

Ozara's Irish Roots

Grandpa Joe

with an introduction

(and comments...)

by

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Ma chère Ozara,

J'avais tellement envie de continuer à te raconter les aventures de Monica et Timmi Turtle dans leur quête de la Musique des Sphères et de la composition que Monica allait entendre et apprendre à jouer sur l'escalier musical. Je suis cependant confronté à une lacune personnelle. Bien que je sois né à Port aux Français sur les îles australes et antarctiques françaises, mon monde entier existe dans la Mer de l'imaginaire. En tant que tel, je suis complètement dépendant de ton imagination et de celle de ton grand-père.

Ce n'est pas rien. Quand ton cousin Jacob a eu neuf ans, ton grand-père s'est lui-même perdu dans la Mer de l'imagination, et où une telle chose pourrait-elle mener ? Si grand-papa se noie dans son imagination, alors comment pouvons-nous, nous qui ne connaissons rien d'autre que la Mer, continuer à être ? Mon cousin Benjamin de Burgh a appelé Jacob à l'aide pour sauver Grand-papa, et je pense qu'ils l'ont fait, car pour ton neuvième anniversaire, Grand-papa m'a poussé à l'écart et m'a dit (ainsi qu'à toi !) qu'il allait écrire sur ton héritage irlandais.

Pour l'instant, toi et moi allons devoir poursuivre la quête de Monica et Timmi Turtle sans son aide, mais je suppose que c'est mieux que de découvrir qu'il s'est perdu dans la Mer de l'imaginaire !

Gortmore, Ireland



Dear Ozara,

If I can just get Roscelina to stop worrying about me for a few minutes, I will try to share the story of your Irish-Australian roots. For some reason she fears I will slip into the Sea of Imagination and that I will be lost. I am perfectly capable of looking after myself and can assure her that everything I write for you in this book is well researched.

A long time ago, Grandma and I decided to incorporate the name Ballyhoo into our business by using it as the name of our storytelling to our clients. We had learned that Ballyhoo was the name for a blatant form of self-promotion. Even so, we decided to use it, since most people we know had lost all sense of its meaning anyhow.

Years later, when you were about four, I began researching our Irish roots – first I wanted to know where our Irish great-grandparents had come from in Ireland.

According to your great-great uncle Antoine Paré, his grandfather Edward Arthur Griffith was born in a hall. Well, not exactly a hall. It was a great-house, a very large residence on a gentleman's holding. This great-house was called Gortmore Hall, found in Gortmore, near Athlone, County

Close-up of Gortmore and the Bally Tour

Tu vois, Ozara?
Son imagination...

Je te jure, il va se perdre
dans la mer...
Quel nonsense!



Start at Ballykeeran, towards Gortmore Farm to Ballymore. Then follow the blue line to Ballynacarrigy and Ballymahon. Detour to Ballinlig, then return to Ballykeeran.

Westmeath, Ireland. In other words, right in the dead centre of Ireland. The towns encircling it included Ballykeeran, Ballymore, Ballynacarrigy and Ballymahon. They were even a few more starting with Balli. So I guess that was where Ballyhoo must have snuck up on us from.

