

DISCOVERING THE PAST

PRINCE HERMANN VON PÜCKLER-MUSKAU

In 1828 there was great excitement on the streets of Limerick, as news reached the city that a Prince would be coming to visit. The Prince, born Count Hermann Pückler on 30 October 1785, later gained the extravagant name of Prince Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Pückler-Muskau. In 1817 he married Lucie von Pappenheim, the daughter of Prince Karl August von Hardenberg. It was following the death of his father-in-law in 1822 that he acquired the title of Prince. Although they remained friends for years to come, his marriage to Lucie was dissolved in 1826, and by 1828 he was on the search for a wealthy second wife to help fund his follies.

His plan to find his new, and wealthy, wife was to take a grand tour throughout Ireland and England. He arrived in Dublin on 11 August 1828 for his state-wide excursion through Ireland. His second stop was Galway which he found uncivilised, observing how the local people lived saying that it was "comparable to savages". From here he travelled to Limerick and after his few days in Limerick, he moved on to Kerry.

The Prince was an excellent artist in landscape gardening and wrote widely appreciated autobiographical books of his time. These were mostly about his travels in Europe and Northern Africa, which he published under the pen name of "Semilasso".

During his stay he wrote "Limerick is the third city in Ireland, and of the kind of cities I like, old and venerable, adorned with Gothic churches and moss-



covered ruins; with dark narrow streets, and curious houses of various dates; a broad river flowing through its whole length, and crossed by several antique bridges; lastly, a busy market-place, and cheerful environs. Such a city has for me a charm like that of a wood, whose dark branches, now low, now high, afford sylvan streets of various forms, and frequently over-arch the way like a Gothic roof. Modern regular cities are like a trimly cut French garden: they do not suit my romantic taste."

The Prince was not overly impressed by the influence of religion in the city as he wrote "I was not quite well, and returned after a little walk in the town to my inn. I found a sexton of one of the Catholic churches waiting for me; he told me that they had rung the bells as soon as they knew of my arrival, and hoped I would give them ten shillings as a gratuity."

Later in the day he met a member of the Protestant church who attempted to warn him "... against the impositions of the Catholics, who annoy strangers in the most shameless manner, and to beg that your royal highness will not give them anything:—at the same time I take the liberty to ask a small contribution to the Protestant poor-house."

The local newspaper Limerick Evening Post reported on 23 September 1828: "His Highness Prince Puckler Muskua, now on a tour through Ireland, arrived at Moriarty's Hotel, Limerick, on Saturday last." The Moriarty Hotel was located at 7 George Street (O'Connell Street) and owned by Eliza Moriarty. The following day and yesterday, he visited all the public Institutions, and the different places of worship. He also went to see the stone upon which the memorable

Treaty of Limerick had been signed. The Prince is a relative of the Bonaparte family, and a Major-General in the Prussian service. His sentiments are well known to coincide with every principle of freedom."

It was no surprise then that while the Prince visited the Treaty Stone, he was mistaken for the son of Napoleon by some gathered locals, who began to let out a cheer of 'Long life to Napoleon!' In response, the Prince laughed and stated: 'You joke! I am at least ten years too old to be the son of the great emperor and the beautiful princess.'

Limerick Evening Post also reported that "Several Members of the Limerick Independent Club, and of the Order of Liberators" and "Limerick Independent Club, waited on his Highness, yesterday, with a Card, conferring the privileges of an honorary Member of the Club, and also with an invitation to the public dinner to be given on Monday." However, the Prince could not make the dinner as he was on his way to the home of Daniel O'Connell in Kerry.

The Prince was unsuccessful in his endeavour to procure a wife while travelling through England and Ireland, and he returned to mainland Europe where he is remembered through his elaborate gardens, writings, his charismatic presence. In Germany he even has an ice cream named after him.

Article by: Sharon Slater

Image "Hermann Ludwig Heinrich Fürst von Pückler-Muskau" by Auguste Hüssener 1837