

Tennyson at Kilkee and Other Munster Tours, 1842-1878

"I am glad that you thought of me at Kilkee by the great deeps. The sea is my delight ..."
(Tennyson to de Vere, October 1849)

(1) Tennyson's First Irish Tour, 1842 and William Blakepeace Thackerays' references to Kilkee

Alfred Tennyson, (A.T.), poet but not yet Poet Laureate or Lord (these honours would follow later in 1850 and in 1884 respectively), paid three visits in 1842, 1848 and 1878 to that "dreadful country",¹ that "horrible island"² - Ireland - which he wished was in the middle of the Atlantic,³ and if not below the surface of that ocean, at least "a thousand miles away from England".⁴ As Hallam Tennyson, eldest son and secretary to the poet, intimated in the *Memoir*,⁵ information on the Irish visits of 1842 and 1848 was very limited, though we have more documentation for his 1878 visit. However the publication of the first volume of Tennyson's *Letters* in 1982, ably edited by Lang and Shannon,⁶ has given us some new information about the earlier tours but has added nothing further on A.T.'s Kilkee visits.

It was Aubrey Thomas de Vere (1814-1902), poet - son of another bard and baronet, Sir Aubrey de Vere of Curragh Chase (the de Veres wrote "Currah"), Co. Limerick, who first suggested to A.T. that he should visit Ireland in the autumn of 1842. de Vere went to Cambridge ten years after A.T. entered and there the Limerickman made lasting friendships with Thackeray, Edward FitzGerald, Carlyle, Frederick Pollock, Spedding and others. Aubrey, like his father, was a great admirer and friend of Wordsworth, and he it was who first introduced A.T. to the poet whom he would eventually succeed in the Laureatship. Like Wordsworth, de Vere was also friendly with Sara Coleridge, only daughter of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, both members of Wordsworth's circle. de Vere has stated that it was "in 1841 or 1842 that I first met the Poet".⁷ Certainly both were corresponding by July 1842.⁸ Prior to their intended Irish tour they had arranged to meet in late August or early September '42 at Henry Lushington's rooms at Mitre Court Buildings, The Temple, London, where A.T. sometimes

by Thomas J. Byrne



Alfred Tennyson.

lodged, but were unable to find each other as Alfred forgot to give Aubrey his friend's address. In fact when writing later to de Vere (who was still in England) from Killarney in mid-September, A.T. again forgot to give Aubrey his friend's address, which necessitated a second epistle from there with the required information.

Thus it was that A.T. set off alone by the Liverpool packet on the Irish Sea crossing to Dublin, where he arrived early on the morning of Thursday, the 8th September.⁹ From there he wrote to Henry Lushington's brother, Edmund - "What with rain in the distance and hypochondriacs in the foreground I feel very crazy. God help all".¹⁰ He left that night for Limerick. His plan of itinerary was to go via Limerick to Killarney, but we know from one of his letters that he visited the Ballybunion caves (or 'Ballybunion' as A.T. wrote it) "but could not get into the finest on account of the weather".¹¹ However, Hallam Tennyson tells us that in one of these caves 'he made the following lines which occur in *Merlin and Vivien*.

*"So dark a forethought rolled about his brain,
As on a dull day in an ocean cave*

*The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
in silence'.¹²*

The poet had to abandon his plans to visit Dingle and Glengarriff (A.T. wrote 'Glengarry') 'for want of time'.¹³ By mid-September he was at the Victoria Hotel, Killarney,¹⁴ from whence he wrote two letters to de Vere, presumably on the same day. He arrived at Cork by Thursday, 22nd September, from which port he sailed for Bristol on the following day. Such are the meagre facts concerning A.T.'s first Irish tour. He does not state that he visited Sir Aubrey at Curragh Chase, which seems strange, and one would think that had he done so, he would have mentioned it when writing to Sir Aubrey's son. On the other hand the late great Kilkee historian, Monsignor Ignatius Murphy, stated (in an article "Kilkee", published in *All About Kilkee*, Kilkee Development Association, 1982, 73) that "Lord Tennyson, the poet visited Kilkee several times and stayed at Moore's Hotel. With Tennyson was his poet friend and more frequent visitor, Sir Aubrey de Vere". As Sir Aubrey died in 1846, Fr. Murphy's statement must refer to the 1842 visit. As Moore's Hotel did not open until the summer of 1843,¹⁵ local tradition at Kilkee that Tennyson stayed at the West End may be correct - Sykes' House has been mentioned and this was probably true also for A.T.'s 1848 visit. Kilkee is not mentioned by A.T. in his (surviving) correspondence of 1842. It should be noted, however, that A.T.'s letters to his friends at this time are generally brief and appear rushed. He gives no information on, or description of, the places he visited beyond stating that he was there, nor does he mention meeting any Irish or Anglo-Irish people. His 1842 letters give the impression of one preoccupied with business affairs. While on his one-day Dublin visit he wrote that 500 of his books¹⁶ were sold and he hoped that "the wood-works¹⁷ would make a sensation". They did not, and they proved a bad investment for A.T. as well as for his family.

Referring to Kilkee in his *Lost Ireland*, Laurence O'Connor wrote: "In 1842 Tennyson mooched around here alone, having failed to contact his fellow poet Aubrey de Vere".¹⁸ No source-reference for this statement is given. Likewise,

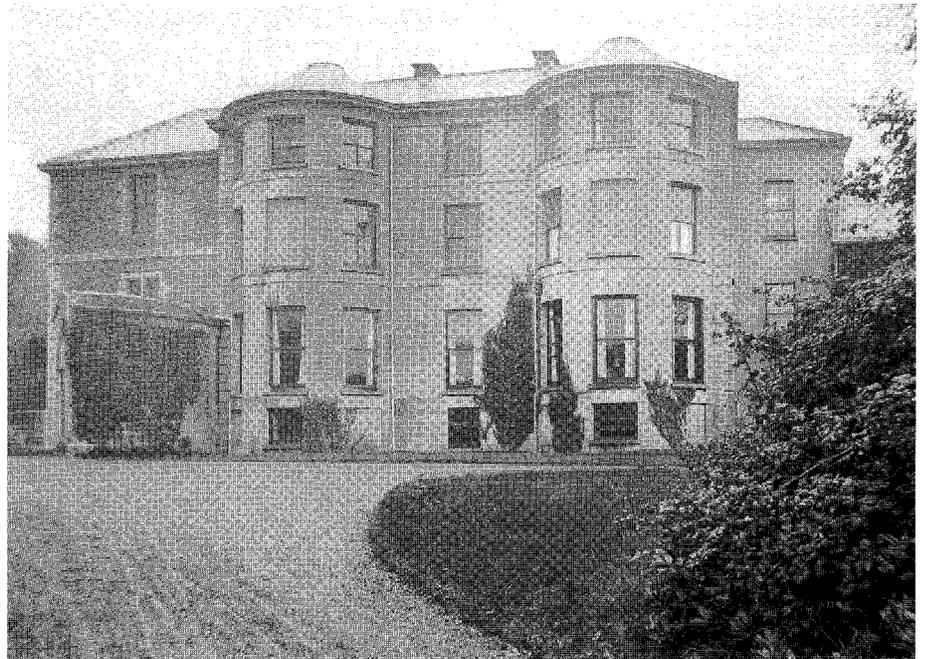
Brendan Lehane stated that "Tennyson came here [Kilkee] twice",¹⁹ again without source. Another article in *All About Kilkee* stated that "Lord Tennyson visited Kilkee three times"²⁰ and added, incorrectly, that Alfred Perceval Graves "met Tennyson one day at the Pollock Holes",²¹ which error has been verified (perhaps with poetic licence which often dispenses with historical accuracy) by Christóir O'Flynn:

"Here Alfred Percival [sic!] Graves
Met Lord Tennyson ..."²²

Another modern Irish poet, James Liddy (who was born within a few hundred yards of the aforementioned Pollock Holes) has referred to "the three segregated swimming pools - the Pollock Holes - in which Tennyson and a multiplicity of bishops used to take plunges in."²³ The latter statement is correct, the former without foundation and a misreading of what Graves actually wrote. These statements about A.T. meeting Graves at Kilkee refer to the Poet Laureates last visit to Kilkee in 1878 and shall be dealt with under that heading.

(2) Thackeray and Kilkee

Another English literary figure who was also on an Irish tour in 1842 was William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863), a friend of both Tennyson and de Vere. Thackeray was A.T.'s junior by two years and although both were in Ireland at the same time, they do not appear to have met. Thackeray spent a much longer time in Ireland. Thackeray, who had some strange and eccentric family connections with some Co. Cork gentry, was in Ireland from July to November, travelling from Dublin to Cork (where he reached before the 23rd July) via Rathcoole, Naas, Kilcullen, Carlow and Waterford. He spent several days in Cork and journeyed on to Killarney (he was there on the 15th August) via Bandon, Skibbereen, Bantry, Glengarriff and Kenmare, where he took a jig to Tarbert. Here he boarded, probably on the 16th or 17th August, a steam-boat which he does not name but which was either the *Garryowen*²⁴ or the *Erin*. Although he makes no mention of Glin Castle and village, he would have passed both on his way up to Limerick. "I can't attempt to describe the Shannon", he wrote,²⁵ "only to say that on board the steam-boat there was a piper²⁶ and a bugler,²⁷ a hundred of genteel persons coming back from donkey-riding and bathing at Kilkee, a couple of heaps of raw hides that smelt very foully, a score of women nursing children, and a lobster-vendor, who vowed to me on his honour that he gave eight pence-a-piece for his fish, and that he had boiled them only the day before; but when I produced the guide-book, and solemnly told him to swear upon that to the truth of his statement, the lobster-seller turned away, quite abashed, and would not be brought to support his previous assertion at all". He speaks of "the excellence of Mr.



