And fame that is attached to the name of Blessington is due to the lady who assumed it on marrying the Lord to whom it belonged. Had it not been for her the name would have figured in "Burke's Peerage," but for very little known beyond the immediate horizon of a certain limited class of the aristocracy. Lady Blessington had reached the age of thirty-three before she dawned upon the world of letters. Up to that time she had been famed for her beauty, her wit, and her personal charms. But from that period onward she became the object of the most careful literary observation. It was then, in 1822, that she published "The Magic Lantern; or, Sketches or Scenes in the Metropolis." This was followed by "Sketches and Fragments," published in 1823. Yet these works, interesting and delightfully written as they were, gave no just idea of the merit that her future productions would evidence. For ten years she was silent, or rather her pen seemed to have ceased work. But in 1833 came forth her first novel, "Grace Cassidy; or the Reapers." And in the same year she began her many years' editorship of the Book of Beauty, to which she was the most industrious contributor. At the same time, in 1834, she published "Conversations with Lord Byron." This is one of the best works, of its class, in English literature. It is a real biography of Byron, most of it gleaned from his own accounts of himself. It might be said that the friendship and the encouragement, as well as the advice of Lady Blessington, helped to bring out all that was best in Byron, and to check many a mad folly that would have, otherwise, choked off some of his finest productions. She knew how to humor him, and then to check him, to awaken the finest of pure and lofty ambition and to quench those of ignoble sentiments and consuming passions, all unworthy of the man and of his genius.

In 1835 appeared her novel "The

Two Friends," followed by her "Flowers of Loneliness," and her "Confessions of an Elderly Gentleman." This might seem to have been enough to immortalize any one woman; but, with Lady Blessington, it was only the commencement of her wonderful literary outpourings. In 1837 she published "Victims of Society." In 1838 came "Gems of Beauty," "The Confessions of an Elderly Lady," "The Governess," "Desultory Thoughts and Reflections," and "The Idler in Italy"—a work which she did not complete till 1840. That year saw the budding of another flower. Heretofore it was prose—prose lofty, prose gay, prose serious, prose charming—but now she comes along with verse. Her first effort was "The Belle of a Season." In 1841 she produced her "Idler in France;" and at the same time, after her return from the continent, began her ten years' editorship of "The Keepsake." In 1842 and 1843 appeared "Lottery of Life and Other Tales" and "Srathern, or Life at Home and Abroad." These were soon followed by her smaller verses in a neat little volume—a casket of tiny gems. In 1846 and 1847 she produced "Memoirs of a Femme de Chambre;" "Lionel Deerhurst;" and "Marmaduke Herbert, or the Fatal Error." Her last work was "Country Quarters." But this was not published until 1850, some months after her death. When this book was written Lady Blessington appeared as one who had fully twenty more years of life and activity ahead of her.

In 1849 she retired to Paris where she took up her residence, evidently with the intention of their continuing her literary work and of gathering fresh material for the future. The very day after she had taken possession of her new home she was attacked with heart disease, and expired in a few hours. Death came in the midst of a thousand and one schemes for future work and enjoyment, and the shock was such that her friends could not realize that Lady Blessington had actually passed away forever from the scene.

She was buried in a mausoleum in the village cemetery at Chambourg. Two inscriptions to her memory, one by Barry Cornwall, (Proctor), the poet and jurist, father of the sweet Catholic poetess Adelaide Proctor, and the other by Walter Savage Landor, are still to be seen on the walls of that mausoleum. That by Proctor gives a very fine and concise sketch of her. It reads thus:—"In her life she was loved and admired for her many graceful writings, her gentle manners, her kind and generous heart. Men, famous for art and science, in distant lands, sought her friendship; and historians and scholars, poets and wits, and painters of her own country found an unfeeling welcome in her ever hospitable home. She gave cheerfully to all who were in need, help and sympathy and useful counsel; she died, lamented by many friends. Those who loved her best in life, and now lament her most, have reared this tributary marble over her resting place."

One of her biographers has told of her beauty in the following language:—"The perfection of matured beauty, her form was exquisitely molded, her movements graceful and natural. The peculiar character of her beauty consisted in the correspondence of every feature with the motion of her mind. The instant a joyous thought took possession of her fancy you read it in her sparkling eye, her smiling lips; you heard it in her ringing laugh, clear and sweet as childhood's merriest tones. There was a glowing sunshine of good humor and good nature seldom surpassed in the genial wit of this woman. Her voice was sweetly modulated and clear; all her beauty without the witchery of its silvery tones would have been only a secondary charm."

