Tennyson at Kilkee and Other Munster Tours, 1842-1878

by Thomas J. Byrne

The poet had to abandon his plans to visit Dingle and Glengarriff (A.T. wrote 'Glengarry') 'for want of time'. By mid-September he was at the Victoria Hotel, Killarney, 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, MonsignorIgnatius 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, 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 books were sold and he hoped that "the wood-works would make a sensation". If 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". No source-reference for this statement is given. Likewise,
Brendan Lehane stated that "Tennyson came here [Kilkee] twice," again without source. Another article in All About Kilkee stated that "Lord Tennyson visited Kilkee three times" and added, incorrectly, that Alfred Perceval Graves "met Tennyson one day at the Pollock Holes", which error has been verified (perhaps with poetic licence which often dispenses with historical accuracy) by Chriostóir Ó'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 jog 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\(^{14}\) 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 piper\(^{26}\) 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 fouly, 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. Cruise's hotel"\(^{28}\) at Limerick. Here he visited a book-shop and in another shop, he tells us\(^{29}\) "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 nutshells,\(^{30}\) containing the flimsy gloves; but instead walked out, making him a lowbow, 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 nauseam', 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...\(^{45}\)
the River Shannon, near Barrington's Pier, Limerick, the home of de Vere's sister, Elianor, 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 Princesses, 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 Vere and her sister, Caroline Standish and Sonatas of Mozart or Beethoven played by my eldest brother, with a power and a pathos rare in an amateur. Later, he read poetry to us with a voice that doubled its pathos. He was a thoroughly Irish one; and gave a stormy jottings are the following lines:

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

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 dug up 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 turbulent 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 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..."

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 ...

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 brooksters 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? ..."

Graves also mentions the poet's other journeys 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 his driver, it appeared to 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 appeared, on being railed 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 ...'"

Of this meeting of the Poet with the royal jarvey, Francis MacManus has written that Tennyson "reached a furthest into the hearts of the people than a meeting with a top-of-the-morning - your honour jarvey ..."

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 cataclysms that they were fain to take shelter in a wretched little roadside sheeling occupied by a poor woman and her little son Johnny. To use Tennyson's own words: "The 'King of Connaught' dripped my stockings and went to sleep on a bench. The woman drew me up a stool to the turf 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 clutched the baby's hand, which was the sixpence. When the 'King' and I climbed into the car, I, in my stupid Saxon way, thinking it was the beggarly 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'. 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 ..."

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"

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'. However Allingham stated that the poet heard nine echoes, the 'last like a chant of angels in the sky'. 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. 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 "Bouge", 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 Ireland: "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 ..."

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 Tennyson and by Graves 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 ..."). 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 ..." 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 ... 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 . . ." 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 Secretary of Ireland) joined Duffy and Carlyle and stated "Clare was almost a conquered by famine..."

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. 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". Seville Morton, who was a contemporary of A.T. at Cambridge 1830-1831, Saville Morton also saw of "the features of a recently retired butchers are each 'eine natar' as Goethe says, and as I write of them to Lady Monteagle and what Papa thinks of them."

(4) Tennyson at Kilkee, 1878

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

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 Princess

Butcher (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, and as I write of them to Lady Monteagle and what Papa thinks of them."

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, visiting Dublin, Wicklow, Westport, Galway, Limerick, Mount Trenchard, Kilkee and Killarney. From Dublin and Wicklow the Tennysons travelled by rail to Westport (Lord Sligo's) and from there to Limerick by "a slow train" via Galway. They were in Limerick on Friday evening, September 14th, stayed at Cruise's Hotel, and on Saturday 15th visited the sights of the city including "a good view of the Shannon and house where Ireton died". 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. From Limerick the three Tennysons travelled to Lord Monteagle's Mount Trenchard house, which the Poet Laureate had visited before (1848). Hallam Tennyson wrote: "We played at lawn-tennis and walked by the Shannon in a storm. Papa read Mand which gave great pleasure, and Eleanor Butcher (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, and as I write of them to Lady Monteagle and what Papa thinks of them".

