



A GRAVE IN KILMURRY

A small grave slab in the picturesque little churchyard of Kilmurry, and close to the northern side of the church, is a little known link between the French Revolution, the disastrous Irish rebellion of 1798 and the peace and idyllic grandeur of Plassey.

The grave contains the remains – now long compounded with the clay – of a baby boy, through whose veins once coursed the royal blood of the Bourbons. He was a grandson of Lord Edward Fitzgerald and his beautiful French wife, Pamela. The inscription, now barely legible, reads:

TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN
THE INFANT SON OF
GUY CAMPBELL, BART.
AND PAMELA HIS WIFE
DIED AT PLASSY
FEB, 4TH 1828.

For a short period in the 1820s, Lieut. Col. Sir Guy Campbell, and his wife, Pamela, the elder daughter of the ill-fated Lord Edward, lived at Plassey House. It is thought that Sir Guy may have been stationed in the Limerick Garrison at the time. An infant son of the couple died while they were there and was buried at Kilmurry, which was only a short distance from the house.

Lord Edward Fitzgerald

Lord Edward Fitzgerald was the fifth son of the twentieth Earl of Kildare and first Duke of Leinster. He was a direct lineal descendant of Garret Og Fitzgerald, the last native ruler of Ireland, and, as commander-in-chief of the United Irishmen, in 1798, became an early victim of the treachery of his friends (He knew his enemies). He was arrested by the notorious Major Finn in a house, owned by a feather merchant named Murphy, in Thomas Street, Dublin. Though cornered in a bedroom, he fought bravely with only a small dagger for his defence. He succeeded in killing Captain Ryan and wounding Justice Swan before he was wounded by a shot from Major Sirr and overpowered. He died in Newgate Prison in the presence of his brother Henry, his aunt, Lady Louisa Connolly and the Lord Chancellor, John Fitzgibbon. The latter had driven Henry and Lady Louisa to the prison in his own coach, after they had been refused permission by the prison authorities to visit the dying Geraldine.

Pamela

Lord Edward was married to the beautiful French girl, Pamela, the

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Lord Edward Fitzgerald.

reputed daughter of Philippe Egalite, Duke of Orleans, the fascinating story of whose life opens in the France of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and ends, for students of Irish history, in the Dublin of the United Irishmen. This historical romance, with its love, drama and tragedy, contains all the ingredients of a best-selling novel.

Her parentage has always been wrapped in mystery. It is certain that she was brought up by Madame de Genlis, who, many of her contemporaries

believed, was the mother, while the weight of opinion points to the Duc d'Orleans, Philippe Egalite, as the father. In her marriage certificate, however, her name is entered as Sims, and she is described as being a native of Fogo, in Newfoundland. This information is held by many historians to be incorrect, for she was sent – some say smuggled – as a baby from France to England, no doubt to avoid a scandal. The move may also have been made to avoid political complications.

Madame de Genlis

After Stephanie Felicite Ducrest de Saint-Aubin, Comtesse de Genlis, better and more simply known to history as Madame de Genlis, was appointed to the household of the Duke of Orleans, as lady-in-waiting, we are told that the Duke was charmed by her; so much so that she became his mistress. Though she was self-educated to a large extent, she proved a brilliant scholar and prolific writer. A girl who acquired such outstanding scholarship by informal means was no mean choice as tutor to the children of the Duke (three princes and a princess), her own daughters by her early marriage when she was only seventeen, and the enigmatic Pamela. She took charge of the education and upbringing of Prince Louis Philippe in 1782, when he was eight years old. At that time, he was a sickly and pampered child, but brought out the best in Madame de Genlis as an educationalist and physical culture instructor, for her charge developed into a well-educated job he was to assume as King of France



The shooting of Lord Edward Fitzgerald.



The gravestone of John Campbell.

after the revolution of 1830. He was afterwards to boast that his teacher had made a man of him.

Friends and Lovers

Louis Philippe was afterwards to confess that, at the age of sixteen, he had fallen madly in love with his teacher. This is not too surprising when one finds two of the visiting specialist teachers, Adde Mariotini, the Italian teacher, and the drawing teacher, falling under her spell. The former openly declared his love for her and was dismissed, but the latter, though deeply affected, did not. Even the great Talleyrand became a victim of her charms, and, apparently had his advances snubbed, for he once said of her, in anger, no doubt, 'In order to avoid the scandal of flirting, she consents immediately'. He was afterwards to share her privations as refugees in London. These emotional incidents, coupled with her earlier romances, showed her to be an alluring and charismatic woman.