Mt. Trenchard, near Foynes, c.1900.

Photo by Philip G. Hunt.

(Limerick Museum)

Cruise's hotel"²⁸ at Limerick. Here he visited a book-shop and in another shop, he tells us²⁹ "I went to buy some of the pretty Limerick gloves, (they are chiefly made, as I have since discovered, at Cork). I think the man who sold them had a patent from the Queen, or His Excellency, or both, in his window: but, seeing a friend pass just as I entered the shop, he brushed past, and held his friend in conversation for some minutes in the street - about the Killarney races, no doubt, or the fun going on at Kilkee. I might have swept away a bagful of walnut-shells,³⁰ containing the flimsy gloves; but instead walked out, making him a low-bow, and saying I would call next week. He said, wouldn't I wait? and resumed his conversation; and, no doubt, by this way of doing business, is making a handsome independence." Thackeray travelled on to Gort (via Ennis, which he described) and from Gort to Galway, from whence he returned to Dublin by way of Clifden and the bay of Westport - 'a miracle of beauty'.³¹ He wrote "from Clifden through the Joyce country to Westport which is far the most beautiful thing I have seen anywhere in Europe I think."³² He spent most of September in Dublin and devoted October to northern Ireland (he wrote "Peg of Limavady" after a visit to that town) and, after a few more days in Dublin on his return from the north, sailed for London on November 1st.

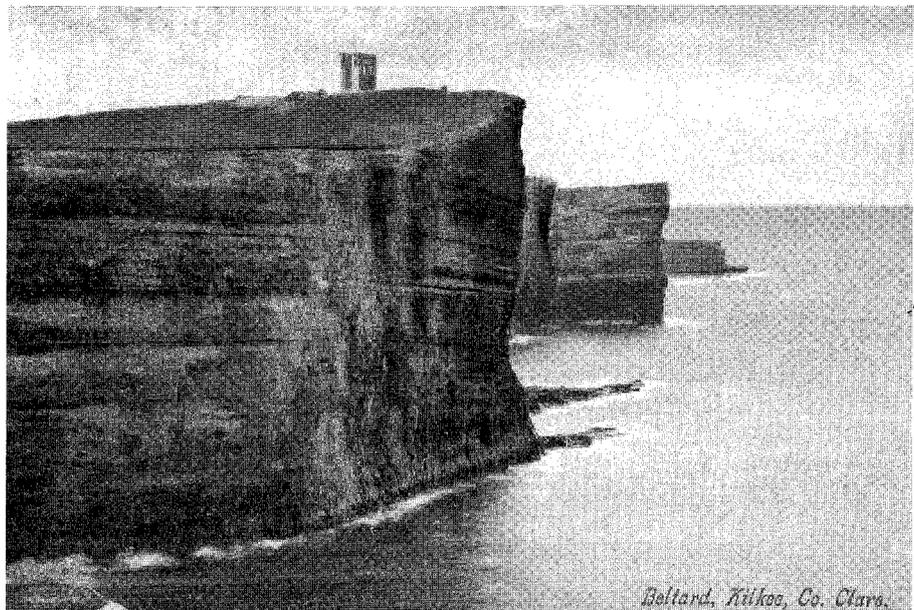
(3) Tennyson's Second Irish Tour, 1848

By January 1848 Tennyson's fame as a major poet had risen greatly. His poems,³³ originally in two slim volumes, had reached their fifth edition and since 1846 he was in receipt of a Civil List pension of £300 p.a., which in a large measure made up for the loss of his small capital back in 1842 through a bad investment in a 'wood-

carving by machinery' scheme.³⁴ He was now being lionised in London, 'bedined usque ad nauseum', he said.³⁵ He had written to Edward FitzGerald that he planned to go to Italy "if I could find anybody to go with me, which I can't, so I suppose I shan't go, which makes me hate myself and all the world".³⁶ He also felt, according to Hallam Tennyson, about this time, a desire for "a lonely sojourn at Bude".³⁷ "I hear", he said, "that there are larger waves there than on any other part of the British coast: and must go thither and be alone with God".³⁸ However, de Vere persuaded him to visit his family home at Curragh Chase. He had missed Tennyson on his lonely visit six years earlier. de Vere told A.T. that the waves were far higher in Ireland than at Bude, "and the cliffs often rise to 800 feet and in one spot, Slieve League, to 2,000".³⁹ A.T. however, set conditions for his stay at Curragh Chase before he consented to visit. There was to be no mention of Irish distress, a subject dear to de Vere who had just published "English Misdeeds and Irish Misrule", a book which the English poet found "from the little I have read very clever".⁴⁰ He was also to be allowed to breakfast alone and not to be expected downstairs for the morning meal. He was to be allowed half the day for writing, and he might smoke in the house.⁴¹ Having agreed to these conditions de Vere and his friend set off for Ireland. We do not know the date or month but it was probably towards the end of January or early in February. It was certainly not "early in January" as a recent biographer, Martin,⁴² has stated. It was sometime after the 15th of January.⁴³ de Vere has written that A.T. "passed five weeks with us at Curragh Chase, to us delightful weeks".⁴⁴ The day before their arrival there was spent at the famous Castleconnell Falls on the Shannon, and they slept that night at Old Church, 'a large house on the Clare side of

the River Shannon, near Barrington's Pier, Limerick',⁴⁵ the home of de Vere's sister, Elinor, who was married to the Hon. Robert O'Brien, a member of the Dromoland family. Sir Aubrey de Vere had died in 1846 and Aubrey's eldest brother, Vere Edmund de Vere, was now the third baronet of Curragh Chase. "We drove our guest to the old castles and abbeys in the neighbourhood: he was shocked at the poverty of the peasantry and the marks of havoc wrought through the country by the great potato-famine: he read in the library, and worked on a new edition of *The Princess*, smoking at the same time without hindrance in our most comfortable bedroom, and protected as far as possible from noise; he walked where he pleased alone, or in company through woods in which it was easy to lose oneself, by a cave so deep that Merlin might have slept in it to this day unawakened. In the evenings, he had vocal music from Lady de Vere⁴⁶ and her sister, Caroline Standish⁴⁷ and Sonatas of Mozart or Beethoven played by my eldest brother,⁴⁸ with a power and a pathos rare in an amateur. Later, he read poetry to us with a voice that doubled its power, commonly choosing pathetic pieces; and on one occasion after finishing *A Sorrowful Tale* by Crabbe, glanced round reproachfully and said, "I do not see that any of you are weeping!" One night we turned his poem *The Day-Dream* into an acted charade; a beautiful girl whom he used to call "that stately maid", taking the part of the Sleeping Beauty; and the poet himself that of the Prince who broke the spell of her slumber. Another night there was a dance which he denounced as a stupid thing, while a brilliant and amusing person, Lady G,⁴⁹ who was accustomed to speak her mind to all alike, scolded him sharply. "How would the world get on if others went about growling at its amusements in a voice as deep as a lions? I request that you will go upstairs, put on an evening coat, and ask my daughter Sophia⁵⁰ to dance". He did so, and was the gayest of the gay for several hours, turning out moreover an excellent dancer. He was liked all the better for always saying what came into his head. One day a young lady who sat next to him at dinner, spoke of a certain marriage just announced, as a very penniless one. He rummaged in his pocket, extracted a penny, and slapped it down loudly close to his plate saying, "There, I give you that, for that is the God you worship". The girl was a little frightened, but more amused: they made friends; and he promised to send her a pocket copy of Milton. Some months later she received one from England, beautifully bound ..."⁵¹

While de Vere appears to have been the perfect host their guest appears to have remained an awkward one, growling at what he disapproved of and becoming truculently British in that time of the Young Irelanders - the leader of which movement, William Smith O'Brien, was related to the de Veres (who would not have approved of O'Brien's later rebellion) by marriage. A.T.'s aim in coming to



Lawrence postcard showing Beltard, Kilkee. Posted in 1910.

