

THE KILVERT SOCIETY

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MARCH 1979

Dear Member,

There has been only one event to record since the last newsletter - the service at Bredwardine on the eve of the 99th. anniversary of Kilvert's death, when the priest-in-charge (and member of the Society), the Rev. de la tour Davies, invited the Society to share in an inter-parish service. The beautiful autumn weather, the simple service, the excellent sermon by Rev. D.T.W. Price (his third Kilvert sermon in 1978!) and the sumptuous tea - all made a memorable occasion for the 50 or so members who attended. We are very grateful to Rev. de la tour Davies, to Mr. H. Entwisle (P.C.C. Secretary) and to the ladies of the parish. It was gratifying to see the simple vase of flowers on Kilvert's grave; also to know that in the congregation were our Hereford members, the Misses Evans, nieces of the Esther Hyde mentioned by Rev. D.T.W. Price in his sermon as one of the young Bredwardine children Kilvert thought so highly of.

The Annual General Meeting has been arranged for Friday, April 6th. at 7 p.m. at the Shire Hall, Hereford (last year's venue). Following the business of the evening and refreshments, there will be an illustrated lecture on "Kilvert's Tastes in the Visual Arts", given by our member, Ms. R. Billingham, B.A., M.Phil., who is Senior Lecturer in Art History at the Lanchester Polytechnic, Coventry.

The following day, Saturday, April 7th. there will be a Walk in the Kilvert Country - leaders, Mr. and Mrs. R.I. Morgan. Meeting Place: The Baskerville Arms, Clyro at 11.00 a.m. Those taking part should be dressed suitably for rough walking. Picnic lunch and tea.

For the benefit of new members there follows the calendar of the remainder of this centenary year's commemorative events:-

<u>Sunday, July 1st.</u>	3 p.m. Service at Langley Burrell conducted by the priest-in-charge, Rev. Derek Copeland. The Act of Remembrance will be performed by our member, Rev. D.R. King of Elizabeth, New Jersey, U.S.A.
<u>Sunday, August 19th.</u>	3 p.m. Service at Wootton (Oxfordshire). A Flower Festival at which the centenary of Kilvert's Wedding will be celebrated. The Rector, Rev. J. Biddestone, has invited the Society to participate.
<u>Friday, September 21st.</u>	Kilvert lecture by Sir. V.S. Pritchett at the Town Hall, Hereford.
<u>Saturday, September 22nd.</u>	Walk and Ploughman's lunch at Bredwardine.
<u>Sunday, September 23rd.</u>	11.15 a.m. Service of Holy Communion at Bredwardine.
" "	3.00 p.m. Service at Clyro, conducted by the Vicar, Rev. D.E. Rees. The Act of Remembrance will be performed by our member, Rev. J.N. Rowe of Newchurch-in-Pendle, Lancs.
" "	(evening) "Readings from Kilvert" by H. Colin Davis (of Radio 4) and Timothy Davies at the Bishop's Palace, Hereford.

Full details will appear in the next newsletter, to be issued in early June.

Yours sincerely,

E.J.C. West.

Hon. Secretary.

BOOK REVIEWS:

Victorian Country Parsons, Brenda Colloms. Constable. £6. 50.

Readers of Victorian Country Parsons will probably turn first to the section that deals with Francis Kilvert; and they will find there an orderly account of his career, and an objective, fair-minded and appreciative account of the Diary. There will be few surprises for regular readers of the K.S. Newsletters and publications, for the author has drawn largely on the researches of earlier Kilvert students, particularly those who are members of the Society; but in the other sections of the book they will find a great deal of fascinating information on other nineteenth century divines. In addition to Kilvert the author deals with Octavius Pickard-Cambridge, the naturalist; Patrick Bronte, father of the famous sisters; John Mitford, author; T.T. Lewis, geologist; William Barnes, poet and philologist; Charles Tennyson Turner, poet; Sydney Godolphin Osborne, reformer; R.W. Dixon, poet and historian; S. Baring Gould, author; and William Kingsley and J.W.E. Conybeare, model parsons. Kilvert Society members will be especially interested in her study of William Barnes, whom Kilvert went to meet when he visited Henry Moule in Dorchester; but I hope they will not stop there. All the clergymen whom Brenda Colloms includes were remarkable men. Her book is continuously interesting, and it is very illuminating to see Kilvert set among so many contemporaries or near-contemporaries. He was almost certainly the least recognised and most obscure of all the clergymen studied here; but the virtues of his Diary will probably ensure a living interest in him when the achievements of others who were acclaimed in their lifetime are forgotten. We must be very grateful to Brenda Colloms for rescuing these fascinating men from comparative obscurity, and making available the stories of their lives and achievements in so readable a form. I hope that she will be sufficiently encouraged to put together a second volume. Candidates for inclusion might be the Rev. R.L. Bevan of Hay Castle, the great educationalist; the Rev. H. Moule whose pioneer studies in urban sanitation should not be forgotten; and maybe the Solitary of Llanbedr himself.

After Kilvert. L. Le Quesne. Oxford. £5. 95.

Mr. Le Quesne first read Kilvert's Diary in Australia (he bought his first copy of the one-volume edition in Adelaide), and, on his return to England, was prompted as so many readers of Kilvert are, to see for himself the countryside that inspired the diarist. He was just in time to travel on those little railways that Kilvert knew, and he was even more fortunate to be able to purchase Ashbrook and live there for several years. Like Kilvert he kept a diary of his Clyro years, and it was out of a comparison with his experiences in 1970 and Kilvert's in 1870 that this book arose.

Readers must not expect a comprehensive study of the Diary. It is largely the Clyro years that Mr. Le Quesne is concerned with, and there is only a casual mention of what we might call Kilvert's Other Country, and his Wiltshire friends and acquaintances. Nor must they expect to find a systematic study of Kilvert's life and achievement. This is not part of Mr. Le Quesne's intention, and no one can find fault with him for not doing what he never promised to do. What he does do is throw, by an illuminating comparison of two views of Clyro, as seen through the eyes of two men of similar social standing and upbringing, a great deal of light on the essential quality of Kilvert's response to Radnorshire; and in the course of this examination he reveals great insight into the peculiar excellence of Kilvert as a diarist. Here are a few of his illuminating and perceptive comments.