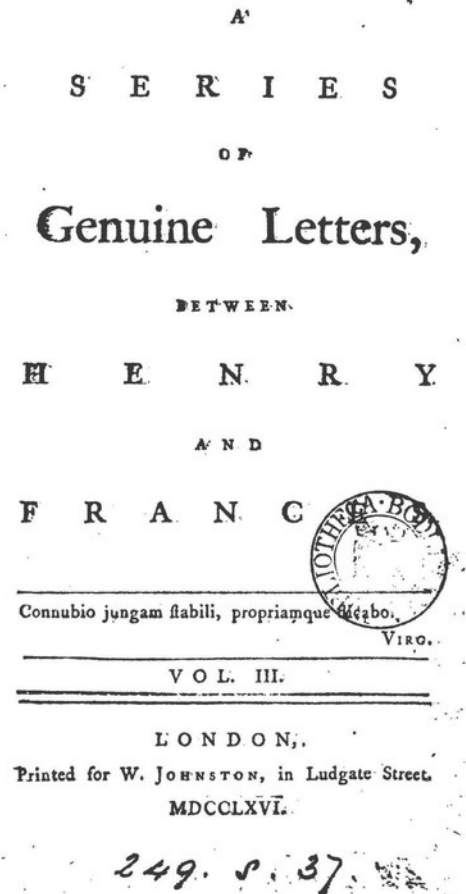
Edward's father, Arthur Griffith, and his mother, Hannah Cunningham, really wanted to leave Ireland and move as far away as they could. It's true he was the 14th child of the family, but he would be leaving both of their family histories behind, including that of his grandparents Richard Griffith of Maiden Hall (not Gortmore Hall) and Elizabeth Griffith of Glamorganshire in South Wales, who had written famous books of love letters to each other. I found volume 3, published in MDCCLXVI – that is old Roman for the year 1766.

You may have noted that his grandparents both had the same last name. In fact, they were cousins and their parents had forbidden them to marry because of that. But being forbidden to marry did not mean that they had not fallen in love. They wrote – and published – their love letters hoping that eventually they would convince their parents to relent and let them marry. They lived on opposite sides of the Irish Sea, with him in County Kilkenny, Ireland and her in South Wales.

The series or volumes are titled *A Series of Genuine Letters between Henry and Frances*. Here is a sample with some modernized spelling and light editing (the original is at the end of the book):

Letter CCCL

Dear FANNY,
I SHEWED your Critic upon the Series
to the Bishop... and he differed
from you greatly, by saying that those fond
Epithets, and Passages of Love and Tenderness,
which you would have struck out of the Public-
ation, rather shew the Letters to be genuine,
than give them the Air of a Novel.
He smiled at one of your Niceties, where you
say, that printing of Love Letters is almost as
indecent as embracing each other in public :
But, tho' he denies your being a sound Critic,
he confesses you to be a delicate one. His
Lordship, however, made one Observation,
which alarmed me, that he never knew People
ashamed of their Fondness, 'till they had changed



their Sentiments.

For my own Part, there is not one Expression of Love or Tenderness, in all my Letters that I have left out in the Copy confided to my Friend, or that I would now exchange for the sublimest Wit, or' most refined Philosophy.

My Love is like a Fairy Gift, which, it is said, when once bestowed, can never be retracted; and whose *Charm* the Possessor's Fault alone, can weaken or dissolve.

Adieu!

Henry

*My dear Roscelina
I am not making this up!*

...mais
trois
volumes
de
lettres!!?

Edward's grandmother, Mary Hussey Burgh, married the son of the couple who wrote the love letters above. She was a descendant of the de Burgh line that began in Ireland in 1185, and her own father was called "Silvertoned Burgh" but probably not to his face. It appears that the name de Burgh is not too popular among Irish Catholics. Here is a story, with a few changes for clarity, that my grandmother, Lucy Paré, told about the naming of my mother. You will also find a bunch of other quotes and images from a book you have,

called The Seeds, and it is your grandfather's grandmother's autobiography, her life story.

*On the sixth of October 1918, a darling little baby girl
was born to us in our home in Palmerston
Gardens, Dublin. We decided to name her Patricia, and as a
middle name, to conform with a family tradition, I chose
de Burgh, the family name of my Irish great-grandmother,
but it wasn't going to be as simple as that to have her
baptized accordingly.*

*Father Patrick O'Dowd was delighted to hear that
we were naming our daughter after his Irish patron, Saint Patrick,
but he bluntly refused to baptize her with the middle
name of de Burgh. He was the parish priest of the little
Catholic church close by Palmerston Gardens and we had
come to the presbytery with the baby in Alphonse's arms.*

*"But Father, that is the name of my Irish great-grandmother
and I am proud of it," I explained.*

The Irish clergy were united in support of the rebel

movement against the British occupation and I could sympathize with their grievances but I couldn't see how that should concern my daughter's Christian name.