(Limerick Museum)

Ireland was to see high cliffs and tall waves and de Vere decided to send the English poet to his cousin Maurice FitzGerald, Knight of Kerry, at Valencia. On his way there, de Vere accompanied him as far as Mount Trenchard, the home of Lord Monteagle,⁵² where Tennyson slept and de Vere adds "I led him to the summit of Knock Patrick, the furthest spot in the South West to which Ireland's Apostle, Patriarch and Patron, advanced ... The sunset was one of extraordinary but minatory beauty. It gave, I remember, a darksome glory to the vast and desolate expanses with all its creeks and inlets from the Shannon, lighted the green islands in the mouth of the Fergus, fired the ruined Castle of Shanid, a stronghold of the Desmonds, one of a hundred which they were said to have possessed. The western clouds hung low, a mass of crimson and gold; which, from a ledge of a nearer one, down plunged a glittering flood empurpled like wine. The scene was a thoroughly Irish one; and gave a stormy welcome to the Sassanach Bard. The next morning he pursued his way alone to Valencia ..."⁵³

While there he was guest of the Knight of Kerry, then aged seventy-five, a member of the old Irish Parliament and a close friend to the Duke of Wellington and a just and popular landlord. de Vere described him: "as chivalrous a representative of Desmond's great Norman House as it ever put forth in those times when it fought side by side with the greatest Gaelic Houses, for Ireland's ancient faith, and the immemorial rights of its Palatinate."⁵⁴ Among the poet's descriptive jottings are the following lines:

*"O friend, the great deeps of Eternity
Roar only round the wasting isle of
Time"⁵⁵*

inspired by Bray Head on Valencia.

On A.T.'s 82nd birthday (6th August, 1891) he received a letter from Tunbridge

Wells from a man with the unlikely Irish name of Bewicke Blackburne, who remembered the poet's visit of 1848 to Valencia, which read: "Long life to your honour", as Irish peasants used to say, and so say I, the man who was working the State [*sic. recte* Slate] quarry, on the island of Valencia when you spent a few days there in 1848. Chartist times in London and Fenian times in Ireland. I remember your telling us, not without some glee, how a Valencia Fenian stealthily dogged your footsteps up to the mountain and coming at last close to your ear, whispered, "Be you from France?"

"Your onorous reading to us after dinner sundry truculent passages in Daniel O'Connell's History of Ireland, which happened to be lying on my table, has lingered in my ears ever since. Seeing among my few books all that your friend Carlyle had up to that time published, you told me you thought he had nothing more to say. I was often reminded of this whilst reading his subsequent Cromwell and Frederick and Latter Days, and how near that was to the truth. You will hardly have forgotten the old Knight of Kerry, the owner of the Island, his dignified presence and his redolence of Grattan and Curran and Castlereagh and the Irish Parliament in which he sat for many years. I don't know whether "the rude imperious surge" which lashes the sounding shore of the Island ever drew from you, as I had hoped, some "hoarse rough verse", some of that roar, which tells us, as "music tells us, of what in all our life we have never known, and never will know ..."⁵⁶

Tennyson was apparently delighted with the seas off Valencia. His son wrote: "He never cared greatly for the sea on the south coast of England; 'not a grand sea', he would say, 'only an angry curt sea. It seems to shrink as it recoils with the pebbles along the shore; the finest seas I have ever seen are at Valencia, Mablethorpe, and in West Cornwall. At Valencia the sea was grand, without any wind

blowing and seemingly without a wave; but with the momentum of the Atlantic behind, it dashes up into foam, blue diamonds it looks like, all along the rocks, like ghosts playing at hide and seek ..."⁵⁷

According to Graves, who met A.T. at Kilkee in 1878, the Poet Laureate "talked a good deal of that visit to Kerry, of the scenery and of the people.

"It was in 1848, the year of revolutions, and the political electricity had even penetrated to Valencia; and Tennyson, while studying the Atlantic breakers from the mountain, was curiously followed up by a conspirator, attracted no doubt by his distinctly un-English dress and appearance. The man finally closed upon Tennyson and whispered in his ear, 'Be you from France?' ..."⁵⁸

Graves also mentions the poet's other journeyings in Kerry:

"He told me of his drive to see a waterfall on Hungry Hill, and of an amusing conversation he had with the carman, a Celt of the type of Daniel O'Connell ... so distinguished-looking indeed that when he claimed the closest connection with the great old families of McCarthy More and the O'Sullivan Bear, and emphasised the statement by the production of a ponderous old seal containing their arms quartered together, Tennyson felt quite inclined to believe his final contention that if he had his rights he should be reigning in these parts. 'He looked an Irish chief', said Tennyson; and though the poet did not tell me so at the time, his driver, it appears, on being rallied by the waiter after returning to the inn from which they had driven, for talking to the gentleman of his 'great blood', drew himself up, answering, 'The gentleman is a gentleman, every inch of him'. *Noblesse oblige* ..."⁵⁹ Of this meeting of the Poet with the royal jarvey, Francis MacManus has written that Tennyson "reached no further into the hearts of the people than a meeting with a top-of-the-morning - your honour jarvey"⁶⁰

Graves also mentions another meeting of Tennyson with some of the native Irish: "... and on that drive in search of one waterfall it had rained such cataracts that they were fain to take shelter in a wretched little roadside shealing occupied by a poor woman and her little son Johnny. To use Tennyson's own words: "The "King of Connaught" dried my stockings and went to sleep on a bench. The woman drew me up a stool to the turf fire with the courtly air of a queen. While he was asleep I heard the mother say to the boy "Johnny" several times - she didn't speak a word of English. The King awoke, and, as we were going out, I said "Johnny" and the little boy with a protuberant paunch (protuberant, I suppose, from eating potatoes) ran forward and I gave him a sixpence. The woman, with her black hair over her shoulders and her eyes streaming with tears, passionately closed her hands over the boy's hand in which was the sixpence. When the "King" and I climbed into the car, I, in my stupid Saxon way, thinking it was the beggarly



Lawrence postcard showing Bishops' Island, Kilkee, c.1905.

(Limerick Museum)

sixpence that had made the woman grateful, expressed my astonishment at such gratitude. "It was not the sixpence, your honour, it was the stranger's gift". And Graves adds: "My recollection of the story as told to me is a slight variant upon this version. According to it the woman cried out something in Irish, and Tennyson asked the driver for its meaning when they got outside, on which he replied, 'She was blessing God, your honour, that the child's hand had been crossed with silver by the dark-haired stranger'. And certainly I don't remember in Tennyson's version of the story as told me that claim to the kingdom of *Connaught* was made by the driver. Even in fun, a McCarthy or an O'Sullivan would never have advanced such a claim. Tennyson saw I was much affected by his story, which was very strikingly told, and said, 'There! you must make a poem out of *The Stranger's Gift*'.⁶¹ Graves later re-told the latter part of *The Stranger's Gift* in his autobiography *To Return To All That*: "As I remember the story, the bard asked the driver what the woman meant by 'The stranger's gift', that the child's hand had been crossed with silver by the dark-haired stranger', a combination which was supposed to bring a special luck. Besides, I am quite sure the driver could not have claimed to be the 'King of Connaught', for no descendant of an O'Sullivan would have made such a boast".⁶²

In 1848 Tennyson again visited Killarney "but remained there only a few days; yet the visit bequeathed a memorial. The echoes of the bugle at Killarney on that loveliest of lakes inspired the song introduced into the later editions of *The Princess*, beginning:

"The Splendour falls on castle walls"⁶³

This was added for the third edition of *The Princess* in 1853. A.T. noted 'Written after hearing the echoes at Killarney in 1848. When I was there I heard a bugle beneath the "Eagle's Nest", and eight distinct echoes".⁶⁴ However Allingham stated that the poet heard nine echoes, the 'last like a chant of angels in the sky'.⁶⁵

Only one of Tennyson's letters survives from his 1848 Irish visit, a letter undated

but probably written in February or March, as Lang and Shannon suggest.⁶⁶ It is headed "Currah Chase, Adare, Ireland", and beyond this address has no further reference to Tennyson's Irish visit. It was addressed to the American Philip James Bailey, the author of *Festus*.

de Vere has stated that Tennyson spent "five weeks" at Curragh Chase but a letter written from "Boulge", and dated "May 4, 1848" from Edward FitzGerald to Frederick Tennyson, the poet's brother, suggests that Tennyson was still (May 1848) in Ireland. At the end of May (1848) A.T. went to Cornwall after "about three months" in Ireland⁶⁷: "I had a note from Alfred three months ago. He was then in London: but is now in Ireland, I think, adding to his new poem, the Princess ..."⁶⁸ Later in the following year (1849) A.T. visited the Burns' country in Scotland and on his return wrote to de Vere from Cheltenham in October (Lang and Shannon, give the date correctly as 'October [2, 1849]'). It was clearly written in 1849 - the date (1848) given by Hallam Tennyson⁶⁹ and by Graves⁷⁰ is incorrect. In it Tennyson wrote: "I am glad that you have thought of me at Kilkee by the great deeps. The sea is my delight ..."⁷¹ This, as Graves has pointed out, "seems to show that he had visited the spot in the previous summer, (sic!) when the guest of his brother poet at Curragh Chase".⁷² We do not know where Tennyson or de Vere stayed when at Kilkee in 1848. It may, if local tradition is correct, have been at Sykes' house in the West End, a house in which Marconi stayed later. It is clear that they did not stay at the premier hotel in the resort - Moore's Hotel, which in 1848 did not open until June.⁷³ Beyond Tennyson's obscure reference to Kilkee quoted above, no account of his 1848 visit to Kilkee has survived.