"Actually it is the obscurity of the man that gives the Diary much of its appeal. The diary of a public man, of any man who has a reputation for something other than the diary itself, gives you only a new look into a past already public.... Kilvert's Diary has the rare quality of opening a window on a past otherwise totally unknown, a past that everybody would have assumed to be gone and forgotten beyond recall".

"The Diary conveys the impression of the past recovered only because it was written by a man who saw it more intensely than those around him, and whose skill at translating that vision into words has not often been equalled in English".

"Kilvert had extraordinary luck; what he was given to describe was a wholly rural England which had been gardened to the pitch of visual perfection at the very moment before the wave of modern industrialism crashed down over it and left it strewn with bricks, cars, overhead wires, concrete blocks and old prams".

"There was a visionary in Kilvert somewhere; the touch ... is something between Samuel Palmer and Stanley Spencer, and I think this capacity is the most truly original thing we are ever allowed to see in Kilvert".

Mr. Le Quesne slips occasionally. Miss Beynon belongs to Under Milk Wood. The lady who lived at Pentwyn was Miss Bynon. When he says there was no harmonium in Clyro Church he is overlooking the reference in Vol. 2. p. 27. There is no need to guess that the Kilvert family went to the 1851 Exhibition. Kilvert's sister, Emily, describes their visit there in her Rambling Recollections. When he says there were no novels of social protest between 1850 and 1900 he is overlooking Hard Times (1854), North and South (1855) and others.

But the book must be considered as a personal reaction rather than an academic biographical or critical study, the response of a sensitive observer who found himself in a unique position to evaluate the excellence of the Diary. I found it full of illuminating insights, a personal, warm-hearted and sincere tribute which it was a pleasure to read.

Frederick Grice.

THE RIVER WYE by Keith Kissack, published by Terence Dalton at £4. 95.

Mr. Kissack, a member of the Kilvert Society, traces the course of the Wye from its source to its mouth. He informs and comments on the towns, villages, churches and other buildings on its banks, and the people, activities and industries associated with them. He is particularly interesting on the churches (many of them known to Kilvert, or associated with people mentioned in the diary) and has a lively and appreciative eye for epitaphs. For human frailties and follies too; I enjoyed particularly reading of the eccentric Dr. Orville Owen who in 1911 dredged the river for proof that Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays! Not only the past (in Mr. Kissack's obviously wide knowledge of history) but also the present is surveyed, for in a series of fascinating appendices he writes of canoeing, salmon and cider. And always his style is fresh, and enlivened with wit, now subtle, now sharp.

Society members will find full reference to Kilvert, upon whose diary Mr. Kissack draws to illustrate or to emphasise a point. We know that Kilvert knew the river down as far as Hereford and that he visited Tintern and Chepstow; his railway journeys to Wiltshire must have taken him through Ross, and the railway from Hereford not only crossed the river four times but also ran alongside it for some considerable distances. Surely then, if there is a "Kilvert river" it must be the Wye!

The lay-out of the book and the many photographs are a delight to the eye. Quite half of the photographs have Kilvertian echoes, from Disserth (scene of the "Mr. Noe" sermon) to Broad Street, Hereford, where the traffic may be incongruous but the buildings are of his time; and from the Moccas Oaks to Chepstow.

All in all, a delightful book to possess. I warmly recommend it to members.

E.J.C.W.

PUBLICATIONS NOTICES:

AFTER KILVERT by A.L. Le Quesne. Copies are now available from the Publications Department, price £5. 95. plus 55 pence postage (= £6. 50) per copy. A Review by the Deputy President appears elsewhere in this Newsletter.

OVERSEAS MEMBERS. As will be noted from the current (October, 1978) List of Publications it will be appreciated if overseas members will pay for publications in Sterling, thus obviating complications due to currency fluctuations and conversion. Where this is not possible will members please add the equivalent of £1. 00 Sterling to their remittances to cover the cost of conversion, which amount is currently the minimum charged by the Society's bankers.

R.I. Morgan, Publications Department, "Heulwen", Castle Gardens, Hay-on-Wye, Powys, via Hereford.

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KILVERT'S VISIT TO DULWICH:

In the summer of 1876, Kilvert visited Dulwich College picture gallery, and recorded impressions of some of his favourite paintings in the entry for Saturday, 24th. June, (Vol. III p. 335 in the first edition of the Diary). The works he described are all at Dulwich today, and most of them are on view to the general public.

A substantial part of the Dulwich collection was already assembled when he visited the gallery; the present building had been erected to house it in 1814, and it is likely that his visit was a fairly similar experience to ours today. The Dulwich entry is, for this reason, a useful starting point for a study of Kilvert's interest in painting, which is shown at a number of points in the Diary, most notably when he visited the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition each year from 1872 to 1875, and the Winter Exhibitions in 1870 and 1872. His tastes were catholic, and reflect an interest in

the Old Masters, and in the art of his own time.

His choice of paintings at Dulwich reveals something of his personality and complements a number of impressions suggested by other passages in his Diary. The first work he described was "Rembrandt's IMMORTAL SERVANT GIRL" now catalogued as 'A GIRL AT A WINDOW' (163) and painted in 1645. According to Kilvert, she:

still leaned on her round white arms a-smiling from the window as she leaned and smiled for three hundred years since that summer's day when her master drew her portrait and made her immortal, imperishable and ever young.

Kilvert reacted to paintings of young girls both as a man and as an artist. He could enjoy a work that reminded him of someone he knew (see the entry for 27th. June, 1874, where he wrote that THE PICTURE OF HEALTH by Millais reminded him of Georgie Gale) and he could admire representations of Innocence in a sentimental way, such as that by Le Jeune in the same exhibition. Yet he was aware that the greatness of Rembrandt's portrait of youthful innocence lay in the timelessness of the representation. At the same time he made no mention of the fine portrait of Rembrandt's son Titus in the same collection.

