

Countess of Clare

Isle of Wight County Press 3 May 1879

DEATH OF THE COUNTESS OF CLARE.- We have to record the death of this well-known lady (which took place on Wednesday morning at The Terrace, where she has so long resided) at the advanced age of 86 years. The deceased lady was the third daughter of the late Lord Gwydyr and the Baroness Willoughby d'Eresby, and was born on the 25th of March, 1793. She married on the 14th April, 1826, John, the second Earl of Clare, who died in 1851. The deceased and the late Miss Elliot were great friends of the Rev. Richard Waldo Sibthorp, whose death is alluded to elsewhere. The deceased and her friend were regular attendants at St. James's Church, and when the Rev. R. W. Sibthorp became a Roman Catholic, these two excellent ladies followed his example. Lady Clare was very charitable, but her munificence seen chiefly in such great works as the erection of St. Mary's Church, which she built and endowed, and which was finished in 1845. She also built the well known convent in Carisbrooke for the nuns of the order of St. Dominic. The Countess will be interred at Carisbrooke, where a vault has been prepared for her for some past years by the side of Miss Elliot.

Isle of Wight County Press 10 May 1879

THE LATE COUNTESS OF CLARE.

LYING IN STATE.

On Friday, the body of the deceased Countess (to whose death we briefly referred in our last issue) lay in state at her residence, The Terrace, and a great many faithful Catholics, who had benefitted by the benefactions which the deceased lady had so generously and constantly made, went to the house to once more gaze upon her revered features. The room was draped in black; but the coffin in which the deceased lay was surrounded by some of the choicest and most appropriate flowers that could be obtained, the whole being lighted by large candles placed round the coffin. There is something solemn in the aspect of death anywhere, but here, in this darkened room, with the beautiful emblems of the resurrection in the glorious flowers, the scene was very impressive, for indeed the features of the dead in the midst of their beautiful surroundings looked almost saint-like in their calmness and placidity. No one gazing upon them would for one moment imagine that the deceased began the earthly course just closed before the beginning of the present century. There was no trace of pain, doubt, or uncertainty; there seemed nothing but peaceful trust and serene content. And well might this be so, for although the Countess had attained such a venerable age, her faculties were preserved to her up to the last, and her life ebbed slowly and imperceptibly away. She became unconscious on Tuesday afternoon, remained so all night,

And when the morn came dim and sad,
And chill with April showers:
Her quiet eyelids closed; she had
Another morn than ours.

We are sure that every one who gazed on that solemn scene will long remember it.

THE COFFIN.

The body was first placed in a shell, and that in a lead coffin, the whole thing being enclosed in a coffin of massive oak, covered with crimson velvet. At the head of the coffin lid was a Latin cross of polished brass, and the breastplate, also of polished brass, bore the inscription:

ELIZABETH JULIA GEORGIANA,
COUNTESS OF CLARE,
Born March 25th, 1793;
Died April 30th, 1879,
AGED 86 YEARS.
Requiescat in Pace.

Beneath were a countess' coronet, and another small cross of polished brass. Eight massive handles adorned the sides of the coffin.

THE CHURCH.

Punctually at half-past 7 on Tuesday evening the coffin was conveyed by eight bearers, with relays, from The Terrace to the Church. It was covered with the same pall which was used on the occasion of the funeral of Miss Elliot, and as the procession passed up to the church it was followed by a large number of people. The mourners went to the church privately. The church was also crowded, and here again the scene was most impressive. The walls of the reredos and chancel had been draped in solemn black from the windows to the floor, relieved however, by a huge gold-coloured cross over the altar. The pulpit was also draped in black, relieved with a few white flowers in the centre.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE.

At the church the body was met by the following priests: the Right Rev. Dr. Dunell, Bishop of Southwark; the Rev. P. Stapleton, O.P.; the Rev. D. Trenow, O.P.; the Rev. R. Fryer, of Newport; the Rev. J. Bower, of Cowes; the Rev. A. David, of Croydon; the Rev. S. F. Bowles, and the Rev. J. B. Cahill. The procession was then formed as follows:

Acolyte. Processional Cross. Acolyte.
Clergy in surplices,
The Lord Bishop in cappa magna.

THE COFFIN.

A very handsome catafalque had been prepared at the entrance of the chancel, and it was draped in black and gold. Round it six huge candle-sticks (about 6 feet high) were placed, each holding a candle of proportionate size, and six smaller candle-sticks on a step. The coffin was covered with splendid wreaths of flowers, and at the feet, on a small black velvet pillow, was a coronet. While the procession was marching up the church the "De Profundis" was sung and the "Miserere" recited, followed by responsory "Sub Venite." After the coffin had been deposited on the catafalque, the Bishop returned to his throne. The solemn dirge was then sung, and consisted of the "Invitaterium," with the Psalm "Venite Exultemus," a composition in three-part harmony by the Rev. Dr. Crookall. Then followed the matins, consisting of three psalms and lessons, followed by the responses; the latter were in three-part harmony, also by Dr. Crookall. At the close the Laudes, harmonised, were chanted, the whole concluding with the Benedictus. Nearly all the service was sung to old Gregorian music, and at times the effect was indescribably solemn and affecting, well illustrating what

