

## THE KILVERT SOCIETY

Formed (in 1948) to foster an interest in the Rev. Francis Kilvert,  
his work, his diary and the countryside he loved.

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FEBRUARY 1991.

Dear Member,

My report begins with the weekend of Sept. 8th. - 9th. In glorious weather, our Hon. Auditor, Mr. Gordon Rogers, led members on a walk to Tom Tobacco's grave. Among the party were Revd. Carl Seaburg and his brother, Mr. Alan Seaburg (Massachusetts, U.S.A). There was much speculation as to why the sheepstealer should have been buried at the spot and should have been commemorated with a gravestone, but as with other Diary references the mystery remains. Our thanks go to Mr. Rogers for the very enjoyable afternoon.

The following day the church at Whitney-on-Wye was packed for the Commemoration Service. It was a great pleasure that it was conducted by Canon D.T.W. Price. The Lessons were read by Mrs. M. Morgan (Hay-on-Wye) and Mr. R. Whitney Wood (W.Australia), and since he was responsible for the Society's acquisition of the Kilvert Family Bible, it was most appropriately used for the Lessons. The sermon was given by the Revd. Carl Seaburg, who used the Mouse Castle episode as his "text". Thanks to Kilvert's magic, his superb artistry, we can live in timeless moments, like the laughing, romping girls of Mouse Castle. "To see clearly is poetry, prophecy and religion, all in one". At the excellent tea in the Village Hall, our Chairman (who had performed the Act of Remembrance at the service), congratulated the preacher, and drew spontaneous applause from those present. The Society is most grateful to all those who made the afternoon so memorable.

The Webb weekend was held at the end of November. Possibly the awful weather deterred visitors, but for those of us who attended the events, there was much to learn about Kilvert's friend at Hardwick Vicarage. From being one of a crowd of friends around Hay, he emerged as a great pioneer of amateur astronomy. I did not know that his name was given to both an astronomical society and a crater on the moon. The Star Party to be launched by Dr. Patrick Moore was cancelled, but the gentleman himself gave a most impressive talk on the future of planet research. In the Parish Hall were displayed Webb's diaries and victorian telescopes, and his vicarage, now The Haven Guest House, was opened to visitors by Mr. & Mrs. Robinson, the owners : and whose organisation of the weekend deserves the warmest congratulations!

The service commemorating the 150th. anniversary of Kilvert's birth was held at Hardenhuish church on December 2nd. by kind permission of the Revd. P. Scrase. Some sixty members were present. The Lessons were read by our Hon. Treasurer, Mr. H.J. Dance, and Mr. Ian Pitcairn, great nephew of both Dora and Edward Kilvert. The preacher, our member Rev. Dr. J.N. Rowe (Glasbury-on-Wye) spoke of the theological aspects of Kilvert's writings, in view of the publication of Darwin's "The Origin of Species" when Kilvert was 19 years old. After the service the congregation was invited to visit the Old Rectory - a gesture by Mr. & Mrs. Snook (members of the Society) which was much appreciated. Tea was taken at Langley Burrell, Mrs. Payne and her helpers yet again, excellently looking to the visitors' needs. The Society is most grateful to members and friends in Wiltshire for the events of the afternoon.

PROGRAMME FOR 1991: While not finalised, the programme will include the following:-

MAY 3RD. at 7. 00 p.m. A.G.M. and Social Evening at the Bishop's Palace, Hereford, (by kind permission of Mrs. Oliver). Mrs. M. Morgan will give readings from her much admired book "Growing Up in the Kilvert Country".

MAY 4TH. Meet at Baskerville Arms, Clyro, at 12. 30 p.m. for Walk led by Mr. R. Morgan.

JULY 7TH. Service at 3.00 p.m. at Wadham College Chapel, Oxford, for dedication of plaque (by kind permission of the College Authorities).

OCT. 6TH. Wiltshire Walk (at the moment, provisional).

I would draw attention to the Committee's proposal to the A.G.M. that annual subscriptions be raised to £5, and remind members that any nominations for the Committee must be received by the Chairman not later than April 3rd.

Yours sincerely,

E.J.C. West

Hon. Secretary.

POSTSCRIPT: Congratulations to our member, Mr. M. John (Hay-on-Wye) on his B.E.M.