Another representation of womanhood which Kilvert admired at Dulwich was "the Oriental-looking Spanish flower girl" who "still offered her flowers for sale". This is now catalogued as THE FLOWER GIRL (199) and is a fine example of Murillo's work. Though it could be expected to appeal to a taste for the slightly sweet, it is neither cloying nor weak as are some of the lesser examples of the seventeenth century Spanish artist's work.

Kilvert evidently admired Murillo. He described that artist's "GOOD SHEPHERD" which he saw in the 1870 Winter Exhibition of Old Masters at the Royal Academy as 'one of the finest pictures, and the one which struck me most' in an exhibition that had contained six Rembrandts. He rhapsodised thus:

No words can do justice to, or convey an adequate impression of this extraordinary picture. Nothing short of inspiration could have enabled this painter to conceive and execute that face and its gentle tender almost mournful beauty.

(Vol. 1. p. 60).

It is not surprising that Kilvert mentioned the Spanish boys who "still laughed audibly and went on with their game". This is another painting by Murillo. "TWO SPANISH PEASANT BOYS", and, to be precise, only one of the peasant boys is laughing, the other is chewing a hunk of bread. The bats and balls belonging to their game are shown in the foreground, and the boy's smile, and the moment of arrested movement is finely caught. Though the rags of the smiling boy are rather picturesque, the boys are fairly convincing peasants rather than obvious studio models.

The Diarist also enjoyed the work of the 17th. Century Dutch Painter, Albert Cuyp. Today there are ten paintings by this artist at Dulwich, and it seems likely that Kilvert wrote a composite description when he mentioned "Albert Cuyp's cows grouped on a knoll at sunset stood or lay about (sic) in the evening glow chewing the cud and looking placidly over the wide level pastures of Holland". The one painting which most nearly accords with this description is "VIEW ON A PLAIN" (4).

These are countrymen's paintings with which Kilvert would naturally be in tune. The seventeenth century Dutch painters had been re-discovered in the nineteenth century by English painters, especially John Constable, and were a formative influence on English Romanticism. Cuyp is an uncomplicated painter of domestic animals, similar in subject matter to the works of his compatriot, Paulus Potter.

Naturally the Rev. Kilvert noticed two works in the collection which were religious in inspiration; one was the "ST. SEBASTIAN" (268) a copy of a work by the Italian Baroque painter Guido Reni, and the other was "JACOB'S DREAM" (126) by Aert de Gelder, a follower of Rembrandt. Both paintings are composed in strong contrasts of light and dark in a style which came originally from Carravaggio and his circle. The reason Kilvert noted "JACOB'S DREAM" is not obvious; he made no comment except to describe "the strange solitary white angel" but the Reni painting has affinities with other works Kilvert liked. The young face of St. Sebastian is slightly effeminate, with large soulful eyes, but like the Murillo "FLOWER GIRL", the work is saved from sentimentality by the sheer quality of the painting, and the fine modelling of arms and shoulders. Kilvert commented that "St. Sebastian still raised his eyes to heaven with the sublime pathetic look of tender submission and gentle resignation"- qualities which might then more usually have been admired in young women.

Kilvert showed a cultivated taste in painting, though his reactions were primarily emotional, and much influenced by the subject matter. In this he was typical of his time. Formal analysis in art criticism is essentially a twentieth century phenomenon, and is an approach used mainly by professionals. Kilvert viewed painting as an educated Victorian amateur and it is this very fact that makes his comments interesting.

FANNY KILVERT - THE SISTER IN THE BACKGROUND:

Emily Wyndowe's "Rambling Reminiscences" and Dora Pitcairn's "Honeymoon Diary" reveal something of the character and experience of two of Kilvert's sisters; the late Secretary of the Kilvert Society, Oswin Prosser, himself knew Thersie Smith and her children and actually was given a pocket compass by her; but Kilvert's fourth sister, Frances Henrietta ("Fanny") remains relatively obscure. All Frederick Grice's Who's Who in Kilvert's Diary reports is that Fanny was born in 1846, did not marry, and joined the Clewer Sisters.

A study of Kilvert's Diary shows Fanny to have been the musician in the family. She played at both services at Clyro on Sunday, September 10th. 1871, and first introduced the sounds of a harmonium to St. Peter's, Langley Burrell.

No recluse, she seems to have enjoyed social intercourse, for Kilvert mentions dining out often in her company.

Fanny was a homebody, however. When Kilvert, his mother, his sister Dora, and two nieces, visited Weston-super-Mare in September, 1872, Fanny stayed at home with her father; and it was Dora, not Fanny, who moved to Bredwardine when Kilvert became Vicar there, to keep house for her brother. Emily Wyndowe declared that as a child "Fanny was the general warming pan of our establishment". While this probably means only that she enjoyed sleeping in different beds in the house, it suggests also Fanny's delight in her family home.

Commendably, Fanny took much interest in the local church. Kilvert credits her with achieving the installation of a stove into the Langley Burrell church, and he pays her this tribute: "Fanny has been very brave, enterprising and persevering in the interests of the congregation".

After her mother's death on July 4th. 1889, Fanny entered the Community of St. John Baptist as a postulant. How long, one wonders, had she contemplated becoming a nun? It would be interesting to discover how Fanny arrived at a view of the cloister so different from that of her brother.

The present Sister Secretary of the Community at Clewer reports that Fanny was clothed as a novice on February 1st. 1892, and professed, as "Sister Frances Harriet", on April 23rd. 1894, at the age of 48. She survived her brother Francis by fifty years, for she died aged 83 on October 4th. 1929. She is buried in the Convent Garth at Clewer. Probably no photograph of her as a nun was ever taken, since this was discouraged at the time.