This is a delightful description, and we to-day can form but slight idea of the physical beauty, the mental endowments, and the combined charms of that splendid specimen of Irish womanhood. Yet in all this there is a lingering cloud. I miss something about here and about all the tributes paid to her. I see the queen, in all her radiance of genius and of grandeur, but I find that the picture lacks the only fitting crown to such a life. Nowhere do find, in letter, comment, inscription, or memorial, the simple words: "May her soul rest in peace."

### A SAINT'S REPLY.

St. Aloysius was once taking his recreation with some companions, and in the course of the conversation the question was asked what should be done if the hour of judgment had come. One said he would fall on his knees and repent of his sins. Another said he would hasten to confession. When the turn of Aloysius came he remarked: "I would continue my recreation, for I began it in God's name, and in his honor I would end it."

# The Week's Anniversaries

(By An Occasional Contributor.)

Here are a few of the notable anniversaries for the week that has just gone. Monday last was the 31st of August, a day upon which several memorable events are commemorated. On that date in the year 651, the great Bishop Aidan of Lindisfarne died; he was the founder of that institution which has been one of the glories of Ireland as the "Land of Saints and Martyrs." In 1682, Delaware was granted to the famous William Penn, the old puritan leader after whom the State of Pennsylvania has been called. In 1767, a noted Irish patriot, and one whose name figures in the annals of 1798—Henry Joy McCracken—was born. In 1809, Charles Lever, the author of "Charles O'Malley," "Tom Burke of Ours," and a long series of rollicking Irish novels, came into this world. In 1870, after the invasion of France by the Prussians, the Vendome Column was restored. In 1886 the memorable and fatal earthquake at Charleston, S.C., took place—one of the greatest catastrophes of the eighty decade.

Tuesday last was the 1st of September. On that day, in 1159, the learned Pope Adrian IV., died. In 1785, "le Grand Monarche," King Louis XIV., of France, closed the most wonderful reign in the annals of French history. Like Elizabeth of England, Louis XIV. derived his glory and renown, not so much from his personal qualities and achievements, as from the length of his reign combined with the galaxy of great men that spanned the three score years from the regency till his death. In 1870 the great battle of Sedan was fought, the Waterloo of Napoleon III., and the finishing stroke of the Franco-Prussian war. In 1850, Jenny Lind, the once wonderful singer, arrived for a first time in New York. And in 1862 was fought the battle of Chantilly, at which the dashing general Phil. Kearney was killed.

Wednesday was the 2nd September. In 1666, on that date, took place the great fire in London—the most fatal event in the annals of the British metropolis. In 1742, on the 2nd September, began the Reign of Terror in France. On that day was the guillotine first set up on the Place de la Greve, and were the first fatal tumbrils hear rolling along the stone pavements from the Conciergerie to the place of execution. In 1870, on the same fateful day, Napoleon III., Emperor of France, surrendered to the Prussians.

Thursday was the 3rd September. On that day, in 1189, Richard I., (Coeur de Lion), was crowned King of England; and on the same date did he depart for his famous crusade to the Holy Land. On the 3rd September, 1652, Bibles were served out with rations to the English army in Ireland. That was the beginning of a system the evil results of which have been ever since felt and the last relics of which seem to be only now dying away. On the same date in 1653, one year later, to the day, Oliver Cromwell died. Needless to refer to his career. In 1783 the treaty of peace between England and the United States was signed at Versailles. And in 1877, the ex-President of France, the noted statesman and author, M. Thiers, closed his eventful career.

Friday, yesterday, the 4th September, commemorates quite a number of events. In 272 Constantine the Great was born; he it was who saw the cross in the heavens, and promised that if victory were his he would become a Christian; he won the victory, was converted, had the cross emblazoned on his national standard and became one of the greatest of Christian rulers. Byzantium was called Constantinople in his honor. In 1768 the great French writer Chateaubriand was born. He is principally remembered for his two great works, "The Martyrs" and "The Genius of Christianity." In 1792 John D'Aiton, the great Irish scientist, was born. In 1844, on the 4th September, the House of Lords in England declared that the trial and imprisonment of Daniel O'Connell was illegal. This was one of the great triumphs of O'Connell's life. The carrying of Emancipation in 1829; the success of this second election for Clare, after being unseated in the House for not taking the

# Our Curbstone Observer

THRILLING EXPERIENCE WITH A WOULD-BE SUICIDE.