Death of the Duke

Her loyalty to the Duke never wavered, and even when such attachment and support was likely to lead to her own execution she remained faithful to the last. He had been arrested through the machinations of a blood-thirsty Irishman, a police officer, Joseph Kavanagh, who was one of the 'September Assassins'. The arrest took place in April, 1793, at the Palais Royle. It is ironic that the Prince, who was shortly afterwards guillotined, was one of those who had voted for the death penalty for his cousin, King Louis XVI.

It has been claimed that the 'melodramatic activities' of Joseph Kavanagh precipitated the 1789 Revolution.

After this calamity, we find Madame de Genlis, still faithful to her charges, the Princess Adelaide and the Duke's natural daughters in the safety – but misery – of London. She was almost penniless, but carried on under great difficulties until the storm had abated in her native country.

Pamela in France and England

It had been a tempestuous time for Pamela. She must have cut a romantic figure in the colour, glory and depravity of the inflammatory period following the great Revolution, and the names of Danton, Miradeau, Talleyrand and other immortals were woven into the delicate fabric of her early life.

While in England, her exotic beauty and perfect refinement created its share of gossip in the 'best' circles. Burke and Pitt, Reynolds and Gainsborough are mentioned among her admirers. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, than at the height of his fame, fell madly in love with her, but she jilted him for Lord Edward. They were married in the Church of St. Quentin in the Grand Place of Tournai, when Louis Philippe, her reputed half-brother and future King of France, was a witness. The spot where they stood at the side altar in the church is still pointed out.

She was devastated by her husband's premature and violent death, and her anguish was aggravated by the taunts of some of the Fitzgeralds that she, as a daughter of revolution, was an important influence on Lord Edward's involvement in the United Ireland movement. Though this charge was totally unfounded, it hardly lessened the prejudice of the Irish authorities against her, for she was banished from the country and her

property confiscated. The indifference of her in-laws to her sorry plight contributed much to her misfortune, and the realisation of the violent age into which she was born hardly made it any easier to accept the calamity. One biographer sums up the over-riding essence of this traumatic period into life: 'Someone had to be made a scapegoat for his (Lord Edward's) uncompromising defiance of the beneficent rule of England.'

Back once more in France, where the great storm had blown itself out, Pamela faced the hopelessness of her shattered life by devoting herself to the care of her family. She re-married, but it was a drab anti-climax to her romantic ambitions. She kept Lord Edward's handkerchief close to her heart from the time of his death, and it was placed beside her in the coffin when she died, in 1831, at the age of 57. She was buried in the vast cemetery of Montmartre.

J.P. Leonard

While on a Continental tour in 1880, the well-known Irish litterateur, J.P. Leonard, visited the cemetery and took possession of Pamela's remains, which were about to be thrown into the Fosse Commune, the lease of the grave having expired. Leonard had the remains brought back to the churchyard of St. Nicholas, in Thames Ditton, outside London, and laid to rest with her elder daughter, Pamela (Lady Guy Campbell), and their descendants, in the Campbell family plot.

Part of the marble monument that marked the grave in Montmartre, and which was damaged by a Prussian shell during the Siege of Paris, in 1870, was also brought to the little rustic graveyard in Thames Ditton, where it can be seen to this day.

Of the descendants of Sir Guy and Pamela, George Wyndham, Chief Secretary for Ireland, was the most noteworthy of at least three score of their descendants whose careers have been recorded. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Ronald Campbell, C.B.C.M.G., great-great grandson of Lord Edward and Pamela, was British Minister in Belgrade.

The inscription on the memorial in Thames Ditton records the re-interment there of the remains of Pamela, on 21 August, 1880, and the bursting of the Prussian shell on the original tomb.

The example set by G.P. Leonard more than a hundred years ago should not be forgotten by those of us who admire his virtuous act. The little slab in Kilmurry churchyard is not only a memorial to the infant grandson of Edward and Pamela Fitzgerald: it is a permanent and poignant link between Limerick and France. We must ensure that the stone will be preserved and that its inscription is not allowed to become illegible.