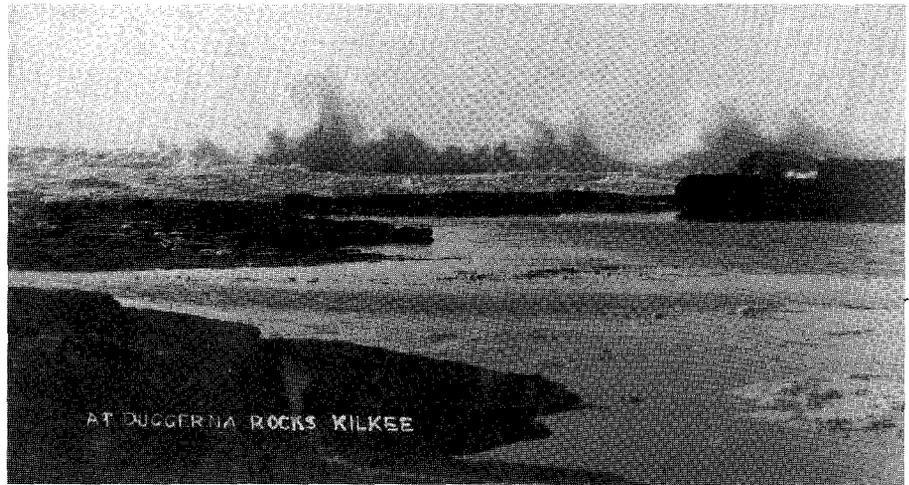
(3) - Carlyle and Kilkee, 1849

Thomas Carlyle (1795 - 1881), historian, philosopher, essayist and critic did not visit Kilkee, Co. Clare in 1849 but wrote about it shortly before his Irish visit in the summer of that year. In a letter dated

Chelsea, June 24, 1849, to his Irish friend, Charles Gavan Duffy, he wrote: "People are giving me letters, &c. Aubrey de Vere has undertaken for 'six good Irish landlords', vehemently protesting that 'six' (suggested by me) is not the maximum number. He wishes to send me across direct to Kilkee (Clare County), where his friends now are. A day or two of peace at some nice bathing-place, to swim about, and then sit silent looking out at the divine salt flood, is very inviting to my fancy; but Kilkee all at once will not be the place, I find ..."⁷⁴ With Duffy he visited Limerick, where he stayed at Cruise's Hotel and where he described Cruise himself - 'a lean, eager-looking little man of forty, most reverent of Duffy, as is common here, riding with us from Limerick station to his hotel'. Like Thackeray before him, Carlyle visited the famous glove-shop: "July 24 - Glove shop; Limerick gloves, scarcely *any* made now; buy a pair of cloth gloves..." He also mentions the Quaker Unthank "(kind of chemist' I think) Irish accent, altogether English in thought, speech and wags. Rational exact man". From Limerick Carlyle travelled to Galway via Dromoland, Ennis and Gort. At Galway towards the end of July 'the young Quaker' (W.E. Forster, later Chief Secretary of Ireland) joined Duffy and Carlyle. In Limerick Carlyle had his photograph taken and inscribed a copy to Duffy dated "Limerick this 24th of July, 1849. T. Carlyle". He described what he saw of "the features of a recently conquered country - conquered by famine - and stated "Clare was almost a wilderness from Kilrush to Corofin".⁷⁵

(4) Tennyson at Kilkee, 1878

*"The next that spoke, a wild November fool:
Twice had he been convened and once
had fought*



At Duggerna Rocks. Postcard by J. Bothwell, Kilkee, c.1905.

(Limerick Museum)

*A bargeman - he was Irish out of Clare;
For every prize he wrote and failed in
all,
And many a song he wrote which no
man knew.
The cleverest man in all our set was he".*

The above is one of the spirited Cambridge portraits which Tennyson introduced to all the early published editions of *The Princess* up to 1850 and which his grandson (Sir Charles Tennyson) could not certainly identify.⁷⁶ These lines would suggest that Tennyson was acquainted with at least one Clareman before he ever visited Ireland. It has been suggested that the lines on the "wild November fool" might refer to Tom Steele, but the lines probably refer to "the mild and brilliant Irishman"⁷⁷ Seville Morton, who was a contemporary of A.T. at Cambridge 1830-1831. Saville Morton did not come from Co. Clare, however, but from Drumrora, Co. Cavan, and was a friend of Thackeray, Tennyson and Edward Fitzgerald. His four brothers,

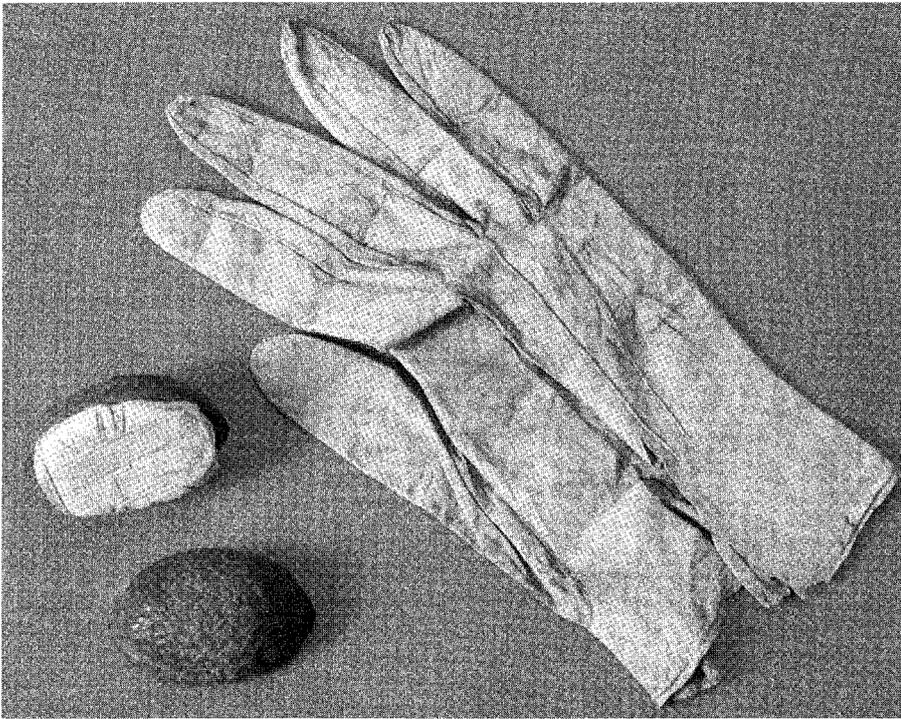
Charles, D'Arcy, Edward and Pierce were also alumni of Cambridge. Painter, journalist and lover, poor Saville Morton met an untimely end - being murdered at Paris in October 1852 by a jealous husband.

In the autumn of 1878 Tennyson, the Poet Laureate since 1850, paid his third and last visit to Ireland. In that summer he toured the country with his two sons Hallam and Lionel,⁷⁸ visiting Dublin, Wicklow, Westport, Galway, Limerick, Mount Trenchard, Kilkee and Killarney.⁷⁹ From Dublin and Wicklow the Tennysons travelled by rail to Westport (Lord Sligo's)⁸⁰ and from there to Limerick "by a slow train"⁸¹ via Galway. They were in Limerick on Friday evening, September 14th, stayed at Cruise's Hotel,⁸² and on Saturday 15th visited the sights of the city including "a good view of the Shannon and house where Ireton died"⁸³ The *Irish Times* of Monday 16th September reported: "On Saturday he was engaged (and, no doubt, gratified) inspecting the portion of the walls still standing, St. Mary's Cathedral, the Treaty Stone &c". It added (incorrectly) that A.T. "has since left Limerick en route for Lisdoonvarna". The *Limerick Chronicle* (of 14th September) reported: "Mr. Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate, accompanied by his two sons arrived at Cruise's Hotel on Thursday and left en route for Killarney". The *Munster News* (of the 12th September) anticipated by a week Tennyson's arrival in Killarney when it stated that A.T. was "sojourning at Killarney". The Tennyson party did not arrive at Killarney until Wednesday, September 18th.⁸⁴ From Limerick the three Tennysons travelled to Lord Monteagle's⁸⁵ Mount Trenchard house, which the Poet Laureate had visited before (1848). Hallam Tennyson wrote:⁸⁶ "We played at lawn-tennis and walked by the Shannon in a storm. Papa read Mand which gave great pleasure, and Eleanor Butcher⁸⁷ (the babe) was found on a rock by herself in the Shannon. She is a wild, simple young child. All the 3 Miss Butchers are each 'eine natar' as Goethe says,⁸⁸ and as I write of them to Lady Monteagle⁸⁹ and what Papa thinks of them".



Curragh Chase c.1905. From a postcard by Guy, Limerick.

(Limerick Museum)



Limerick calfskin gloves in walnut, early C19th.