When first professed Fanny worked in the district around Clewer. Then about 1898 she served All Hallows' Mission in London's East End. She was at St. Mary's, Westminster, from 1900 to 1909. Thence she went to work at the Devon House of Mercy, Bovey Tracey, in Devonshire. She worked at St. Andrew's Hospital, Clewer from 1924 to 1926, and finally was admitted to the Sisters' Infirmary in September, 1926, where she died two years later. Not surprisingly, in view of her musical talents, Fanny was a Choir Sister; as such, her work may have been in a supervisory capacity in the various places she served.

Rev. D.R. King.

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THE ONLY SON OF LOUISA MARY DAWSON (NÉE BEVAN):

Frederick Grice, in the Kilvert Society Newsletter of June 1978, reveals that Louisa Mary, daughter of the Reverend William Latham Bevan, Vicar of Hay-on-Wye from 1845 to 1901, was married in 1888 to Lt. Colonel H.P. Dawson, R.A., of Harlington Hall, Burnsall, near Skipton. Their son Christopher Henry was born on October 12th. 1889, dying in 1970 in his 81st. year.

One interesting fact is that Christopher was born, not in his Father's Yorkshire, but at Hay Castle. For most of the published biographical facts about Christopher Dawson, we are dependent upon his life-long friend and fellow-author, Edward Ingram Watkin. Both Watkin and Dawson were, at the same time, pupils of the Rector of Bletsoe, in Bedfordshire, in 1905, and it was Watkin who celebrated his friend in the columns of The Tablet on his 80th birthday in 1969, a span of friendship stretching over 64 years.

Maisie Ward, who induced both Dawson and Watkin to write for a volume she edited in 1933 called THE ENGLISH WAY - a volume dedicated to English sanctity across the centuries - tells us that Christopher spent a childhood of happy solicitude between the Welsh border country, the Cobbett south and the Yorkshire moors, and that he learnt mysticism, philosophy and classics from his Father, and poetry from his Mother, Louisa Mary. At Oxford, Dawson was received into the Roman Catholic Church on January 6th. 1914, but all his life he belonged, Watkin reminds us, to "that pre-eminently gracious and cultured tradition of the Anglican country gentleman", a tradition well understood by the Bevans and Kilverts. Professor David Knowles, after Dawson's death, wrote of Christopher's "vast learning and faultless scholarship", and this can be seen in

every historical work he wrote. These works created a stir in the 1930's and 40's, both inside and outside the Roman Church - Dean Inge of St. Paul's was very enthusiastic about them - and less unpolemical works on Christian Culture are hard to imagine. They must have given pleasure to the author's uncle, the first Bishop of Brecon.

Dawson's Englishness, inherited from both his Skipton and Hay-on-Wye forebears, runs through all his books. In The English Way he chose the 14th. century poet, William Langland, to illustrate English piety. In a sense, what Dawson was demonstrating in all his historical works on the world's cultures was an extension of what he learnt in his childhood on the border of Wales and in Yorkshire. From his Mother and Father, he learnt that it is religion which is at the very centre of the English, rural way of life. In his books, he demonstrated that it is religion which has always been at the very centre of all the different world cultures, be they Hindu, Muslim, Taoist or Christian; and that it is the lack of this central religious norm in today's world that is the cause of all our troubles, national and international. In Enquiries, Christopher Dawson wrote: "The English culture and the social discipline that went with it were not a civilisation imposed from above, but grew up from below out of the very soil of England.... We must recognise that our national culture is our greatest asset and that the true foundations of society are to be found neither in commerce nor in financial and industrial mechanism, but in nature". Many would have difficulties with these words today, but there is little doubt that they would have been well understood and welcomed by Dawson's grandfather, the Vicar of Hay-on-Wye, and by the Vicar's friend the diarist, the Reverend Francis Kilvert.

References: Commonweal, Vol. 18, 607-609; Catholic World, May, 1949; Tablet, 1969, 975; 1970, 558; God and the Supernatural, Longmans, 1920, reprinted Sheed and Ward, 1952; The Relation between Religion and Culture, Daniel A. O'Connor, Montreal, 1952; Enquiries, Sheed and Ward, 1934.

M. Doughty

KILVERT THE NUDIST:

The discovery that one's idol, after all, may have feet of clay is always rather disconcerting. There must be many amongst Francis Kilvert's admirers who will scarcely admit of any criticism of their beloved hero. Is it permissible, for example, to suggest that Francis may have been a bit of a social climber? And are there not some critics who have ventured to suggest that Kilvert's interest in little girls may not have been quite so innocent as appears at first sight?

To Kilvert's fanatical admirers, his naked adventures by the seaside may appear little more than harmless eccentricity. Nevertheless the entries in the diary make it plain that Francis thoroughly enjoyed swimming in the sea with nothing on; and in this respect there is plenty of evidence to show, indeed, that he was a child of his time. (And it's possible that, without meaning it, he was something of a pioneer amongst nudists!).

The evolution of the swimsuit provides a feast of entertaining sidelights on the social history of the last two centuries. Our remoter ancestors, it seems, were not exactly enthusiastic about bathing - in the sea or anywhere else for that matter. But there is no doubt that when they bathed at all, they bathed nude. Late in the eighteenth century the sea began to be popular, principally for medicinal reasons; you were supposed, after bathing in it, to drink it. And the seal of Royal approval clinched the matter. The future of the English seaside resort was assured after George the Third descended naked into the waves at Weymouth to the accompaniment of a military band. In the next century, long before swimming trunks were ever thought of, men bathed openly naked at Brighton, Scarborough, Margate and other rising watering-places; and nobody thought anything of it. A few daring ladies were tempted to follow their excellent example; but a free strip-tease show on the beach was too good to miss, as Setterington's famous cartoon of Scarborough shows - a group of obviously dirty-old-men on the promenade, gazing rapturously through telescopes at some portly ladies disporting themselves nude on the edge of the waves. Subsequently the bathing-machine came to the rescue of outraged modesty; and early-Victorian ladies descended delicately into the briny, shielded from prying eyes by vast folding hoods attached to the doorways of their machines - and, of course, by the attentions of these formidable creatures, elderly bathing-women. Even these concessions to modesty didn't suffice for Victorian prudery: hence the invention of the "bathing costume" - in its earliest form a shapeless confection of dark-blue serge covering the wearer practically from top to toe. (These things must have been hideously uncomfortable, and at times dangerous - but it is on record that some intrepid ladies actually succeeded in swimming in them).