#### OBITUARY

It is with deep regret I announce the death of Mr. Godfrey Davies, at the age of 91. He was the last founder-member of the Society, an Honorary Life Member, Society Archivist and Committee member for many years. I recall that he once spoke to me of his great admiration for Alfred Watkins, an older Hereford man, the author of "The Old Straight Track" and a pioneer in photography. Mr. Davies founded a photographic equipment business in the town - which is still run by his family - and pursued a deep interest in the countryside. It was natural that he should make many films, among them "The Kilvert Countryside", much in demand in the early years when interest in the Diary was new. He faithfully recorded every commemoration service, loaning tapes out to members unable to attend. All these have now a historical value, as do also his books of press-cuttings of the Society's events. The Society's debt to him for all his years of dedication is enormous. Nor must it be forgotten that Mrs. Davies was a member of the Committee for many years, and that at more recent showings of his films he was assisted by both of his sons. To them all we offer our sincere condolences.

Though not a member of the Society, Mrs. E. Farmery, who died last autumn, deserves commemoration as the author of "Kathleen Mavourneen", a book which gave much interesting information about the Heanley family, and in particular Katharine Heanley. She was assisted in the production of the book by our Skegness member, Mr. R.B. Taylor, who informed me of the lady's decease.

#### BY CAB, CART, CHAIR AND CHARIOT by John Dunabin (Warrington)

A break, later brake, has been described as a large waggonette, but its origins were quite different. A waggonette was a utilitarian form of carriage, built to seat perhaps 6 or even as many as 10 people, usually with one or two transverse bench seats at the front and inward facing ones at the rear, open or with a detachable roof. The Llanthomasas owned one - it broke down on 3rd September 1870 - as did Mr. Westhorp, Rector of Ilston, and Kilvert mentions others, including some obviously commercially owned. Most types of vehicle he refers to were meant either for private or for commercial use, not both; waggonettes were an exception.

Brakes were firmly commercial. One at least, it can be concluded, was based in Hay, not just from the occasion when Kilvert spotted a 'unicorn' (a single horse leading a pair) coming out of the Rose & Crown yard with one in tow. Two months later, when the famous Snodhill picnic took place, we read: "A great break very roomy and comfortable came round with a pair of brown horses and we all got in, Mrs. Oswald, Captain and Mrs. Bridge, Perch, Jim Brown, Arthur Oswald and myself." No wonder Kilvert found it very roomy; brakes could carry far more than 7 passengers. They were a relatively basic form of transport, deriving from open frames used for breaking in horses, and adapted to provide economical yet reasonably comfortable travel for considerable numbers going together. In later years, further adapted for motor propulsion, they became popular in some places for carrying football teams to away matches.

Brakes may or may not have been commonly available in Cornwall. There were waggonettes however, small ones, waggonettes nice and roomy too, while on Friday, 29th July 1870, when with his friends the Hockins and others Kilvert arrived at Roscowarne, home of the Parkers, in the pony carriage, "a large omnibus and pair was waiting to drive us on with the Parker's party". Then followed quite an exciting trip, horses scrambling and staggering all over the place, a tyre nearly coming off, and sherry "flying all about inside". Kilvert remarked that happily there was a doctor on board although no bones were actually broken. He himself as so often chose

to ride 'on the box', only learning later from Captain Parker that another passenger had been thrown off the box seat of that very omnibus a few weeks previously with fatal results.

The day's entry also included a very succinct account of a transport problem of those days, and its solution. Carriage wheels were made of wood but with iron tyres. The former shrank when dry, while the latter expanded when hot. "The horses were driven into a pond in order to drink and cool their heels and tighten the tyres of the omnibus wheels".

Looking again at private transport, but later and no longer in the immediate Clyro area, Miss Newton of 'The Cottage', a handsome house in Bredwardine, figures prominently in Kilvert's catalogue of local journeys. Miss Newton, daughter one concludes of a former vicar of the parish, was obviously a lady of means, possibly also one deriving some pleasure from the ownership of means of travel. Clearly she enjoyed using them to help the new vicar.

They were acquainted during Kilvert's Clyro days, and he took part in her picnic very shortly before relinquishing his curacy there, but we learn nothing of the travel arrangements for that day. Not until January 1878 is there mention of Miss Newton's 'closed chair'. This could not have been a bath chair or a sedan chair; in this context a 'chair' was a lightweight variant of the horsedrawn chaise, with room for a single passenger. Ten days later she drove Dora and her brother to Moccas for dinner, and the next day drove Dora on her own (Kilvert himself had walked!) to Monnington for lunch. At the end of February again came mention of help from Miss Newton, this time for Kilvert himself; the day was dry and he rode on the box of her brougham to Mansel Gamage.