OUR LADY'S NATIVITY (September 8th.)

Small offering have I for thee, Dear mother, on thy natal day, For what by me might valued be Is gift too trifling far to lay Before thy feet to full express My homage to thy worthiness.

A wearied, life-tired heart is mine;— To give to thee 'tis all unfit, But, Lady, deign to claim it, Where goodness rare and virtue fair May bloom in kindly soil fore'er!

'Tis what one fain would be is best, Not what one is; so, Mother, take The little good I have; the rest Make better for thy Son's dear sake;

Thus, one day, I may hope to be An off-ring worthier of thee! —Amadeus, O.S.F. in St. Anthony's Messenger.

# Goes to Sing for Lepers

Archbishop Farley has granted to two Franciscan Sisters in Syracuse permission to go to the Sandwich Islands to nurse the lepers of that territory. They are Sister Mary Leonida and Sister Beata. The former was Miss Theresa Kilmurry, of Newark, N.J., and the latter comes from Louisville, Ky.

Sister Leonida is one of the youngest nuns in the Order, having received the veil last year. She is also one of the most accomplished, having devoted her life to music and being the possessor of a beautifully developed voice. It has long been her ambition to brighten the lives of those greatly afflicted, and this was the incentive for the development of a talent which would give pleasure to the exiled lepers.

The leper law of the Sandwich Islands forbids the return of any who enters the leper colony, or even direct communication with the world by such a person.

# With Our Subscribers.

I enclose \$1.00 subscription to your valuable paper from May, 1903, to May, 1904. I am very sorry to have neglected sending in my subscription in May. I shall be more careful in the future for I assure I could not do without the "True Witness." My father received the first issue of the paper, and it has always been our family paper since that time, with the exception of one year.

Yours respectfully,  
 T. E. D.

Enclosed please find one dollar for my subscription from June, 1903, to June, 1904, for your good paper, which I find is improving all the time.

Yours truly,  
 M. K.

# CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY.

Statement of earnings and expenses under date of August 8, and signed by Mr. C. Drinkwater, secretary, just received, is as follows:—

	July, 1903.
Gross earnings .....	\$3,997,343.75
Working expenses .....	2,678,816.63
Net profits .....	\$1,318,527.12

In July, 1902, the net profits were .....

	\$1,175,711.26
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The gain in net profits over the same period last year is therefore, for July, \$142,815.86.

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# Our Curbstone Observer

THRILLING EXPERIENCE WITH A WOULD-BE SUICIDE.

LET it not be supposed that because I select this subject of suicides for my notes of this week that I have ever observed the perpetration of the crime of suicide, either from my curbstone, or from any other point of vantage. No more is it my intention to moralize upon the sin. I have not the faintest inclination to go into the religious or the moral aspect of the subject. Simply I desire to give a few hints, not to intentional suicides, but to those who may have to do with such maniacs. I have had a couple of very queer experiences in my time, one of which I will presume to relate as best I can; but before so doing I wish to draw attention to some of the conclusions that I have come to in regard to this subject of suicide — of self destruction.

...A FEW HINTS.—As far as the person who desires to become a suicide is concerned I have nothing to say. I never did and I never can believe that any perfectly rational being could ever dream of self-killing. The one so inclined may to all appearances be sane, but there is "a screw loose" somewhere. The mind is unhinged; no matter whether it be from drink, or disappointment, or misery, or disgrace, or fear, or any other cause—the mind is not sound. No matter how slight and how thin the gaze of insanity that envelopes it, that alien substance, that abnormal condition most certainly exists. It may not be to the extent of positive madness, but it is certainly a corruption or weakening of the mental fabric. As a rule, the one who seeks to change a suicide from his fell purpose, begins by arguing with him, by reasoning, by pointing out his folly, by pleading with him. Now I have discovered, from both observation and experience that this is merely throwing away an opportunity and may be called a pure loss of time. The more you reason with the mentally unbalanced, the more you are liable to confirm him in his purpose. In a word, I have found that the only means of changing the mind, of uprooting the purpose of such an individual is to turn his attention to something calculated to make a more serious and if possible more exciting and lasting impression on him than whatever is the cause of his unfortunate infatuation. It is not always easy to strike the right note, and frequently you will need to run up and down the gamut many times before touching it. I will tell of an experience I had, by way of illustration.