For their part, men continued to bathe nude until they, too, were overwhelmed by insistence on modesty at all costs. The "bathing-slip" seems to have arrived from France about the middle of the nineteenth century by way of a curious garment called a "caleçon". But (as is evident from the Diary) bathing suits for men didn't come into general use until much later: the bathing-slip being then superseded by the so-called "University" costume - an extraordinarily ugly waspish affair in horizontal stripes which effectively covered the male torso from shoulder to knee. (The writer can just recall, from his early childhood, the surprising spectacle of his father on the beach, wearing one of these remarkable creations).

All this, however, was long after Kilvert. The first entry in which Francis records his bathing adventures was for 4th. September 1872, at Weston-super-Mare. He writes:

"Bathing in the morning before breakfast from a machine. Many people were openly stripping on the sands a little further on and running down into the sea and I would have done the same but I had brought down no towels of my own".

However, next day Kilvert joins in the fun:

"I was out early before breakfast this morning bathing from the sands. There was a delicious feeling of freedom in stripping in the open air and running down naked to the sea where the waves were curling white with foam and the red morning sunshine glowing upon the naked limbs of the bathers".

An idyllic picture! Only to be followed - a few days later - by the famous account of that appalling sea voyage to Ilfracombe, during which nearly everybody except the diarist was violently sick. Ilfracombe itself, however, seems to have made ample amends:

"In a little shingly cove at the foot of the huge grey cliff stood some tiny bathing machines. Some men were bathing, plunging from a spring diving-board in full view of the steamboat and one man swam round our vessel looking for all the world like a frog as he swam naked close beneath the stern in the clear blue water".

That ladies were expected not to be shocked by the sight of full-frontal male nudity is evident from the remarkable entry for 24th. July, 1873, while Kilvert was staying at Seaton:

"... while Dora was sitting on the beach I had a bathe. A boy brought me to the machine door two towels as I thought, but when I came out of the water and began to use them I found that one of the rags he had given me was a pair of very short red and white striped drawers to cover my nakedness. Unaccustomed to such things and customs I had in my ignorance bathed naked and set at naught the conventionalities of the place and scandalised the beach. However some little boys who were looking on at the rude naked man appeared to be much interested in the spectacle, and the young ladies who were strolling near seemed to have no objection".

This entry in the diary raises some significant points. For one thing, mid-Victorian ladies must have been surprisingly tolerant of male nudity. Had the incident occurred some fifty years later, the ladies of Seaton would almost certainly have reported Kilvert's behaviour to the police with a view to a prosecution for indecent exposure. Clearly, to Kilvert "bathing-drawers" were something of an innovation; he was accustomed to bathing naked and could not have known that at a sophisticated resort such as Seaton swimmers in the sea were expected to cover their genitalia. And there's a refreshing absence of shame about Kilvert's reactions to his discovery. Obviously the conventional sensation of guilt about being seen unclothed is lacking. Francis, evidently, had few inhibitions!

Next year the diarist visited the Isle of Wight, and the entry for 12th. June 1874 is even more explicit:

"Bathing yesterday and today the bay was full of white horses. At Shanklin one has to adopt the detestable practice of bathing in drawers. If ladies don't like to see men naked, why don't they keep away from the sight?. Today I had a pair of drawers given me which I could not keep on. The rough waves stripped them off and tore them down round my ankles. While thus fettered I was seized and flung down by a heavy sea which retreating suddenly left me lying naked on the sharp shingle from which I rose streaming with blood. After this I took the wretched and dangerous rag off and of course there were some ladies looking on as I came up out of the water".

While it is difficult to believe that the "rag" can have contributed materially to Kilvert's injuries, at the same time one can't but sympathise with poor Francis in his sad plight. To be flung, stark naked, on a pile of cruel shingle by a gigantic wave must have been an unnerving experience!

The last passage in the Diary to which reference must be made is the entry for 13th. July 1875; and this is a passage, with its blatantly erotic overtones, which is most likely to embarrass Kilvert's most un-critical fans. Actually, on this occasion Kilvert didn't bathe himself. Instead, with avid curiosity, he watched the antics of a group of naked children on a beach near Shanklin from the cliff above; and his

lush description of the physical charms of one of the girls leaves little doubt about the nature of his reactions.

Nevertheless the passage doesn't throw a great deal of fresh light on the social customs of the mid-Victorian seaside, except, perhaps, to underline the fact that boys and girls of that era habitually bathed naked - as indeed they continued to do for decades to come; and for no better reason than their parents almost certainly couldn't afford to buy them costumes. Truly, swimming-trunks and bikinis are amongst the hall-marks of an affluent society!

Obviously Kilvert got a great deal of fun out of his nudist activities. His unabashed zest for life, after all, is perhaps his most endearing characteristic. Kilvert enjoyed everything - the sea, mountains, gardens, flowers, trees, churches, children, girls - of all ages. To his bathing he brought this naive capacity for innocent enjoyment. And Kilvert was no prude. He had no irrational feelings of guilt about being seen naked. He was quite uninhibited about his body. He looked upon "bathing drawers" with singular distaste, regarding them as ridiculous and stupid garments - as indeed they are. To dress up in order to get wet, to Kilvert, was the height of absurdity; and who are we to argue that he was wrong?