A few weeks later, on 4th March, Kilvert once more had transport provided by Miss Newton, but for variety it was a spring cart. This was a station trip, the first stage of a journey to Langley, but Kilvert was obviously not well. Dr. Spencer next day diagnosed congestion of the lungs, and on the following day, Ash Wednesday, his mother insisted on a fly for his journey to and from church. Perhaps Miss Newton was aware of Kilvert's indisposition, or it may just have been because there was a whirling snowstorm at the time, but when he reached Kinnersley on his return home Price (the coachman?) was waiting for him with her brougham. Less than a week later, on another day of "wild drifting snow with a terrible black bitter wind", the brougham was in service again, Kilvert noted, to take Dora and Florence to Kinnersley for a train journey to Hereford and later in the day to bring them back.

We have no further mention of the brougham for some months; instead, on 3rd. June, also probably a week later ("Price drove me") and again in September, Miss Newton's cart provided transport to the station, but the entry for 10th October provides a possible explanation. "Miss Newton's new brougham came home. A nice carriage, dark blue picked out with red, a great improvement on the last". Three days later Kilvert was riding in "the nice new brougham" to Eardisley.

The Diary presents us with a wide ranging view of passenger transport - I have written very little about the many recorded train journeys and have passed over the informative accounts of movement by water - with a mass of detail about one small area on the England/Wales border, but it has obvious limitations. We learn hardly anything really, other than by inference, of the state of roads; so far as Kilvert was concerned they could almost all have been perfect, which seems unlikely. We learn nothing either, directly, about the cost of road travel, something of extreme importance, although an illuminating entry for 24th February 1873 tells of London cabs charging double and treble fares after a heavy snowfall. Nowhere have I found any reference to tolls or turnpikes; surely quite a few country roads were still subject to toll.

Conforming to the class pattern, local people, Francis Kilvert himself being a notable exception, fell roughly into two groups, the riders and the walkers. Carriage owners it would seem rarely walked, while from the Diarist's own comments, or more from his silences, the countryfolk he met on his walks rarely rode. Many seldom left their home villages, for some the limit of travel was just a few miles away, and some few perhaps used the train to go further, but only infrequently.

Artisans, farm workers, small farmers, servants and others of limited means, did need to go to town occasionally. For them the carrier's cart provided an economical means of travel as an alternative to walking. All over England, Wales probably too, the carriers with their carts went into market, weekly or sometimes more frequently. They took smallholders to market with their produce, brought goods, breakables included, from town, and sometimes found room for casual passengers.



Kilvert so far as we know never mentioned this last function, but one of the carriers does figure in the Diary. By a call made at Mrs. Matthews' shop the previous afternoon, New Years Day 1878, Mrs. Baynham was asked to "bring a new chimney glass from Hereford in his cart to-morrow" (Wednesday), and on another Wednesday, this being Hereford market day, a new lawn mower for the Vicarage came from Hereford in Baynham's cart. In between these two dates Mrs. Baynham drove Kilvert to Kinnersley Station, which means of travel unspecified, while on at least two occasions Baynham's trap was used, once to take the Kilverts father and son to Kinnersley for a day's fishing at Llangorse Lake, and once to collect Sam Cowper Coles, the new pupil. Were cart and trap the same vehicle? It seems unlikely, bearing in mind Kilvert's apparently precise descriptions. Price of Clyro, owner of a trap, may also have been a carrier.

From information gathered about Herefordshire carriers in later days it seems that married women, some of them widows, played a significant part of this activity. The carts were small, so too were the horses, a combination readily manageable for a woman. Large items were carried by slow moving waggon or train and waggon. On 22nd March 1870 Kilvert, in his best scene painting vein, noted "heavy loads of timber, large long trees on the timber carriages grinding through Clyro every evening". Although more exotic woods from further afield were widely used too, this was possibly the raw material to help the coachbuilder produce the landaus, the barouches, the victorias, stanhopes, cabriolets, and all the other vehicles which travelled the roads.

To repeat, the picture the Diary yields, while detailed in many respects, is not a full one, and the transport historian would wish to know much more. From it however one can deduce a lot about how a dominant stratum of late Victorian rural society, aided considerably by the horse, held closely together in a rapidly changing world.