(Limerick Museum)

Having signed the Visitor's Book at Mount Trenchard (and Alfred Tennyson was the first to sign the new Visitors Book there)⁹⁰ and after Tennyson had borrowed a pocket handkerchief and Hallam had borrowed a shirt from their generous host, who also helped them to pack their traps, the party set off for Kilkee, with the Lady Monteagle's brother, John George Butcher⁹¹ and her three sisters. They steamed up the Shannon. "At Kilkee", Hallam wrote,⁹² "we walked up beyond a headland, and heard the Atlantic's savage voice shattering on dark slab rocks that made the white foam seem whiter. At night we sat on a ledge on the sea-wind and smoked our pipes".

On the following morning (Tuesday September 17th) Tennyson and his two sons and party walked over Look-out Hill to "the Hungry Bishop's Isle"⁹³ where the party saw the "ruins of a cottage inhabited by some Bishop or other".⁹⁴ In the afternoon they drove to Beltard to view the cliffs and the cavern, while J.G. Butcher was left to enjoy the Kilkee horse races on the sands with a Miss Ponsonby.⁹⁵ Describing Beltard, Hallam wrote "The view was fine, a sheer 400 foot high black precipice and broken castles running out to sea. There was a splendid wind..."⁹⁶

We are fortunate in having another account of Tennyson's Kilkee visit of 1878. Staying at Kilkee while the Tennysons were there was another poet and writer, Alfred Perceval Graves and his invalid wife, listed as "Mr. and Mrs. Graves" in a list of visitors to Kilkee in September 1878.⁹⁷ Graves account is worth quoting in part:

"It was the summer of 1878. A gale from the south west, after breaking suddenly over the iron-bound coast of Clare, and raging against it furiously for forty-eight hours, had just died away.

"Scarcely a breath of air was stirring, and the August [*sic, recte* September] sky was intensely blue. Yet the great Atlantic billows, gathering out of the sea distance at ever increasing intervals still boomed and smoked against the cliffs - the last sullen thunders of oceans retreating insurgency.

"But the proverbial ill wind that had kept all but the most venturesome spirits close prisoners in the 'lodges' of Kilkee had blown the storm-loving Tennyson over from Foynes, where he and his son Hallam were the guests of Lord and Lady Monteagle....

"The intelligence of Tennyson's arrival at Moore Hotel had spread rapidly, and on the splendid forenoon in question it was very noticeable what a number of the Laureate's slim green volumes were in evidence on the terraces and up the cliff side in the hands which had been

swinging a racquet in the fine weather of a few days before.

"These Limerick girls', remarked a local wit, 'are growing more fickle than ever. Yesterday they had lawn-tennis on. To-day they have Alfred Tennyson'"⁹⁸ It was at the Duggerna (Graves called it 'Duggena') springboard at Carriguvana, or as it was even then and now more generally called, 'New-Found-Out' that Graves almost knocked heads with another swimmer:

"Beg your pardon, sir!"

"Not at all sir!" - then 'What! You here, Alfred?

Why, how long have you been in these parts?"

'About ten days, J.G.! I replied, recognizing my friend Butcher.

'Very odd we've not met before?

'Not at all. I've been purposely avoiding you?

'That doesn't sound very friendly'.

'Perhaps not, but my intention was particularly so'.

'Explain!'

'Well, the fact is, I heard you were showing Tennyson the sights; and knowing how shy he is of strangers, I thought the most friendly thing I could do was to steer clear of your party'.

'My dear fellow, I'll make that all right'

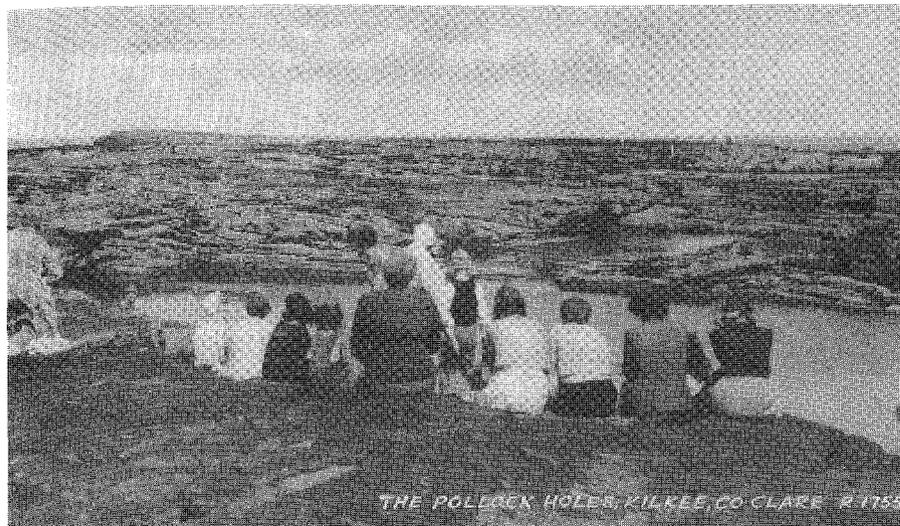
"And he did within a few hours; for that afternoon I got a note from him saying, 'Tennyson hopes you will spend the evening with us. Don't bother about dressing. Come just as you are, if not exactly as you were when last we met'."⁹⁹ Graves' wife, Jane (eldest daughter of James Cooper Cooper, of Cooper Hill, Co. Limerick - she died in 1886 and A.P.G. remarried later), was an invalid and too unwell to accompany her husband to Moore's Hotel "where the Bard received me beaming, evidently amused at what he had heard from Butcher of our marine meeting. He offered me a 'churchwarden' pipe, made me sit beside him, and plunged into pleasant talk."¹⁰⁰ A.T. was then aged 70 years.

"His accent and speech both surprised me. I was quite prepared for the fastidious



Lawrence postcard of Moore's Hotel, posted in 1905.

(Limerick Museum)



Valentine postcard of the Pollock Holes, Kilkee, posted in 1952.

(Limerick Museum)

articulation and premeditated hesitation in the choice of words to which so many distinguished English University men are prone. There was a rich burr in his accent, Lincolnshire, I suppose, and a pungent directness in his utterance which was as refreshing as they were unlooked for".¹⁰¹

Tennyson and Graves first talked of the sea "and he spoke notably. He said that a great storm, such as we had witnessed, was a wonderful and terrible sight of impatient passion, and he quoted St. Jude's words, 'Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their shame'.¹⁰² But he had once seen roll in out of the Atlantic, suddenly, over a still sky, a succession of stupendous billows, earthquake waves perhaps, which completely engulfed the shore, and whose awful serenity impressed his imagination far more deeply than any tempest he had ever experienced."¹⁰³ Tennyson also spoke of his Kerry visit of 1848.

Graves continues: "He went on to say that he much desired to write an Irish poem, and was on the lookout for a suitable subject. Could I make a suggestion." Graves suggested Dr. Joyce's *Old Celtic Romances*,¹⁰⁴ which were then unpublished, but which he had seen in manuscript form. He promised to send a copy of the work to Tennyson on its publication - which he did - and adds that Tennyson's *Voyage of Maeldune* was the outcome. The Poet Laureate, in his notes quoted by his son, wrote 'I read the legend in Joyce's *Celtic Legends* [recte *Old Celtic Romances*], 'but most of the details are mine'. His biographer added: 'By this story he intended to represent in his own original way the Celtic genius, and he wrote the poem with a genuine love of the peculiar exuberance of the Irish imagination'.¹⁰⁵

As Francis MacManus wrote, Tennyson's enthusiasm for a Celtic subject was "an enthusiasm that did not seem childish, or at least presumptuous, to either of the two men. Had they been in France, would they have talked so inconsiderately about writing a French poem?"¹⁰⁶ Mac Manus's article is of great interest to those who

would discover how far Tennyson's version of the Maeldune story varied from the original 'course sailed by the ancient navigator',¹⁰⁷ and how far his poem varied from the original Irish legend.