Equally it is possible to argue that Kilvert, and those who shared his views about bathing, were unwitting pioneers, born before their time. Are there not signs that the wheel may be coming full circle? It's easy enough to laugh at Kilvert's naive enthusiasm for nudity. The fact remains that of recent years a growing number of sober English citizens - the writer and his wife amongst them - have discovered for themselves the joys of swimming in the sea naked. They have learned, as Francis learned, that naked bathing is a harmless, healthy and rewarding pastime. Like Kilvert, they understand the need to be discreet - so as not to offend those who may not be like-minded. It would be a bold man today who would venture to repeat Kilvert's feat of swimming naked off the beaches of Seaton and Weston-super-Mare at the height of the summer season. Yet, for a decade or more, on an unfrequented beach near Blackgang on the Isle of Wight - not so very far distant from Shanklin - it has become the custom for numerous men and women, of all ages, shapes and sizes, to bathe and sunbathe entirely naked, without any interference from anybody. How Kilvert would have loved it! And how amazed and delighted he would have been to find the ladies joining in the fun!

N. T.

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THE LATE H.J. MASSINGHAM:

Many members will be familiar with the work of the late H.J. Massingham, distinguished author and journalist, who died in 1971, through his book: The Southern Marches, which contains a long and excellent chapter entitled: "Kilvert of Clyro".

The Southern Marches was published in 1952, but it was not, I now find, the first of Massingham's books to contain an appreciation of Francis Kilvert. Recently I came across another of his books called An Englishman's Year, described in the dust-jacket blurb as "... a journal of Mr. Massingham's impressions, agricultural, horticultural, social and political ... of the year October, 1946, to September, 1947 ... " The book itself was published in 1948.

These impressions were gathered from a wide area of Britain and Ireland, one of the places he visited being the Black Mountains and the countryside thereabout. He had obviously already read the Diary and knew a good deal about Kilvert before this visit, since in connection with it he says: "My ostensible reason for making a brief stay in Brecknockshire was to see for myself the extent of the hill farmers' losses last winter and to pay my homage to Henry Vaughan at Brecon and my devoirs to Francis Kilvert at Clyro". He then continues:

The little afons and the great rivers pour out their inexhaustable waters and the Black Mountains are strong arms to keep watch and ward over the treasure of the green valleys.

Of these spacious valleys Kilvert may be taken as the incarnate spirit. His rich sensuous quivering receptivity was wholly at home in them, and his response to them poured out of his taut being as the afons tumbling, bubbling and gleaming down the mountain sides. But this was not all of Kilvert. He possessed as well a mountain ardour to which his sensibility was attuned like the deep-toned Welsh harp he was amongst the last to hear. Threaded into this lavish, sometimes excessive fruitfulness of feeling and facility of expression occur passages not only of Biblical fervour and faith but of Biblical phraseology. This was the mountain strain in him.

Sometimes Kilvert's prose gushed like a Tennysonian brook in a Victorian garden rather than caught the measure of his own mountain streams. The rosy-cheeked Lauras of local society had a sensuous appeal for him which hints at

Victorian repressions. But his fellows in the spirit were the seventeenth century, not the nineteenth century divines. Like Traherne, he exulted in the natural creation and like Herrick, he was in love with the pagan thanksgivings and festivals of the fields. He hungered for the "primitive piety" that Herbert possessed and for the poor of his parish had something of Herbert's charity. His lyrical fervour brought new life, brief as his own, to the cultural tradition of the seventeenth century in which piety and poetry were sisters. Like Hawker of Morwenstow and William Barnes of Came, he looked back to a golden age, not forward to an evolutionary paradise. Kilvert was a complex being: the pagan and the Christian, the Baroque and the Victorian, were queerly blended in him. Where he differed fundamentally from his own age was in closing the division between the sacred and the secular and rejoicing in the natural world as the shadow of the eternal. Herein he resembled his fellow-poet of Brecon, Henry Vaughan:-

"And in these weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity".

His Diaries, discovered and introduced by William Plomer, have chiefly interested modern readers because they "paint a unique picture of country life in mid-Victorian times". The gay, free and animated society he depicts was something so delightfully emancipated from the Barretts of Wimpole Street style that Kilvert's Diaries have enjoyed a success of surprise as well as of esteem. But his laughing and romping girls, merry parties, charming excursions, social buoyancy, are not so surprising as they appear to be. His rural environment in Radnorshire, Herefordshire and Wiltshire was sufficiently remote from the chill of Victorian plutocracy and Calvinism to be itself and to continue into an age that was destroying regional vitality. The social significance of the Diaries is that they distil and enshrine the regional life. This was the magnet that drew me to Clyro and Bredwardine.

I wonder if any other town in Britain is watered, as Brecon is, by three rivers and garnished with such magnificent timber at its eastern end. All along the Hay road, past Talgarth and the Three Cocks Inn and over the Wye at Glasbury, the dual mountain and the valley strains in Kilvert were reflected in the richness of the trees and the rhythm of the waters against the sublime face of the Brecon Beacons. Where else did Kilvert get his alertness to the impact of primeval light upon mist and cloud and the atmospherics of earth but from the Black Mountains? The changing shapes and transfusion of light upon the Beacons seemed the very source on that bright day in June of the lyric genius. A greater than Kilvert felt the same inspiration, Henry Vaughan.

I saw Clyro on just such a day as Kilvert described in the July of 1871:-

"There was not a person on the roads or moving anywhere. The only living creature I saw was a dog. An intense feeling and perception of the extraordinary beauty of the place grew upon me in the silence as I passed through the still sunny churchyard and saw the mountains through the trees rising over the school, and looked back at the church and the churchyard through the green arches of the wych elms".

"Every part of Clyro", he wrote in 1874, "is classical and sacred and has its story", "the beloved place", fringed by "the beautiful woods and the hanging orchards and the green slopes of Penllan and the white farms and cottages dotted over the hills". I saw no living creatures but the house-martins gathering mud for their nests and a Blackface lamb rescued from the winter and feeding on the tiny lawn of Kilvert's substantial house between the Baskerville Arms and the wooded Castle Clump. A tiny afon brawls under the arched bridge beside the lawn. But the straggling stone village itself is England in miniature set like a cool moonstone within the clasp of Wales. In spite of his nervous tensions and moods of black introspection, Kilvert was richly endowed with the heart that rejoices, and his prodigal happiness at Clyro was that of a man rooted in the royal bounty of the Valley of the Wye.