"Mrs. Paré, the de Burghs and their kin have been the leading oppressors and despoilers of our Irish race for 700 years," he said, "and I can't bring myself to baptize a good Catholic child with such an opprobrious name."

By now I had understood that our Griffith ancestors in Ireland, the same that Grandfather Griffith boasted "had never intermarried with the 'bog Irish,'" had been members of the 'Irish Ascendancy,' or the Establishment, under the British Occupation, and Father O'Dowd was talking about my own family as the enemy of the Irish people. I hadn't dreamed that feelings were so intense and the divisions so deeply rooted in the past. But my ire was up and finally I said to him, "Alright, Father, I'll go and see the Anglican minister and ask him to baptize my daughter." The good pastor had to choose between his religious convictions and his patriotic fervour. I am glad to say that he opted for the former, and

*my daughter was properly baptized with the name of
"Patricia de Burgh Paré."*

*During this exchange, Alphonse, holding Patsy, dressed in his military uniform,
wisely let me do the talking. I knew he was furious and I
feared he would let his Latin temperament get the better
of him. Only afterwards did I realize that the sight of a
hated British Army uniform in his own presbytery
probably fanned the bigotry of the Irish cleric.*

I am just getting started!

Imagine the scene in Dublin! Arthur Hill Griffith, the 14th child of Sir Richard of Millicent, was orphaned young, but he was from a family that cared for him, and he married Hannah Cottingham, a strong woman that no-one would cross.

When they were embarking with seven families, they alone had eleven children. They also had their personal property that went so far as to include their poultry. and there is no reason to imagine that the other families were smaller. The hold of the boat must have stunk something awful.

*...et j'avais tellement voulu
continuer l'histoire de Alexandro
et Athabaska.*

*Tu te rappelles? C'est l'histoire du
garçon qui portait de grosses bottes
pour que les personnes qui le
suivaient aient peur. La vieille dame
(sa mère qui le cherchait) a vu que
les marches étaient rapprochées.
Elle s'est rendu compte que ses
jambes étaient courtes.*

To the Other Side of the World

Your great-great-uncle says they sailed 12,000 miles in that smelly hold all the way to New Zealand.

Yes, I know, they went to Australia but it's not a mistake. They must have made an agreement with the other families to get as far as New Zealand, where they helped build a farm and a mill, and then Arthur Hill left for Australia—to Melbourne, the same place where Alex Hoffman lives. You see he had family there, and he hoped they would help—and they did!

Hannah Cottingham was a demanding woman that her granddaughter (my grandmother Lucy Griffith Paré) described her:

I knew Granny Griffith. I even lived with her for some time. She was not an easy woman to love.

My grandmother was a very loving woman who always had a place for everyone, and I really cannot imagine her saying that, but her father, Edward Griffith, was not well treated by her, so maybe she had reason to feel that way.

What happened was that Edward's father Arthur was a specialized kind of

lawyer who could not have found work easily in his legal specialty, and he was a terrible snob who would not take work that he felt was beneath his importance. He and Hannah worked hard to educate or marry off their children so that they could have a good future. They helped Edward find a job as a bank manager, a job which he did well, but in exchange, he had to marry the daughter of a rich businessman whose only attraction was the money. Well, Edward was not in love with the young woman he would be forced to marry, and anyway, he had a girlfriend.

Back in the early days of Australia, there were people like Edward's parents, who came from a family with a lot of social connections, but men like Arthur Hill, the 14th child, didn't have a lot of prospects. These men often chose to negotiate an allowance from their well-connected families, and leave to live in some other part of the world. As long as their allowance lasted, they had an opportunity to set themselves up in some comfortable lifestyle. You can see why he didn't want to be a farmer in New Zealand.