our forefathers could do in the worship of God. The whole of the singing was unaccompanied, the Rev. J. B. Cahill conducting. At the conclusion of the solemn service, Mr. Salter, the organist, played Chopin's "Deux Marches Funebres." The coffin remained in the church all night, and early on Wednesday morning private masses were celebrated, and at half-past 10 the church was again filled to hear the solemn Requiem Mass, which was sung by the Bishop, the Rev. T. Fryer, deacon, the Rev. F. S. Bowles being sub-deacon, and the Rev. J. Bower assistant priest at the throne. The Rev. A. David and two Dominican Fathers in white habits also assisted. At the conclusion of the Mass, the full Absolutions and the Libera followed. Special prayers were offered, and "In Paradisum" sung. The funeral *cortege* started for Carisbrooke about half-past 12 o'clock. Two coaches, each drawn by four horses, contained the Bishop and clergy. Then came the hearse, which was drawn by four horses, and this was followed by two mourning coaches, containing Lord Gwydyr, the Hon. Willoughby Burrell, Mr. John Fitzgibbon, and Mr. Louis Fitzgibbon, it being the express desire of her ladyship that only these gentlemen should attend. The procession arrived at the Cemetery at Carisbrooke about half-past 2, where they were met by the choir at the gate, and the procession wended its way up the Cemetery, headed by the Rev. F. S. Bowles as cross bearer and the Bishop in his cope and mitre. The chanting of "De Profundis" and the usual psalms followed, and as the body was placed in the vault the Benedictus was sung and the usual prayers recited in English. The entrance of the vault was adorned with flowers and evergreens, and the coffin itself was covered with a profusion of beautiful wreaths. The vault in which the remains of the deceased lady were placed adjoins that of Miss Elliot. A piece of glass in the wall which divides the two enabled any one to see into Miss Elliot's vault, and a great number of persons went down to take one more look at the coffin that contained all that was mortal of the Countess' friend. We noticed that Lady Louisa Fitzgibbon, Mr. C. Forster, Misses Bertie Matthews, and a great many members of the Church from Ryde joined in the procession. There was also a large general attendance, and the nuns might be seen viewing from the upper windows of the convent the last sad rites for their benefactress. - We may add that the whole of the funeral arrangements were carried out by Messrs. Scott, of Union-street, and that Messrs. James and Harvey supplied the beautiful flowers used on the occasion.

WHY THE COUNTESS WAS BURIED AT CARISBROOKE.

It might reasonably have been expected that, having lived for 40 years in Ryde, the deceased lady would have preferred to have been buried here, especially as there is now a portion of the Cemetery allotted to the Catholics. It seems, however, that under the church of St. Mary's a vault was made, and that it was the intention of the Countess to have been buried there, side by side with her beloved friend, Miss Elliot. The passing of the Intramural Burials Act, shortly before Miss Elliot's death in 1861, prevented this intention being carried out in her case, and as she could not be buried in the Cemetery for the reason before stated, Miss Elliot was buried in the Catholic burial ground at Carisbrooke Cemetery, a double vault being prepared for the reception of the Countess. We also understand that a monument was prepared in the lifetime of the Countess, with her name upon it, and only needing her age and date of death added. Her affection for Miss Elliot showed no abatement up to the last, and her wish was that her obsequies should be conducted in precisely the same manner as those of Miss Elliot. This wish was carried out to the letter. The undertakers (Messrs. Scott), who carried out the funeral arrangements in the case of Miss Elliot, now did the same for the deceased Countess. The same pall was used, and, we

believe, the same hearse; in fact, everything was done to carry out the deceased Lady's wishes.

HER BENEFACTIONS.

We last week mentioned two of the most munificent benefactions of the deceased to the Church, but the full extent of her munificent charities, which were not confined within her own church, will never be known, owing to the unostentatious manner in which they were carried out. Received into the Catholic Church in 1841, Lady Clare commenced almost immediately to show the sincerity of her conviction, for St. Mary's, Ryde, was commenced in 1844, and opened for public worship in 1846, entirely at her expense. The church was completely decorated and consecrated in 1863, which is not the case with the majority of Roman Catholic Churches in England. The Convent at Carisbrooke was also entirely built by the deceased Countess, at a cost of no less than £40,000, and her ladyship also built the Catholic Church at West Croydon. Her ladyship had several severe illnesses: one of these lasted for some years. She was unable to attend to business, and her money accumulated. On her recovery she gave away immense sums, and answered almost every appeal in the most generous spirit. The Rev. J. B. Cahill briefly alluded to these matters in an eloquent sermon on Sunday last, and remarked that the gratitude and respect of the congregation could be best expressed by prayers for the eternal repose of the soul of the deceased lady.

HER PEDIGREE.

The deceased lady, Elizabeth Georgiana, Countess of Clare, was descended from the Dukes of Ancaster. Her uncle, the Duke of Ancaster, dying without male issue, this part of the title became extinct. His sister, Priscilla, however, succeeded to the barony of Willoughby d'Eresby, one of the oldest baronies in England; to which is attached the hereditary Great Chamberlainship of England. She married Sir Peter Burrell, who was created Lord Gwydyr. Lord Gwydyr and Lady Willoughby were succeeded by their son, Peter, who became Lord Willoughby, who was succeeded by his lordship's son, Almeric, who also died without issue. The Willoughby title then remained in abeyance, and was afterwards terminated by the Queen in favour of Lady Aveland. The Gwydyr title followed the male line, and passed to the present Lord Gwydyr as son of the Hon. Lindsay Burrell, second brother of the late Countess of Clare. Her ladyship married in 1826, John, second Earl of Clare, who died in 1851.

*Transcription by Kate MacDonell for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries,
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