Other subjects discussed by the two Alfreds at Moore's Hotel on that evening long ago included Ossian - Tennyson quoted from Macpherson - the preternatural, witches, spiritualism and a subject dear to Graves, an Inspector of National Schools, - national education. The Laureate, according to Graves, "seemed eager for practical instances of its [i.e. National Education] enlightening effects upon the people, derived from my personal knowledge as an inspector of schools. A generation previously he had said that 'one of the two great social problems impending was the housing and education of the poor man before making him our master; the other was the Higher Education of Women', to which his *Princess*¹⁰⁸ served as a pioneer".¹⁰⁹ Hallam Tennyson wrote: "O'Brien,¹¹⁰ son of Smith O'Brien, who talked of a Local Government for Ireland, and Perceval Graves the Ireland [sic!] poet came in and smoked in the evening".¹¹¹

On the following morning (Wednesday, September 18th) all the Tennysons rose early before 7 o'clock and walked "to a wendy ledge of rock and saw the white wave - ghosts at intervals leaping up here and there over breakers".¹¹² The Tennyson party drove in a long car to Kilrush and parted with the Butchers at Tarbert, where they were met by Lord Monteagle's phaeton, which took the party to Tralee and from there to Listowel, where they lunched "on Salmon and Whiskey - a truly Irish lunch"¹¹³ and from thence to Killarney, where A.T. stayed again, for the third time, at the Victoria Hotel. The *Munster News* anticipated Tennyson's arrival in Killarney by a week and reported: "Mr. Tennyson, the Poet Laureate, and Dr. Kennelly,¹¹⁴ the would-be-poet, are at Killarney: the one to drink in inspiration from the Lakes and Mountains, the other to imbibe the Devil's Punchbowl".¹¹⁵

The late Mrs. Mercy Ida Tyner of Kilkee (who died in September 1968) told me (in the autumn of 1963) that her late father, Dr. John Walton (d.1925),¹¹⁶ and his friend, the Rev. Robert J. Gabbett (d.1891),¹¹⁷ a former Vicar of Shanagolden, Co. Limerick, had both met Tennyson at Kilkee during his last visit there and this seems likely as both Dr. Walton and the Rev. R.J. Gabbett were at Kilkee at the time of A.T.'s visit in 1878. On Dr. Walton's and the Rev. R.J. Gabbett's monument at Kilfearagh cemetery, Kilkee, the following lines from Tennyson's *Crossing The Bar* appear:

"I hope to see my pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar"

and on the beautiful monument erected in St. James' Church of Ireland, Kilkee, by Dr. Walton to the Rev. R.J. Gabbett, the lines:

"Oh for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still"

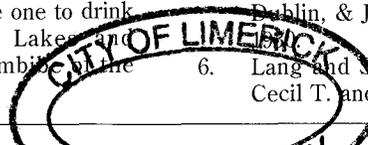
from Tennyson's *Break, Break, Break*, appear.

A Local Myth

About 1952 or 1953, I heard from several old residents of Kilkee that Tennyson's *Break, Break, Break* was either composed at or inspired by Kilkee! This story is without foundation and the lines were first published in May 1842, before Tennyson ever set foot in Ireland. In fact, Hallam Tennyson stated that it was composed "in a Lincolnshire lane at five o'clock in the morning between blossoming hedges,"¹¹⁸ in a very different setting from that to which it refers. Cecilia Tennyson, the poet's sister, recited *Break, Break, Break* on the 16th March, 1839,¹¹⁹ so presumably it was written sometime before early 1837, when the Tennysons left Somersby and / or after September 1833, since it was inspired by the death of Arthur Hallam, possibly in the spring of 1834.

ABBREVIATIONS

1. Allingham, *A Diary*: Allingham, H. and Radford, D. (eds): *William Allingham A Diary*, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1907.
2. *D.N.B.*: Dictionary of National Biography.
3. Graves, *Reminiscence*: Graves, Alfred Perceval, *Tennyson in Ireland: a Reminiscence* in *The Cornhill Magazine*, (New Series) Vol. 3 (November 1897).
4. Graves, *Irish Literary*: Graves, Alfred Perceval: *Irish Literary And Musical Studies*, Elkin Mathews, London, 1913.
5. Graves, *Return*: Graves, Alfred Perceval: *To Return To All That: An Autobiography*, The Talbot Press, Dublin, & Jonathan Cape, London, 1913.
6. Lang and Shannon, *Letters*: Lang, Cecil T. and Shannon, Edgar F. Jr.



- (eds): *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, Clarendon Press, Oxford. *Volume 1* (1821-1850) 1982, and *Volume 3* (1871-92) Oxford, O.U.P. 1990.
7. L.C.: Limerick Chronicle.
 8. M.N.: Munster News.
 9. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir: Tennyson, Hallam: Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir By His Son*, Macmillan and Co., London, 1897 (2 volumes).
 10. Tennyson, Hallam: *Materials: Tennyson, Hallam: Materials for a Life of Alfred Tennyson. Collected for My Children*, (4 volumes, privately printed) 1895. The Senior Librarian at the Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire Central Reference Library states (letter to author dated 21st January 1987) "... As far as I can tell the information in these two (i.e. quoted in 9 above) and the manuscript from which both derived) is almost wholly reproduced in the *Memoir*.
- #### REFERENCES
1. Allingham, *A Diary*, 293.
 2. *Ibid.* 297.
 3. *Ibid.* 293.
 4. *Ibid.* "He spoke of Ireland with abhorrence and the wickedness of ill using poor animals" Queen Victoria on Tennyson (Osborne, Tuesday, August 7th, 1883) quoted in Dyson, Hope and Tennyson, Charles: *Dear And Honoured Lady*, Macmillan, London, 1969, 102.
 5. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir*, I, 287.
 6. Cf. Abbreviations 3 above.
 7. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir*, I, 207.
 8. Lang and Shannon: *Letters* I, 208.
 9. Tennyson, Hallam: *Material* I, 281-2 quoted in Lang and Shannon: *Letters* I, 210 and also in Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir* I, 212-213.
 10. Lang and Shannon: *Letters* I, 210.
 11. *Ibid.* 1, 210; Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir* I, 217.
 12. Quoted by Graves, *Reminiscence* 594; *M.N.* 6 November 1897; Graves, *Irish Literary* I; Graves, *Return*, 185.
 13. Lang and Shannon: *Letters* I, 210; Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir*, 1, 212-213.
 14. Lang and Shannon: *Letters* I, 210-211.
 15. *L.C.*, 6 May 1843.
 16. Lang and Shannon: *Letters* I, 209.
 17. *Ibid.* 210; Cf. also Canon A. Aingers' article in the *D.N.B.* Vol. 19 (1909) p549, where he states that Tennyson and his family lost 'a considerable part of their small capital' in a 'wood-carving by machinery' scheme which did not succeed. Cf. also Sir Charles Tennyson's article on the poet in *Collier's Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 22, 170.
 18. O'Connor, Lawrence: *Lost Ireland*, 1984 (under photo. No. 203).
 19. Lehane, Brendan: *The Companion Guide to Ireland*, Collins, London, & Prentice Hall, Inc., Eaglewood Cliffs, N.J., 1985, 335.
 20. Kilkee Development Association: *All About Kilkee* (nd, but 1982), 43.
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. O'Flynn, Criostoir: *Summer In Kilkee*, The Treaty Press, Limerick, 1984, 34.
 23. Liddy, James in a Radio Eireann I. broadcast in November, 1974 (repeated 22nd August, 1986).
 24. For an account of *The Garryowen F. Murphy*, Rev. Ignatius: Pre-Famine Passenger Service On The Lower Shannon in the *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, Vol. XVI, (1973-4), 74 and McNeill, D.B.: *Irish Passenger Steamship Services*, David and Charles, Newton Abbott (Vol. 2. South of Ireland) 149-150.
 25. Thackeray, William Makepeace: *The Irish Sketch-Book* by Mr. M.A. Titmarsh ... In Two Volumes, London, Chapman and Hall, (1843) Vol. I. 253 et. seq.
 26. The piper was Paddy O'Neill of Lisdeen, Kilkee, a minor Irish poet and player of the Scotch-pipes. Cf. *L.C.* 11 Sept. 1841 ('Paddy O'Neill's Song').
 27. The bugler was 'bugler John' cf. *L.C.* 11 Sept. 1841: "Or bugler John, sped th' *Erin* on, that slap up spankin' boat, sir.
- Till on Cappa pier the folks did hear his regular QUAY-note, sir".
28. Thackeray, *Ibid.*
 29. *Ibid.*
 30. A pair of these Limerick gloves, one of the pair contained in a walnut-shell, is in the collection of Limerick Museum.
 31. Thackeray, William Makepeace in a letter (dated 31st. August - 1st. September) to his mother, Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth, quoted in Ray, Gordon N: *The Letters And Private Papers Of William Makepeace Thackeray*, O.U.P., London, 1945. Vol. 2 (1841-1850) 76.
 32. *Ibid.* 75.
 33. Tennyson, Alfred: *Poems*, In 2 volumes, by Alfred Tennyson, London, Edward Moxon, 1842.
 34. Cf. reference 17 above.
 35. Henderson, Philip: *Tennyson. Poet And Prophet*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and Henley, 1978, 68.
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir* I, 287.
 38. *Ibid.*
 39. *Ibid.*
 40. Lang and Shannon: *Letters* I. 282 (in a letter to Lord Monteagle endorsed by Alfred Tennyson '15 January 1848').
 41. Ward, Wilfred: *Aubrey de Vere: A Memoir*, London, 1904, 146. Quoted also in Lang and Shannon: *Letters* I, 283.
 42. Martin, Robert Bernard: *Tennyson. The Unquiet Heart*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, Faber and Faber, 1980, 318.
 43. Tennyson headed his letter to Lord Monteagle "42 Ebury Street [London] [15th January, 1848]".
 44. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir* I, 288.
 45. O Cléirigh, Nellie and Rowe, Veronica: *Limerick Lace: A Social History And A Maker's Manual*, Colin Smythe, Gerrard's Cross, 1995, 45. There is a photograph of Old Church (Rowe Collection) in the same work. I am most grateful to Mrs. Rowe for this description of Old Church.
 46. Lady de Vere: She was Aubrey Thomas de Vere's sister-in-law, the former Mary Lucy Standish, dau. of Rowland Standish, of Scaleby Castle, Cumberland and of Farley Hill, Berks, (whose wife was a dau. of the Earl of Limerick) who married 9th January, 1838, Vere Edmund de Vere, who succeeded as the third baronet of Curragh Chase in 1846. A descendant of a Protestant Bishop of Limerick, she later converted to Catholicism, as did her husband, and died in 1892.
 47. Caroline Standish. The sister of Lady de Vere. She m. 13 November 1849, Paulet St. John Mildmay.
 48. Sir Vere Edmund de Vere, 3rd Bart., was a gifted musician. Writing as early as October, 1828, Alfred Tennyson's cousin wrote of de Vere: "He plays beautifully on the piano." Cf. Martin: *Tennyson, The Unquiet Heart*.
 49. Lady G. Almost certainly Lady Guillamore (1805-1871). Born Gertrude Jane, eld. dau. of the Hon. Berkely Paget (youngest bro. of the Marquis of Anglesey). She m. 16th October, 1828 the Hon. Standish Darby O'Grady (1792-1848), who succeeded as Viscount Guillamore in 1840. The O'Grady's came from Cahir Guillamore, Co. Limerick.
 50. Almost certainly the Hon. Sophia O'Grady, eldest of the four daughters of Viscount and Viscountess (Lady) Guillamore.
 51. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir* I. 289.
 52. Lord Monteagle. Born Thomas Spring-Rice (1790-1866), first Baron Monteagle of Brandon (created 1839). M.P. for Limerick 1820-1832, and for the borough of Cambridge 1832-1839. A Whig, he served as Chancellor of the Exchequer under Lord Melbourne from April 1835 to September 1839. Lived at Mount Trenchard (near Foynes), Co. Limerick until his death in 1866, when he was succeeded by his grandson. A statue to his memory graces Pery Square, Limerick, and in Limerick Chamber of Commerce there is a painting of Thomas Spring Rice being chaired after an election victory. Cf. Potter, Matthew: *A Catholic Unionist: The Life and Times of William Monsell First Baron Emly of Tervoe*, Limerick 1994.
 53. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir* I. 291.
 54. Maurice FitzGerald (1772-1849), 18th hereditary Knight of Kerry. M.P. from 1794 to Act of Union (which he supported) for Kerry. In 1801 he was returned again for Co. Kerry and later supported Catholic Emancipation. Vice-Treasurer of