On the way to Bredwardine from Hay, whose September fair and the decoration of the church to grace it Kilvert described with an exuberance proper to this gifted countryside, the traveller skirts the head of the Golden Valley, "with the white houses of Dorstone scattered about the green hillside 'like a handful of pearls in a cup of emerald'". He moves along a shelf between the Wye below, now a broad pastoral stream sauntering the Herefordshire plain, after its Mercutio-like passage from the mountains, and the beautiful wooded arc of Merbach Hill above. The farm-buildings here are stone-slatted, including a fine "tallat" or open-sided barn, and this stone-roofing occurs both in Brecknockshire and

Radnorshire, though sparsely like the solitary white Georgian houses of the open or wooded hill and mountain-flank between Brecon and Symonds Yat.

The churchyard of Bredwardine and the early Norman church beside it stood on the apex of a conical hillock, itself high above the Wye. An avenue of cherries leads into it and it is surrounded by three circles - of hanging woods for the outer one, of orchards that form the skirts of the mount and within of wide-spreading trees. Near the blocked-up western door of the plain little church, topped with a lintel carved with strange beasts and devices, and between the outstretched boughs of a towering beech and sycamore, rests the bright spirit who wrote, a year before his death, "May I be prepared to enter into the everlasting Spring and to walk among the birds and flowers of Paradise!" In this green citadel of peace he may be said to have been half-way there.

His gravestone in the long grass is an ugly white cross on which he may also be said to have made his own comment:-

"There is something much more congenial to my mind in the old Catholic associations than in the bald ugly hideous accompaniments which too often mark the place of Protestant or rather Puritan burial. The Puritans of the last century seemed to have tried to make the idea and place and association of death as gloomy, hideous and repulsive as possible, and they have most signally succeeded".

But the white sorcery of this churchyard, crowned in its triple garland of wooded hills, orchards and sentinel trees, charms away even the blot of his own tombstone. He himself felt the near heavenliness of this green sanctuary, for he wrote of its graves:-

"As they stood up all looking one way and facing the morning sun, they looked like a crowd of men, and it seemed as if the morning of the Resurrection had come and the sleepers had risen from their graves and were standing upon their feet silent and solemn, and looking towards the East to meet the Rising of the Sun. The whole air was melodious with the distant indefinite sound of the sweet bells that seemed to be ringing from every quarter by turns, now from the hill, now from the valley, now from the deer forest, now from the river. The chimes rose and fell, swelled and grew faint again".

The sentiment is Victorian, but the churchyard of Bredwardine distils its sediment into pure essence. A few hundred yards away, Kilvert's white vicarage with its little rounded gables looks down upon the Wye and the bridge of brick across it. Opposite is the village of Staunton-on-Wye, an old man of which told him as another told Thomas Hardy at much the same period, that he had seen on Christmas Eve, "the oxen kneeling and moaning, the tears running down their faces".

Anyone familiar with Massingham's many books will not be too surprised that he made so much of Kilvert and his Diary, for he passionately worshipped the countryside and nature and abhorred industrialism and technology, even to the extent of creating a sort of "back to Ruralism" hobby-horse, which he tended to mount rather too frequently without explaining just how the clock could be put back a century or two. Nevertheless he was a writer of formidable erudition, with a more than usually scholarly style for our generation, who made a useful and welcome contribution to the literature of our times; and we should be grateful that he has given us, in The Southern Marches and in An Englishman's Year, an appreciation of Kilvert as good as any that has so far appeared.

R.I. Morgan, Hay-on-Wye.

T. PERCIVAL SMITH:

I have long been interested in this nephew of Francis Kilvert, the one to whom the diarist's widow left the notebooks and the man who "set everything in motion" by sending them to Messrs. Jonathan Cape and thence to William Plomer. On my retirement I decided I would investigate him, and though I have not got far, I feel that what I have found may be of interest to members. I am very much indebted to Percival's great niece, Mrs. Hooper, and to another member of the Society, Mrs. P. Murray of Dorset, for the valuable and profitable leads they have given me.

I have not ascertained Percival's date of birth, but the diary entry for April 14th. 1875 would suggest he was born in that year at Monnington. Mrs. Hooper informed me that he died in 1952, and a search in Somerset House gave me his last place of residence at a small village in Dorset. I wrote to Mrs. Murray whose address was in the neighbourhood, she most kindly wrote a letter to the local newspaper and received an answer from

Rectory Monnington 826, Rev. William Roberts Smith (Cave - Hoyle)
The Rectory. MA of Pembroke College Oxford
- 11 - instituted 1879 Nov 11 1913.

a Mrs. Hyslop who had bought Percival's house after his death. Mrs. Hyslop told Mrs. Murray that she and her husband were so impressed with its character - "Mr. Smith had left his mark upon the place" - that she wrote to Mrs. Essex Hope, Percival's surviving sister, and received from her the following letter (which Mrs. Hyslop has most kindly allowed me to reproduce here):-

"Dear Mrs. Hyslop,

Thank you for what you say about my brother, and that you would like to hear something of him and his life.

When he left Cambridge he took Holy Orders, and held 3 curacies, but in the meantime his views had so greatly changed that he felt he could no longer remain in the Church. His bishop was very much against his giving up, and tried to persuade him otherwise, but arguments were of no avail - he felt he could not conscientiously remain a parson. Later he became a tutor and was very successful coaching boys for the University. His pupils and their parents kept in touch with him for years. One of his pupils wrote later - 'I owe more than I can say to Mr. Smith and his moral influence'.

My father, who was Principal of Sydney College, Bath (now a museum) until his health broke down and he was obliged to take a country living, was a very good shot and fisherman, and both my brothers took after him - Percival especially being an expert shot and fly-fisherman. Until my father's death in 1889 we lived at Monnington-on-Wye in Herefordshire, right in the country.

Percival rowed for his College at Cambridge, and was also a good cricketer and lawn tennis player. He was a remarkably clever carver, using very few tools. I wish I had something he carved to send you, but before I gave up my house I had to give them all away. One large carving I gave, at his death, to Mrs. Padfield when she was landlady at the Green Man.