So Arthur and Hannah figured they could use their self-importance, pretending that they had money, to get themselves and their children installed into the new society where they could continue looking self-important. It worked with a number of their children, but it didn't work with Edward. He did not want to marry, and even though he thought the young woman his mother had chosen for him

was very nice, they both lived in fear of their parents. The young woman in question, whose name we do not have, but we can call her Roscelina, was only 17 and told Edward that she did not want to marry him.

Their mothers, though, were busy planning a huge wedding, but Edward went out and secretly married his girlfriend Lucy Armstrong.

How was poor Hannah Cottingham going to break the news to the other mother, the rich man's wife, she was preparing the wedding with? After all, the invitations had gone out before she learned that her own son was married and would soon be a father himself! She ordered Edward to come with her to a meeting with the jilted 17-year-old Roscelina and her mother, but when she shared the disastrous news, the jilted young woman should have been devastated, but she was so relieved and so admired Edward's courage that she threw her arms around him and thanked him! Poor Hannah Cottingham Griffith! It was getting worse.

Hannah was very angry and distressed with her son. Two days before the birth of his first child, on May 1, 1888, she published this letter in the newspaper:

A certain Mrs. E.A. Griffith is going around town claiming to be a daughter-in-law

of mine. This is to advise that she is no relation of mine whatsoever.

Signed at Melbourne this 1st day of May 1888.

(Mrs.) Arthur Hill Griffith.

Two days later, on May 3rd, Lucy Armstrong, who had moved into an apartment with Edward above the bank where he worked, gave birth to twins.

One of the twins born that day, Lucy Mae, was my own grandmother. She and Constance Victoria, her twin sister, would be each other's best friends for the rest of their lives.

When they were five years old, the two girls and their younger sisters were taken for a walk with their nanny, and when they returned, they discovered all of their worldly possessions, including their dolls



Lucy Armstrong Griffith,
wife of Edward H. Griffith

and toys, had been thrown out of the bank building onto the road. Their father had no more job, and they had no house to live in.

No wonder my grandmother did not find Hannah, her grandmother, an easy person to live with. But in fairness, Edward and Lucy did not send love letters to each other and then publish them over three years hoping to convince their parents to change their minds.

It was Edward's turn to leave. He had to seek his fortune, to be able to look after his loving wife and his—by then—five daughters.

In the 1890s people who had nothing, mostly desperate young men, were arriving in the Western Australian interior, where there were rumours of gold. These were tough men who knew how to fight and drink. What was this city banker thinking of that he could do? How could he compete in such a world? Why did Edward choose such a hardship? How did he succeed in sending money home to Lucy to care for their girls?

Mais si tu commences à parler d'or, tu dois aussi parler d'Alphonse Paré, l'homme que Lucy finira par épouser. Après tout, à la même époque, son propre père, Louis, et sa mère Joséphine, ainsi que leurs cinq enfants, ont déménagé de

Lasalle, à Montréal, au Manitoba, dans l'espoir que Joséphine puisse combattre une maladie.

S'il te plaît, Roscelina. C'est mon histoire! On était en accord ! Laisse-moi la raconter. De toute façon, le père d'Alphonse avait un travail. Il était médecin dans la gendarmerie montée ! Le père de Lucy... il a dû aller travailler avec les orpailleurs dans un village de tentes appelé Coolgardie, dans l'Outback de l'ouest australien.

Oui, mais la mère d'Alphonse est morte et il a dû être élevé par son oncle et sa tante.

Okay, I'll tell you what. Let me tell this story and after, once Ozara's read it, we can decide what to do about Alphonse... don't answer me. Just nod your head, okay? Otherwise we're going to run out of paper before we can finish this part of the story.