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KILVERT WILTSHIRE WALK  
by Gwen Ball (Swindon)

On the 13th. October, a beautiful autumn day, we met on the green at East Tytherton where Farmer Jim Hall was waiting to lead us on another Wiltshire walk. Here is the Moravian church and school where Kilvert's mother attended daily, riding on a donkey (Vol.3.p.146). Mrs. Marjorie Hall read from the diary the extract when the hounds met here on Nov. 28th. 1873.

From East Tytherton, some stalwarts walked - others had lifts - to the top of Wick Hill to see the monument of Maud Heath, sitting with her market basket on a high pedestal overlooking the Wiltshire countryside. On 21st. August 1873 Kilvert wrote an enchanting description of the view from Wick Hill. We too in 1990 could see the Cherhill White Horse, and the precipices of Clyffe Pypard across the down-land just as Kilvert and his sisters did in 1873.

At the bottom of the down the famed Maud Heath's Causeway starts - here is a stone inscribed with a couplet by William Lisle Bowles, poet-vicar of this parish of Bremhill in the last century - "From this Wick Hill begins the praise

Of Maud Heath's gift to these highways".

This stone, as was the monument, was erected only in the nineteenth century. But Maud Heath lived over 500 years ago. Legend has it that Maud Heath was a poor widow living at Langley Burrell. Week in, week out, she trudged over marshy, muddy roads to sell her butter, eggs, etc. in Chippenham market. When she died in 1474 she left all her worldly goods to make a pavement (at Kellaways running over a bridge of 64 arches) so that folk could go dry shod to Chippenham. Maud Heath indeed left money for this purpose, but undoubtedly she was a well-to-do lady, widow of one John Heath, a person of some substance in the fifteenth century.

Jim Hall then led us across the meadows toward Stanley Abbey. Here, one of the party read from the diary the entry for 15th. Jan. 1874, a somewhat gruesome tale. The walk here was very pleasant with views of Chippenham's church spires across the fields. Three or four dogs accompanied us and thoroughly enjoyed themselves, although the cows gave us some strange looks.

Leaving official footpaths behind, Jim led us a weird and wonderful way, crawling under bushes and over the old canal (Kilvert walked this way on 30th. December 1872) then crossing the river Marden to reach the site of the old Cistercian Stanley Abbey. Even the old Abbey Farm is now ruinous, but we could still see many pieces of masonry from the old Abbey built into the walls. To see

more of the sculptured stones we should have to go to Bremhill Rectory where Parson Bowles took them last century.

We then started on our long walk back by road. Some lucky souls were given lifts by Mrs. Hall or her friends and we all met up near Tytherton Lucas Church. Then another pleasant walk through the fields and over the River Avon. Here some of the party stopped to admire a bush covered in ivy with its creamy green winter blossoms. This made us think of Kilvert's sister decorating Langley Church with the "large blossomed ivy" for Keren Wood's wedding (New Year's Day 1873).

Soon we were at the Old Brewery at Langley Burrell, where Mrs. Renée Payne and her helpers had tea laid out for us in her attractive conservatory among the lovely flowers and plants. How very much we appreciated the reviving cups of tea and delicious goodies provided. Mrs. Marjorie Hall had typed various references from the diary for us, relating to our walk.

A very pleasant afternoon which I'm sure Kilvert himself would have much enjoyed.

Many thanks to Mrs. Payne, Mr. & Mrs. Jim Hall and to all who helped make an interesting and enjoyable Wiltshire Walk!

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#### FRANCIS KILVERT AND THE MONKS AT CAPEL-Y-FFIN

New Information from John Spence's Narrative

by Canon S.G.A. Luff (Llandovery)

In previous articles the relationship between Francis Kilvert and Father Ignatius, the Anglican monk of Llanthony, has been discussed. It was a relationship rather than a mere encounter, for in two brief visits to Capel-y-ffin (April and September 1870) Kilvert moved from a typical 'British' prejudice towards all that Ignatius stood for to a sympathy with his ideals, a fascination with his family and his 'place' (as Harriet Lyne called it) and a definite reverence and affection for Ignatius himself. Add to this, had his mild flirtation with Harriet moved faster and further, Kilvert might have ended up as Ignatius's brother-in-law.