Have I written too much? I hope not, but it is a great comfort to know that someone cares to know about him. I am the last of my family (83) and have outlived all my old friends, and there is no-one now with whom I can talk about the past. Your letter was a very great pleasure to me".

With the valuable information in this letter I consulted Crockford and found that Percival was ordained priest at Winchester (1902), was curate of Michaeldever (Hants) 1901-4, of Cuckfield (Sussex) 1904-8, and of Abbeydore 1908-10. This last post interested me very much for Abbeydore lies in the same quarter of Herefordshire as Bredwardine (and members who do not know its beautiful church should not miss the opportunity of a visit). Could it be that he came there to try to restore his faith, in the county where his father and uncle maintained theirs? A later edition of Crockford (1914) gave merely the words "Marden (Kent)" as his address. Recommended to go to Bromley Public Library, I made a flying visit there while staying in London last autumn, but without success. I consulted Somerset House again, looking up his mother Thermuthis Valentine's will. She died intestate and her daughter, Florence Smith, was appointed Administratrix. There was no mention of Percival.

In 1928 he retired to Dorset, living alone and becoming a recluse. "Latterly", Mrs. Hyslop reports, "he would only leave the house at night to walk in the meadow behind it. He was well thought of in the village and if someone called for charity they were never refused. On the other hand, offers to help in the garden were turned down. A neighbour told me he was very proud and would not accept help. He carved the door-knocker and the inscription (in Greek) "Here is peace" over the door. And he was right, there is peace here. (But in his day, there was no mains water, no sewage and no electricity!)"

Mrs. Hyslop added that whenever he had a large crop of apples he would fill a big skip and leave it by the gate with a notice 'Please help yourself'. "He was a very tall man, about 6' 4", and bumped his head so often on the beams that he lowered the floor about 18 inches, as it still is today. He had a precious collection of stamps kept hidden in a recess in the cob wall and also some valuable guns, but he couldn't bear to part with any of these things, which would have made life easier for him".

I would like to put on record my deep gratitude to Mrs. Hyslop for the above! Percival Smith's story, though, is not complete. I am sure I shall be too busy this year to make further enquiries, especially into the years 1914-28. Could it be that some older member of the Society would have known Percival in Kent, or even in Abbeydore? Mrs. Hooper has kindly sent me a photograph of Thersie, Hastings, Florence and Percival taken, I should think, about 1905. Hastings and Florence have similar

features, quite unlike Thersie and Percival. These latter are long-headed and Percival in particular is very dark. I feel sure these are the Kilvert features. Would that be why, added to the fact that he was the only nephew to be in Holy Orders when Elizabeth Kilvert made her will, he was left the notebooks? Though he did not ensure that his legacy was preserved, at least he made it known, to our immense gain!

E.J.C. West.

MAX KROMER AND THE SIEGE OF STRASBOURG:

Wednesday 8 May 1872.

"I found the old soldier sitting in his house and read to him the remainder of that most touching story of Max Kromer and The Siege of Strasbourg. As I drew near the end of the book I became deeply affected and my voice was broken with emotion. My eyes filled with tears and I could scarcely see the page. The letters swam before me. Once or twice I was stopped by my sobs and the choking in my throat and when I closed the book I was crying. 'I thought', said the old soldier to me tenderly, 'by the sound of your voice that something was pressing on your mind'".

(Kilvert's Diary Vol. 2. 194).

Why was it that this simple and eminently forgettable story by the now unknown Hesba Stretton (not Hannah Smith, as Plomer says in his footnote) affected Kilvert so strongly?

The explanation probably lies in this. Max Kromer was the son of an English mother and a German father. On the death of his mother he went to live with his grandmother in Strasbourg (a city which Kilvert had visited in 1865 and of which he had fond memories); and when he was there Max made the acquaintance of the pious little Elsie whose chief joy was in knitting a warm white vest for the infant Jesus. When the long siege was at last over, Elsie told Max that she was afraid she would never be able to give Jesus the vest because he had gone to heaven; but Max reassured her that when Jesus ascended into heaven he told his disciples not to grieve although for a little while they could not see him. 'Nevertheless' he said, 'I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart I will send him unto you'.

This was the text which clearly meant a great deal to Kilvert. On 14 May 1876, still deeply distressed by the decision of Mrs. Meredith Brown to forbid all intercourse between him and her daughter Ettie, he preached at Langley Burrell a sermon on this same verse. 'Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away'. Later in the day he went to Kington St. Michael and preached the same sermon, a highly personal address on the comfort that the verses had brought to him.

Obviously the text had a deep personal significance for Kilvert. On the day when he was reading the story to the old soldier he had already made up his mind to leave Clyro, and, if possible, to forget Daisy Thomas. When he came to the text that was deeply charged with emotion for him he could not control himself. But it was not for the fortunes of little Elsie and Max Kromer that he was weeping. He was weeping for himself, for the loss of Daisy, and the exile to which events were condemning him.

(I am greatly indebted to Mrs. J. Feisenberger for allowing me to read the copy of Max Kromer which she has kindly presented to the Kilvert Society).

F. Grice.

THE REV. A.W. CHATFIELD:

Subsequent to Rev. J.N. Rowe's note in the last newsletter, I was working in the Cathedral Library at Worcester, and came across four or five letters, written in the 1880's and 90's, from the Revd. A.W. Chatfield, Vicar of Much Marcle. The letters referred, in the main, to the same theme, a petition on behalf of some Much Marcle parishioner for a place in St. Oswald's Hospital, Worcester.

The connection with Kilvert is very slight, but readers of the Diary will remember that the diarist stayed with Mr. Chatfield when he went to be best man to his friend Andrew Pope on the occasion of his marriage to Miss Money Kyrle of Homme House, Much Marcle; and it was Mr. Chatfield who officiated at the service. The letters are in no way 'eccentric' or 'original' (the words Kilvert used to describe his host) but they do confirm his opinion of Mr. Chatfield's kind nature.

F. Grice.