D'accord, mais je veux avoir le dernier mot. (nod, nod)

Well, Edward did send money home, with letters. What he did not tell, though, was that he was living with men in tents, settling their quarrels by pretending to be a lawyer, and that there were no families at all. There were women, who were

selling their services and were pretty down themselves.

Lucy Armstrong was not one to wait for everything to be ready. She set off to see her husband, along with her daughters and whatever else she still owned, on the trip that is shown below.



A map of Australia, showing our journey from Melbourne to Albany, and thence to Coolgardie.

The miners were shocked at the arrival of Edward Griffith's family. Where were they going to live? A family in a tent-camp of miners? They quickly arranged a large tent in a private location of the encampment, and you can see a drawing that Lucy drew of it from memory on page 53 of The Seeds.

Lucy Mae and Constance Victoria explored this strange, new world. There were no streams or lakes, no water at all in fact. The camel train brought all the water in once a month and, being the eldest daughters, they had to work hard to help with all of the tasks of caring for them and their little sisters.

In those days, when a family had twin girls like Lucy and Constance, one would be considered as a servant, a sort of bonus person to help out. She would be given a lesser name and treated differently, while the other would be given a different importance and a stronger name. Lucy and Constance, though, were as close as Siamese twins, as though they were attached to each other, and they rejected the whole idea, doing all of the chores together. They even exchanged middle names so both would have more important-sounding names. They became Lucy Victoria and Constance Mae Griffith, and they even, very soon, had a little brother named Heck to look after too.

One of the biggest chores regarded how to care for the water. Here is a short description from that section of the book:

Washing was a ritual. Once a week on Saturday night we all had a bath. Mother supervised and did most of the scrubbing. This took place in an iron tub in the kitchen area. The same water had to be used by each child in turn in order of precedence although this order varied from time to time to be fair to all of us. One can imagine how much dirt we were likely to shed after playing all week in the sand. But the water remaining after the last child was bathed was not thrown out. Far from it. it was carefully boiled again on our wood stove so that all the dirt rose to the surface. This scum was then skimmed off and what remained of the water was used to wash our clothes and for the household chores. Our clothes were graded according to their dirt value. The cleaner were washed first. When the water became too red , the colour of the sand, it was thrown around the camp to keep the dust down and the ground hard.

When Lucy and Constance were about your age, they received a visit, a young girl of the same age who came through the Coolgardie district on what is called a walk-about. The people were the Wangkatha, or Wongi, who had lived there since the time of the Rainbow Serpent. One of their little girls was ill, and Lucy and Constance began to care for her. Soon the Wongi left, and the twins found they had a triplet. When she was better, they played together and she simply became a part of the family until... well, eventually the Wongi's walk-about was close enough by, and she slipped away, strong and healthy, to join her family again.

Conditions were so poor at Coolgardie that Lucy, and probably Constance as

well, both had to be given carved wooden teeth to wear in their mouths by their mid-teens. That did not stop them at all from having full, healthy lives.

The town of Kalgoorlie grew up nearby, and as the family prospered they moved into a proper house there. In her early twenties, Lucy Victoria met a strong young man, a mining engineer named Alphonse Paré and...

ARRÊT! C'est la prochaine histoire...je veux avoir mon dernier mot.

Okay, fine dammit.

Happy Birthday Ozara!

Alors maintenant tu va me comprendre bien, Ozara? Il est tombé vraiment dans le Mer de l'imaginaire. IL PENSE QU'IL ME PARLE! Il n'est même pas gentil avec moi, en choisissant mon nom pour la fille qu'Edward a plaquée!

Ozara, il faut qu'on fait quelque choses avant qu'il se noie dans le Mer de l'imaginaire. Et s'il fait ça, qu'est-ce que je serai? J'aurai seulement toi pour me donner une chance d'exister dans ton imagination.

Entre-temps, chère Ozara, Grandmama et moi... et lui te souhaite

BONNE ANNIVERSAIRE!

The last photograph of Lucy Griffith & Alphonse Paré

taken together (in Florida)



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