- Ireland (1830), he was defeated in the elections of 1831 and 1835. Described as an "excellent friend and landlord" he died at Glanleam, Valentia, 7th March, 1849. Cf. D.N.B. Vol. VII. 141-2.
55. Ricks, Christopher: *The Poems of Tennyson* (Longman's Annotated English Poets series), 1969. Appendix B, 1796.
56. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir* I. 291.
57. Quoted by Graves, *Reminiscence*, 598.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.* 599.
60. MacManus, Francis: *Tennyson's Irish Tale* in *The Irish Monthly*, Vol. LXXI. (July 1943) 275.
61. Graves: *Reminiscence* 599-600; Graves: *Irish Literary*, 8, Graves: *Return*, 190.
62. Graves: *Return*, 189-190.
63. Added by A.T. 1850 to *The Princess*. Published in third edition of "The Princess" (in *Poems*, 2 Vols, Sixth edition, 1853). Cf. Ricks, Christopher: *The Poems of Tennyson*, (Longman's Annotated English Poets series), 1969, 783.
64. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir* I. 291-2; quoted also in Ricks, Christopher: *The Poems of Tennyson*, 783.
65. Allingham, *A Diary*, 301.
66. Lang and Shannon: *Letters* I. 283.
67. Martin, *op. cit.*, 319
68. Hayter, Alethea: *FitzGerald to his Friends: Selected Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, Scholar Press, London, 1979, 93.
69. Tennyson Hallam: *Memoir* I. 280.
70. Graves, *Reminiscence*, 594; *M.N.* 6 November 1897; Graves, *Irish Literary*, 2. Graves, *Return*, 185. A note by Aubrey de Vere on the original letter (in the Bewicke Rare Book And Manuscript Library, at Yale University): 'Later than his visit to Curragh Chase in 1848 - A de V.'
71. Original letter at Yale University, U.S.A. cf. (69) above. Lang and Shannon: *Letters* I. 305.
72. Graves, *Reminiscence*, 595.
73. *L.C.*, 3 June 1848.
74. Thomas Carlyle in a letter dated "Chelsea, June 24, 1849" to Charles Gavan Duffy quoted in Duffy, Sir Charles Gavan: *Conversations with Carlyle*, Sampson Low, Marston, & Co., London, 1892. 42.
75. *Ibid.* 120.
76. Tennyson, Sir Charles: *Alfred Tennyson*, Macmillan, New York, 1949, 220.
77. *Ibid.* 185, 202.
78. Lionel Tennyson, youngest son of the poet Laureate and Emily Sellwood (cf. Thovaitte, Ann: *Emily Tennyson: The Poet's Wife*, Faber, London, 1997) b. 1854, he m. 1878 Eleanor Mary Bertha Locker [of E. of Elgin's family] and d. 20 April, 1886.
79. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir* 2, 529 where Hallam lists "Summer tours that my father made with me, 1874 to 1892," where Ireland is mentioned 1878, but not Kilkee.
80. George John Browne (1820-1896), 3rd Marquis of Sligo, Earl of Altemount etc. He was one of the 28 peers who in 1883 owned over 100,000 acres in U.K., being 23rd in point of acreage and 27th in point of annual rental, "valued at (only) £19,000 a year". He m. (as his third wife) June 1878, Isabella De Peyronnet, youngest dau. of Viscounte de Peyronnet and died 5 p.m. 30 December 1896. He lived at Mount Browne, near Guildford and at Westport, where he owned 114,881 acres.
81. Lang and Shannon, *Letters*, III, 162 - letter dated 'Royal Victoria Hotel, Lakes of Killarney, September 24, 1878' from Lionel Tennyson to his mother Emily Sellwood.
82. *L.C.* 14 September 1878.
83. Lang and Shannon, *Letters*, III, 162.
84. *Ibid.* 163.
85. Lord Monteagle, Thomas Spring-Rice, 2nd Baron Monteagle (1849-1926). Succeeded his grandfather 1866.
86. Lang and Shannon, *Letters*, III. 162. When Alfred Milner visited Mount Trenchard in the autumn of 1886 - only 8 years after Tennyson's visit - the home of his friend Lord Monteagle, he found the tennis lawn was overgrown and an air of dilapidation 'joined to fortitude' about the place.
87. Eleanor Butcher (d. unm. 1894) youngest sister of Lady Monteagle, both daughters of the Bishop of Meath and sisters to John George ("J.G.") Butcher, later Lord Danesfort.
88. Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe*, 3 December 1824.
89. Lady Monteagle. Born Elizabeth Butcher, eldest dau. of the Very Rev. Samuel Butcher, D.D. Bishop of Meath, she m. (1875) Lord Monteagle and d. 27 April 1908.
90. A.T. signed it "A Tennyson Sept. 16th - 78". I am most grateful to Lord Monteagle of Brandon for this information.
91. John George Butcher (1853-1935). Killarney-born son of a future Bishop of Meath. Educated Trinity Coll. Cambridge 1870-1874; Scholar and Barrister, Lincoln's Inns 1878. Conservative M.P. York City 1892-1906 and 1910-1923. Q.C. 1897. Baronet 1918 and cr. Baron Danesfort. President of the British Empire Union. He was an arch-Conservative. The *Times* obituary notice (1st July, 1935) described him as "one of the few really uncompromising 'diehard' Tories of his generation".
92. Lang and Shannon, *Letters*, III. 162.
93. Generally called 'Bishop's Island' to the west of Kilkee, off the Dunlickey Rd. The Tennysons appear to have used Murray's *Handbook For Travellers In Ireland*, 1878 edition - it contains the same mistakes in the spelling of local place-names as in Hallam Tennyson's letter to his mother.
94. Lang and Shannon, *Letters*, III. 163.
95. Miss Ponsonby. Almost certainly one of the two daughters of Chambré Brabazon Ponsonby of Kilcooley Abbey, Co. Tipperary, and his wife, the Hon. Mary Sophin Plunkett (eldest d. of 16th Baron Dunsany) - either Dorothy Constance (b.1874) or Alice Isabel (b.1876). The Ponsonbys were frequent visitors to Kilkee and stayed at Moore's Hotel while the Tennysons were visiting there. Cf. Neely, W.G.: *Kilcooley: Land And People In Tipperary*, Belfast University Press, 1983.
96. Lang and Shannon, *Letters*, III, 163.
97. *L.C.*, 14 Sept. 1878.
98. Graves, *Reminiscence*, 595; *M.N.* 6 November 1897. Did this quip by the Kilkee wit on 'lawn-tennis' inspire James Joyce "... of all the glad new year, mother, the rum tum tiddledy tum Lawn Tennyson, gentleman poet" (*Ulysses* (1920); Bodley Head edition (1937) p. 47. ll. 20-21). Later Joyce told the Irish artist, Arthur Power, in Paris - "Lawn Tennyson", he said, repeating the quip in *Ulysses*, "the rectory prude, a poet deficient in intellect." Cf. Power, Arthur: *Conversations with James Joyce*, Millington, 1974. 102. Cf. Graves, *Irish Literary*, 3. Graves, *Return*, 185.
99. Graves, *Reminiscence*, 596. Graves gives a slightly different version of this note in his *To Return To All That* (1930) 186.
100. *Ibid.*, where the pipe is described simply as 'a long pipe', *M.N.* 6 November 1897; Graves, *Return*, 186 etc.
101. *Ibid.*
102. "mild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame" from the letter of Jude, 13 (new testament).
103. Graves, *Reminiscence*, 597; *M.N.*, 6 November 1897; Graves, *Irish Literary*, 4; Graves, *Return*.
104. Joyce, Patrick Weston: *Old Celtic Romances*, Kegan Paul, London, 1879.
105. Quoted by Graves, *Reminiscence*, 600.
106. MacManus, Francis: *Tennyson's Irish Tale* in *The Irish Monthly*, Vol. LXXI (July, 1943), 275.
107. *Ibid.* 275.
108. "Tennyson brought out in 1847 the first poem of his maturity, *The Princess*, a fantasy on the theme of women's rights" - Tennyson, Sir Charles, in *Collier's Encyclopaedia* (Vol. 22). (1952) 170.
109. Graves, *Reminiscence*, 602; Graves, *Return*, 195.
110. O'Brien. This was the fourth son of William Smith O'Brien and Lucy Gabbett - Robert Donough. Born 1844, he was, unlike his elder brothers, patriotically inclined and subsequently became a member