In his Diary entries Kilvert not only observes monks working in the field but finds out their names, at least in three cases. Of the first that he notes, Father Philip, somewhat more is recorded in 'The Life of Father Ignatius' by the Baroness de Bertouch, in 'Father Ignatius of Llanthony' by Donald Attwater, and in 'The Enthusiast' by Arthur Calder-Marshall. Of the others hardly anything has been recorded. Donald Attwater quotes from Ignatius's pseudo-mediaeval Abbey Chronicle which he consulted at Prinknash Abbey, but which Arthur Calder-Marshall was unable to consult because it was alleged to be mislaid. Some of his excerpts are for precisely the time of Kilvert's visit, the first full year of New Llanthony Abbey's history, and for no good reason that I can think of he replaces the names of monks by the letters X and Z. Attwater then quotes from Kilvert and again refers to Father X and Brother Z. Thanks to the Diary it is easy to supply the names: they were Father Philip and Brother Serene. Kilvert picked up another name; he heard a young novice addressed as 'Manny', which I supposed at first to be short for Emmanuel.

On the April visit of 1870 Kilvert had taken his friend Morrell of Cae Mawr in Morrell's carriage to Llanigon and thence by foot over Hay Bluff to Capel-y-ffin. A girl washing at a tub directed them up the lane to the monastery, of which only the west wing was under construction. Through the hedge they saw Father Philip and Brother Serene, the former digging and the latter wheeling earth from the builders' excavation. They were working in their monastic habits. Though they were 'studiously unconscious' of being watched - Ignatius forbade association with seculars, at least without his permission - Kilvert noticed that Brother Serene 'glanced furtively at us from under his cowl when he thought he was under cover of the heap of earth'. Kilvert may have elicited the names from the masons who spoke of the monks with 'great respect and some awe'. They told Kilvert that Ignatius had gone to London and these were the only two in residence.

In September Kilvert returned without Morrell. In July he had already encountered Mr. and Mrs. Lyne, and Ignatius's brother and sister, Clavering Mordaunt and Harriet Lyne, at Hay, seeing them at church and later meeting them socially at Hay Castle. This time Kilvert arrived to find the Lyne family preparing to picnic with Ignatius in the dingle - the little ravine which is still a short cut to the monastery. Now Kilvert was able to converse with Ignatius at length, walking up the hillside with him before lunch, observing the comings and goings of monks and

novices. The Census Return for the hamlet of Glynfach in 1871 lists seven monks and two acolytes, or scholars, resident at the monastery.

At the picnic they were served by two novices, whom Kilvert describes. One is a 'fine, noble-looking boy, a gentleman's son - with a sweet open face and fair clustering curly hair', who came running up with a basket of mushrooms he had just gathered. He was allowed to shake hands with the guests - 'he had hands as small, soft and white as a girl's'. They called him 'Manny'. The other novice is soon dismissed. He was of a 'lower rank of life'. He had a 'peculiarly sweet and beautiful face'. His name was Placidus. This name is common among Benedictine monks because in St. Benedict's own career (6th.c) he tutored two boys of distinguished family, Maur and Placid. Placid is said to have been martyred in Sicily about 546.

This information from Kilvert's Diary is of course of value in both sketching and colouring monastic life at Llanthony. As far as the biographies of Ignatius go, nothing more is known of Philip, Serene, 'Manny' and Placid. In the Archives of the Ignatius Trust, however, there is a remarkable typescript (perhaps the original was a manuscript) of a year's novitiate at Llanthony throughout 1871 by one John Spence, who as a novice became Brother Cuthbert. He was a youth with some literary flair, an over-active critic, with some ambitions himself to be a restorer of monastic life in the Church of England. He was perhaps intellectually above most of the community and Ignatius may well have hoped he might make a useful assistant - he chose him as his companion on a Lenten lecture tour of Clifton, Bath and Torquay. In his narrative he sets out to give pen-portraits of the community, and among these we find Philip, Serene and Placid - but not the attractive Manny.

Father Philip is one of whom we know something from other sources. The Baroness, whose biography was largely dictated by Ignatius, records how he accompanied Ignatius, Sister Ambrosia, and the famous child-monk nicknamed the 'Infant Samuel' to Rome in 1865. He seems to have tried to give Father Ignatius the slip while visiting the historic Dominican Priory of Santa Sabina on the Aventine while they were being entertained by the community there. The Baroness also tells us that he tries to run back to Rome and Santa Sabina from Naples, but according to John Spence his second flight was for 'Monte Christo'. This is probably an amusing lapse on someone's part - the novel by Dumas père appeared in the 1840s - and Philip was heading for Monte Cassino. Early in 1872, he was in fact to abandon Father Ignatius for Belmont Priory, the monastery near Hereford, where Ignatius, as a young man, had first procured a copy of the Holy Rule of St. Benedict while staying at the nearby village of Clehonger. But there is no record at Belmont of Philip having been received into the Catholic Church there, nor into the community.