AN EXPERIENCE.—It was about the middle of January in the year 1890; I was sitting in my office very late at night. I happened to have had some work that kept me there until near midnight. A storm was abroad, a veritable blizzard. The wind howled, the snow drifted, and the thermometer registered 18 below. I was in the midst of a very important piece of work, when the door slowly opened and an acquaintance walked in. He was a man of about fifty years of age, low sized, thick-set, wearing glasses, and dressed in accordance with the season. He resided at the other side of the river, and was accustomed to go home either with his own horse and cutter, or else by train. It was evident to me that there was something wrong the very moment that I got a look at him. His eyes were wild, haggard, blood-shot, and his face was the picture of death—the genius of despair—and I actually felt a little nervous. He stood in front of me for fully two minutes before he spoke. I may remark that we were very intimate friends, but I had not seen him for some time. He had been drinking; he was in the worst stage of a delirium tremens—so I concluded. At last he found power to speak, and he said, in a calm, determined, maniacal manner: "I am going to commit suicide to-night." There was no mistaking that look; I never saw it before in any face, and I never want to see it again. I knew, and I knew positively that he meant what he said. I made no reply. He, then, added: "I am going to drown myself in the St. Lawrence. I am not able to stand it any longer. There's no hell—this is hell—I am going to end it all—I'll do it now—good-bye." He turned

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on his heel, he gave me one more fearful look and moved on towards the door. I was so taken by surprise that I could not find utterance. But I felt that something must be done. What prompted me I will never tell, but as soon as I found power to speak, I called after him and said: "Did you say it was in the river you intended to commit suicide?" He wheeled back, like a maniac, and said:—"Yes, of course—where else?" "Oh, never mind," I said, "I merely asked the question, as I was afraid you'd find some little trouble in view of the ice." He seemed to be forcibly struck with the thought. "What do you mean?" he asked. Ever since I have wondered at my own coolness and calmness; certainly I was deeply agitated, yet I spoke with an air of indifference and said: "You see all the hardware shops are closed at this hour, and most of the people are in bed." He seemed puzzled. "What do I want with a hardware shop?" he asked. "Sit down there," I said, "and I will explain." He sat down and waited in wonderment for my explanation. So I thus began slowly:—"You see the stores are closed, and for the life of you it would be impossible to get a pick, axe, shovel, spade or any implement to-night. Now you cannot dig a hole in the ice with your hands. That ice is fully three feet thick. Then there is such a snow-storm blowing, that as fast as you could work your way downwards just as rapidly would the snow drift in and fill up the hole. To dig a hole in that ice, big enough for a man's body to go through would take you till noon to-morrow, and ten to one you would be frozen to death before you could get the work done." As I spoke I could see the wonderful change coming over his features. The fixed determination vanished, and some other wild passion was evidently stirring up in his breast. I did not, however, expect what followed. All of a sudden he stood up, and fixing his gaze on me with a fierceness that seemed only softened by a doubt or an uncertainty in his mind, he said: "So you want me to commit suicide!"—"So you are only sorry that I can't do it!"—"So you would not prevent me from killing myself." I saw that I had him. I went on again: "Of course, it is none of my business. If you want to drown yourself it is none of my affairs; it interests yourself only. But I thought that I would just point out to you all the difficulties in the way. Moreover I would be afraid of your being frozen on the river at this hour." He was thoroughly indignant by that time, and he almost shouted: "You black-hearted scoundrel; you could sit there and calmly speculate upon all the trouble I might have to commit suicide, while you pretend to be anxious about my safety on the river in a storm, of all the heartless characters I've ever met you are the very worst." He foamed on and raged for fully five minutes. I saw, by that time, that the thought of suicide had completely vanished and that a rage, tempered with contempt for me, had succeeded in his breast. He gave me a lecture the like of which I had never heard before. And he ended by telling me that it was too late for his train that night, and that he would go over and take a room at the St. Lawrence Hall for the night. We parted, he in a fearful fit of anger with me, I in a state of doubt and anxiety about him. When he was well out of the building, I closed my office and followed. I went to the Hall, and as I came in towards the office, I saw him going off with a bell-boy towards the stairs. I was perfectly satisfied that he was safe, and I went home. Next day I met him, and he had but a dim and hazy recollection of having seen me the night before. This experience I think tells clearly the tale and illustrates my idea of dealing with would-be suicides.