of the Council of the Home Rule League, to which his sister, Charlotte, was passionately attached. He died 1917.

111. Lang and Shannon: *Letters*, III, 163.
112. *Ibid.*
113. *Ibid.*
114. Dr. Edward Hyde Kenealy, M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent, on "Independent Principles" 1875-80. Educ. T.C.D.: B.A. (1840), LL.B. (1846) and proceeded to LL.D. Called to both the Irish and English bar (1840 and 1847). Played a minor role in the famous Tichborne case (1866). Died 1880. Cf. Stanton, Michael *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament*, Vol. I (1832-1885) Atlantic Highlands N.J. Union Bros. Ltd ... for a short biography of Dr. Kenealy, who was a minor poet.
115. This statement is not as libelous as it first appears, as "The Devil's Punchbowl" is a hill, 2,379 feet high, near Killarney.
116. John Walton, M.B. Adopted son of Rev. Robert J. Gabbett. Dr. Walton was educated at T.C.D. and was a fine Greek and Latin scholar. He d. at Kilkee 1925.
117. Rev. Robert J. Gabbett (1816-1891). Brother of Mrs. William Smith O'Brien and former Vicar of Shanagolden. Scholar and Artist, he d. at Kilkee, 1891.
118. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memorial*, I, 190.
119. Blackwoods Magazine (1894) 602.

ADDENDUM

Since writing the above, three Tennysonian items have surfaced which shed further light on the poet's Irish visits of 1848 and 1878. The first, and most important, is a letter dated 'March 27. 48' from Aubrey de Vere, Curragh Chase, Co. Limerick, to his friend and kinsman, the then Knight of Kerry. It is an introductory letter acquainting the Knight with the immanent arrival of Tennyson at Valentia, where the Knights of Kerry resided. I quote in part: " ... I thought I should have had the great pleasure of enjoying within the next few days some of your recollections connected with that period and the time of the Union, for I had fully intended to have accompanied my friend Alfred Tennyson who has heard of the fame of Valentia and is going tomorrow [i.e. 28th March, 1848] to pass some days at the little Inn on the Island - I don't like to move from home just at present ... it is not impossible that I may be able to follow him by the end of the week. In the meantime if I should not be able to introduce him to you personally pray allow me to do so thus by letter - He is a man whom you doubtless know by name though I doubt your having read his poetry ... He is however not only an eminent Poet, but an excellent fellow (though somewhat shy) and a very intimate friend of ours. He has been staying here for the last two months - He is now staying away from us partly from a

great longing for the sea. [A.T. was probably staying at Kilkee, Co. Clare, at this time] and partly I suspect because he wants to be quite quiet, live in a home by himself and indulge in lonely musings - which will probably take the shape hereafter of poetic Denunciations of the revolutionary spirit now abroad -¹

The second item is a notice which was headed 'Supplementary List of September Visitors To Kilkee' which appeared in the *Limerick Chronicle* of September 21, 1878: "Mr. Tennyson, the Poet Laureate and two sons'.

The third item is a spurious account of a near accident which erroneously links A.T. with the English statesman, William E. Forster, at Kilkee. This appeared under the heading 'The Irish Brighton' in the *Clare Journal* of the 23rd August 1888. The author stated, *inter alia*: 'It was whilst watching the waves charging up the limestone slope of the Diamond Rocks a few autumns ago, that the most distinguished of English poets, and an eminent statesman "whose name has been unwarrantly connected with ammunition", had a narrow escape from being swept away by the sudden incursion of a billow more than usually large'. While A.T. and Forster were at Kilkee in the autumn of 1878, they were not there at the same time.

- 1 Knight of Kerry Papers, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast. Vol. 17. I am grateful to Mr. Adrian FitzGerald (per Knight of Kerry) and Dr. A.P.W. Malcomson and the P.R.O. N.I. for permission to publish extracts from Aubrey de Vere's letter.
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Aubrey de Vere to Knight of Kerry Introducing Tennyson

Curragh Chase, March 27. 48.

My dear Knight

Pray accept my best thanks for your letter. It was very kind of you to find time to write it in these troubled days when all Europe is Dashing forward at rail-road speed, and in which direction no one can exactly know. For Germany and for Italy I have good hopes mixed with considerable fears - As for France I do not see what chances there is of that unhappy country escaping a state of anarchy - equal to the worst it has yet known. Its certainly not very pleasant to have ones neighbour's house on fire and our excitable people seem inclined enough to catch the blaze - The Roman Catholic clergy will do what they can.

I think to prevent an outbreak but if the excitement shall become very great it may perhaps hurry them along with it. If there existed in Ireland anything like a combination among the *upper classes* for the attainment of really practical and remedial measures I think that one might expect some useful concessions just now - but unfortunately nothing is demanded but Repeal and Tenant Right - one does not

see therefore what concessions can be made, or what diversions can be effected. I conclude therefore that matters have reached a crisis state it only remains to be seen whether the Young Irelanders are stout enough for a Rebellion and whether England in stout enough to put it down.

These times must be interesting for you who remember 98. *I thought I should have had the great pleasure of enjoying within the next few days some of your recollections connected with that period and the time of the Union, for I had fully intended to have accompanied my friend Alfred Tennyson who has heard of the fame of Valentia and is going to-morrow to pass some days at the little Inn on the Island - I don't like to move from home just at present until I hear something as to the other course things are likely to take, but it is not impossible that I may be able to follow him by the end of the week. In the meantime if I should not be able to introduce him to you personally pray allow me to do so thus by letter - He is a man whom you doubtless know by name though I doubt your having read his poetry for I remember that you are so very orthodox in your poetic faith and such a determined believer in Pope, that I suspect you regard somewhat slightly, the more modern schools. He is however not only an eminent Poet, but an excellent fellow (though somewhat shy) and a very intimate friend of ours. He has been staying here for the last two months - He is now staying away from us partly from a great longing for the sea and partly I suspect because he wants to be quite quiet live in a house by himself and indulge in lonely musings - which will probably take the shape hereafter of poetic Denunciations of the revolutionary spirit now abroad -*

Will you present my remembrances to Mrs. FitzGerald, who however will hardly remember my name as I have only once had the pleasure of meeting her - that was some nine years ago when Stephen Spring Rice and I looked in on ... [Vere??] at Ballyinruddery on our way to Killarney -

May you believe me

faithfully yours

Aubrey de Vere

My mother sends you her kindest regards.

NOTES

William Smith O'Brien's brother Robert [of Old Church] was married to Elinor Jane Alicia Lucy de Vere (14.2.1835), sister of Aubrey (Thomas) de Vere, thus W.S. O'Brien and Aubrey de Vere were brother-in-laws. de Vere did not approve of O'Brien's revolutionary principles, being a liberal constitutionist leaning towards the Tory party. De Vere's brother, Stephen Edward de Vere (later 4th and last Baronet), was M.P. for Limerick (1854-9), a liberal, but was opposed to home rule like most of his class. de Vere's mother, Mary Spring-Rice (d. 11th February 1856), was a sister of Thomas Spring Rice (1st Baron Monteagle of Brandon of Mount Trenchard and Ballycrispin, Co. Kerry).