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

(Limerick Museum)

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

(Limerick Museum)
Having signed the Visitor's Book at Mount Trenchard (and Alfred Tennyson was the first to sign the new Visitors Book there) 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 Butler and her three sisters. They steamed up the Shannon. “At Kilkee”, Hallam wrote, “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 Isleng where the party saw the “ruins of a cottage inhabited by some Bishop or other”. 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.

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...” 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. Graves account is worth quoting in part:

“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. Today they have Alfred Tennyson’...” 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’. 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.”

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.
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.

Tennyson and Graves first talked of the sea "and he spoke notably. He said that a great storm, such as we had witnessed, impatient passion, and he quoted St. "impressed his imagination far more deeply than any tempest he had ever experienced."l03 Kerry visit of 1848.

Tennyson much desired to write an Irish suitable subject. Could I make a suggestion, manuscript form. He promised to send a publication of the work to Tennyson on its outcome. He quoted the imagination."

Joyce's Graves continues: "He went on to say as they were unlooked at. The Poet Laureate, in his notes to "O'Brien, 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 where they were met by Lord Monteagle's party drove in a long car to Kilrush and on the beautiful monument erected in 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, 1859,119 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

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. 1412.


57. Quoted by Graves, *Reminiscence,* 598.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid. 599.


64. Tennyson, Hallam: *Memoir I. 290-1*; quoted also in Ricks, Christopher: *The Poems of Tennyson,* 783.

65. Allingham, *A Diary,* 301.


67. Martin, op. cit, 319


73. L.C., 3 June 1848.


75. Ibid. 120.


77. Ibid. 185, 202.

78. Lionel Tennyson, youngest son of the poet Laureate and Emily Sellwood (cf. Thoraiite, *Ann: Emily Tennyson,* Tennyson's 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 Almonte etc. He was one of the 20 peers who named 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 Sept. 1878.


84. Ibid. 163.


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 Montagle, 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 Montagle, both daughters of the Bishop of Meath and in turn to John George ("J.G.") Butcher, later Lord Danesfort.

88. Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* 3 December 1824.


90. A.T. signed it "A Tennyson Sept. 16th - 78." I am most grateful to Lord Montagle of Brandon for this information.


93. Generally called 'Bishop's Island' to the west of Killkee, off the Dunlockey 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.


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 Mount Altemount Hotel while the Tennysons were visiting there. Cf. Neely, W.G.: *Kilcooley: Land And People In Tipperary,* Belfast University Press, 1983.


97. L.C., 14 Sept. 1878.


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).


105. Quoted by Graves, *Reminiscence,* 600.


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.


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 1877.

111. Lang and Shannon: Letters, III, 163.

112. Ibid.

113. Ibid.

114. Dr. Edward Hyde Kenealy, M.P. for

115. further light on the poet's Irish visits of

116. Since writing the above, three Tenny-

117. sonian items have surfaced which shed

118. letter acquainting the Knight with the

119. Limerick, to his friend and kinsman, the

120. important, is a letter dated 'March 27. 48'

121. Currah Chase, March 27. 48.

122. Dr. Walton, Michael Who's

123. of Parliament,

124. Vol. I (1832-1868) ..., Atlantic

125. Highlands N.J. Union Bros. Ltd... for

126. a short biography of Dr. Kenealy, who was a minor poet.

127. This statement is not as libelous as it first appears, as "The Devil's

128. a hill, 2,379 feet high, near Killarney.

129. Walton, M.B. Adopted son of Rev.

130. Rev. Robert J. Gabbett, Dr. Walton

131. was educated at T.C.D. and was a very

132. Greek and Latin scholar. He d. at

133. Kilkee 1925.


135. Brother of Mrs. William Smith

136. O'Brien and former Vicar of Shanta-

137. golden. Scholar and Artist, he d. at

138. Kilkee, 1891.

139. Tennyson, Hallam: Memorials, I, 190.

140. Blackwoods Magazine (1894) 602.

ADDITIONAL

Since writing the above, three Tenny-

sonian 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

got 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

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 follo-

him by the end of the week. In the mean-

time 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

now abroad 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

due to 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

to pass some days at the little Inn on the Island -

I don't like to move from home just at present

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