Spence describes Philip as a 'short, sunburnt man of about 30 (he was 28 in 1871), having a most satanic face, deeply sunken eyes and oak-coloured skin tightly drawn over the bones', yet 'though so dark and evil-looking he had a handsome face like Mephistopheles'.

Philip was one of the few subjects Ignatius ever allowed to commit themselves irrevocably (in theory) by taking vows for life. It was only to these that the title 'Father' was accorded - in monastic tradition it was not necessarily attached to priesthood; Ignatius himself was not a priest at this time. He had picked up Philip while running his Priory at Norwich. Spence tells us his secular name was William Pointer, and he had been brought up by grandparents at a pub called the Three Jolly Dyers. Harriet Lyne told Kilvert he had been a baker. Father Ignatius put him in charge of the farm but he seems not to have been a success. The unkind Spence makes out he wasn't much good at anything, and if he undertook to transport anyone by horse and cart to catch the train he 'arrived late as usual'. Spence has to concede: 'When we had worked hard and suffered together, we became friends'.

A valuable element in Spence's account is the transcription of several letters from Ignatius and others. Writing from Feltham Priory, Middlesex, (his foundation for nuns), clearly in reply to a complaint, Ignatius explains his tolerance of Philip: 'Our Blessed Lord Jesus does not will that Father Philip should be as he is, but he permits it for our good. I am sure that Father Philip has been a means of grace to me, and has by trying me so much helped me to conquer self, self-love and self-will to a considerable extent'. Philip had in fact run away up to seven times. Spence sometimes depicts Ignatius as irascible, but from this evidence we may allow that his patience was sometimes well stretched before it snapped.

Brother Serene was another wayward disciple. He had apparently fled from Llanthony in 1870, but the Chronicle records his return on September 2nd; he was



gone again by the time Spence arrived in December. He returned later in 1872, in time to be partly responsible for Spence's own vocational crisis, for Serene delated him in letters to Father Ignatius at Feltham. Kilvert in conversation with Harriet contributes something - Serene had been a gardener and also a drunkard. Spence describes him as 'a man of about 29 with a handsome face and good teeth and sunken blue eyes, a hard worker at all sorts of tasks but with a temper'.

Of the curly-haired 'Manny' Spence has nothing to say - he must have left. Ignatius accepted some boys to be tutored and to help with services, and of them a few became novices. Ignatius was willing to receive them as novices at the age of fourteen. I doubt that Kilvert could distinguish, sartorially, a novice from a postulant. The 1871 Census lists as 'acolyte' one Eugene Manlius Davy, aged 14, very likely our collector of mushrooms, and probably not a novice, or he would have had a new monastic name. If so, he was not named after the Biblical Emmanuel but the classical Roman Manlius.

Poor lower-class Placidus was one of those in residence when Spence arrived. He tells us his name was William Henry Wicking, his father was organist at the Dutch Calvinist Church in London - Austin Friars, and his home was Woodbine Cottage, 98, Holly Street, Dalston. He was 16, and had first listened to Ignatius preaching at the age of 11. He had joined the community at Feltham (Spence must mean the Priory at nearby Haleham). He was 'easy, sleepy, good-natured, fond of outdoor work and almost always employed in cooking'. 'He had nothing of what we called a vocation' - decides the all-wise Spence - 'but a blind enthusiasm for the Reverend Father'. Kilvert's description of Placidus is confirmed, but in less gracious terms: 'He was a big boy, very pretty, with white even teeth and a ring of crisp curly golden hair'.

The blind enthusiasm was not entirely reciprocated. Reading between the lines it seems that Placidus fostered dissension in the small community. The lad must have got himself into a real spiritual tizz, for Ignatius wrote on July 9th. 'I love Brother Placidus more dearly than anyone in the world I am sure, yet how can I encourage him in wearing a monk's dress when he writes that he does not love the Rule or our Lord Jesus Christ either? No. I intend him to go; he will be honest as a secular, he is not honest as a monk'. And go he did, in the rain, with Philip driving him to the station and missing the train. He wrote to tell Spence he was taking up engineering. I wonder if the news would have pleased Kilvert.

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GEORGE STOVIN VENABLES

by Sidney Ball (Swindon)

Whence came his Christian names? From maternal ancestors named Stovin. At Tetney in Lincs the heads of this family for several generations in succession were named George Stovin. The last George Stovin married his cousin Elizabeth Stovin. They were the grand-parents of the Venables brothers. George Stovin changed the family surname to Lister on inheriting Eastoft House and Girsby Hall in Lincs from Lister relatives. Thus when George Venables's mother married his father she was Sophia Lister. Francis Kilvert knew this lady as "Mrs. Archdeacon Venables"; he conducted her funeral service when she died at Clyro Vicarage, aged 83, in December 1868.

George Stovin Venables never married. His friends, Lord and Lady Ashburton, hoped that he would marry Lord Ashburton's sister, Lydia Baring. But, as one writer put it, "Venables adroitly managed not to marry her". Despite this Venables kept friendly with Lord and Lady Ashburton and visited them at their home, The Grange, near Alresford, Hants. Lydia remained unmarried, dying in 1868, twenty years before George Stovin Venables.

On one of his visits to Newbridge-on-Wye, Francis Kilvert had a very interesting talk with Mr. George Venables about the poet Wordsworth, whom Venables had met in the Lake District (Vol. 1. p.234). On another occasion Kilvert recorded "Mr. George Venables sent me a brace of Llysdimam pheasants and a rabbit" (Vol. 2.p.84).

George Stovin Venables had a host of friends, including Alfred Tennyson and his wife Emily. In the summer of 1844 Tennyson, in Wales, wrote to "G.S. Venables, Esq., Llysdimam, Builth"; the letter was postmarked "Barmouth, Corwen, July 17th. 1844". In it Tennyson regretted that he would not have time to reach Newbridge-on-Wye, but would see his friend in London later.

Tennyson and Emily were again touring Wales in the autumn of 1856, and from her Journal we learn that at Builth they were visited on September 15th. by Mr. and Mrs. Lister Venables. This was the Revd. R.L. Venables and his first wife, Mary. On his return to England Tennyson wrote to George Venables expressing regret that he had not spoken to Venables's father - Tennyson had seen the top of the Arch-deacon's head in the Justice Room at Rhayader!

An interesting sidelight on the Tennysons in Wales is that in Llangollen they stayed at 'The Hand' hotel; a Welsh harper played to them. Fifteen years later Francis Kilvert and his father stayed at the same hotel (Vol.1.p.360). And a Welsh harper played to them. "It was a great and strange delight to listen to the music of this Welsh harp". (Vol.1.p.362).

Among George Venables's chief friends were the Lushingtons of Park House, near Maidstone in Kent. When Henry Lushington, as Chief Secretary to the Government of Malta, became ill in 1855, he tried to return to England. George Venables met him in the South of France, took him to Paris, where he died. Henry left all his books and his villa in Malta to George.

Kilvert records that George Venables had "a prodigious memory" (Vol.2.p.94). Another friend said that Venables "was tall and strong, charming and witty". Hallam Tennyson said that G.S.V. "had a highly cultivated intellect, a clear judgement and a rather haughty bearing". Augustus Hare found Venables "pleasant with visitors, but stern with younger members of the family".

Much has been written about W.M. Thackeray's nose, which George Venables broke in a school brawl at Charterhouse. Plomer mentioned it in a footnote on page 93 of Volume 2. It has been repeated in early newsletters. I have read elsewhere that "Thackeray's nose was broken by a school bully" and in another book, "Thackeray lost a fight at school against a bigger boy and got his nose battered". But G.S. Venables and W.M. Thackeray remained friends, although Thackeray's nose was scarred for life - this I have noticed in a painting of Thackeray in London's National Portrait Gallery.

One of the highlights of Kilvert's Diary is his meeting with William Barnes. (Vol.2.pp. 437 - 442). When William Barnes died, his daughter Laura, his house-keeper, help and companion for many years, had no home and no income. A group of friends petitioned Queen Victoria for a pension for Laura. Among them was George Stovin Venables.

It is fitting that our President, Lady Delia Venables-Llewelyn, lives at Llysdinam, Newbridge-on-Wye. Thus the Kilvert Society is strongly linked with a house and family so well known to Francis Kilvert and linked with Kilvert's Mr. George Venables".

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