

# The Selected Letters of Katharine Tynan



# The Selected Letters of Katharine Tynan:

*Poet and Novelist*

Edited by

Damian Atkinson

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In memory of  
*Deborah Hayward Eaton*  
sometime Librarian  
St Edmund Hall, Oxford



Katharine Tynan aged thirty (*Magazine of Poetry*, 1889)

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## NOTE

Unfortunately, *without the courtesy of any explanation*, I was denied access to the letters of Katharine Tynan to her mentor Fr Matthew Russell, S.J., held in the Jesuit Archives in Dublin. This has obviously led to a gap in the understanding of her relationship with Fr Russell and her views on a variety of subjects not necessarily covered in her other correspondence.



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

*Frontispiece*: Katharine Tynan aged thirty (*Magazine of Poetry*, 1889)

Alice Meynell (Greatham)

Katharine and Pamela Hinkson November 1904 (© Victoria and Albert Museum)

Katharine's father Andrew Cullen Tynan

Fairlawn, Park Road, Southborough, Kent (Chris Jones)

Plaque on Fairlawn, Park Road, Southborough, Kent (Chris Jones)

Wilfrid Meynell 1910 (Greatham)

Pamela and Giles Aylmer Hinkson 1918 (*Bookman*, January 1918)

Subscriptions appeal (TCD, Dublin)

Holographs at Greatham (Oliver Hawkins)

21 June 1886 to Alice Meynell

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28 November 1922 to Wilfrid

27 February 1924 to Wilfrid Meynell

17 November 1928 to Wilfrid Meynell

14 January 1931 to Wilfrid Meynell

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## INTRODUCTION

A farmer's daughter, a convent girl, a lover of the Irish countryside, a poet, novelist and short story writer, a journalist, a friend of the English during war and peace, a fighter for justice, a Catholic but able to see and decry the interference of religion in politics: this is in part Katharine Tynan Hinkson, usually known as Katharine Tynan, who lived in Ireland and England and wrote through the turbulent times of Irish politics, suffrage, the Great War, and civil war in Ireland.

Katharine Tynan was born on 23 January 1859 in Dublin into a farming family, her father Andrew Cullen Tynan (1829-1905) being a farmer of some note and a council member of the Irish Cattle Traders Association. He traded cattle with Irish and English buyers and sellers and also supplied the British Army and the Royal Navy. Her mother, Elizabeth O'Reilly (1831-68/9), is not mentioned in the letters I have seen, whereas her father played an important role in Katharine's life, though not always to Katharine's benefit. The first chapter of Katharine's *Reminiscences* is entitled "My Father" and references to her mother occur in later chapters where she is seen as a rather Puritan influence, especially in her attempts to control Katharine's selection of reading matter.

Katharine was born as the fifth child of a family of twelve. Her sister Nora (Norah) Tynan (1866-1954), achieved some literary note as a novelist, poet and women's editor of *Freeman's Journal*. Katharine's education was firstly at a Dublin school for young ladies and later at the Dominican Convent, St Catherine of Siena, at Drogheda. Her schooling was sparse and was not helped by increasing poor eyesight which she later referred to as "purbblind" which forced her in later life to seek treatment in Germany. At one point in her early life Katharine remembers "kneeling by a big chair, my face on my folded arms, because I could not bear the light" (*Memories*, 388). Her poor eyesight is evident in some of her later letters and certainly towards the end of her life. In her last years she relied on her daughter Pamela to act as an amanuensis.

One could argue that there were three major friendships in Katharine's life outside her family, the first being Fr Matthew Russell, S.J., editor of the *Irish Monthly*. Katharine had submitted a long ballad, "The Legend of the Painted Windows" and was asked to meet the editor. The ballad was published in July 1880 and Fr Matthew Russell became a life-long friend

and mentor. The second friendship resulted from Fr Matthew Russell's suggestion to write to the Catholic literary couple Alice and Wilfrid Meynell and Katharine met them on a visit to London in 1884. This soon enabled Katharine to publish in the Catholic *Weekly Register* and the Meynells' monthly *Merry England*. The friendship with Alice was deep and lasted until Alice's death in 1922. Some of Alice's letters to Katharine are published in my *Selected Letters of Alice Meynell: Poet and Essayist*. Katharine's affection for Alice is shown in her "Alice Meynell—The Dearest of Women" (*Memories*). The third friendship, though not strictly life-long, was with W. B. Yeats whom she met in June 1885 through the auspices of Charles Hubert Oldham, co-founder of the *Dublin University Review*. Yeats was a frequent visitor to the Tynan home in the 1880s and early 1890s. The friendship was basically one of common literary interests although Yeats did propose unsuccessfully to Katharine on 19 July 1891. Unfortunately very few of Katharine's letters to Yeats appear to have survived but those to her from him are in *Yeats Letters*, and show that both were involved with Irish literature to the extent of collaboration on *Poems and Ballads of Young Ireland* published in 1888. This collaboration and the interest in Irish literature was in part a contribution to the Celtic revival in which Katharine played a minor part through her poetry. Katharine also visited the Rev. Fagan and family in Norfolk.

Wilfrid Meynell introduced Katharine to the publisher Kegan Paul and with the financial support of her father her first volume of poetry *Louise de la Vallière and Other Poems* was published in 1885 and was generally well received, with letters from William and Christina Rossetti, and also Cardinal Manning: Katharine had started on her life as a poet. She began to publish in America, notably in the Catholic *Ave Maria* and later in the *Providence Journal*. Horace Reynolds in his *A Providence Episode in the Irish Literary Renaissance* (Providence: 1929) notes that Katharine contributed some sixty poems (11). Kegan Paul published her second volume of poetry *Shamrocks* in 1887 to good reviews including two from Yeats. His father John Butler Yeats completed a portrait of Katharine in 1886.

1888 was a major year in her life when she met the Trinity College scholar Henry ("Harry") Albert Hinkson, who, incidentally, had been at one stage in the same form at the Harcourt Street High School, Dublin, as Yeats. Harry was a Protestant and the Catholic Church did not take too kindly to such marriages and they were eventually married in England at the Register Office, in Kingston, Surrey, on 4 May 1893. Despite Katharine staying with the Meynells before the wedding they, being strong Catholics (both converts), did not appear to have attended the wedding.

Harry did convert on his deathbed in 1919.

Further literary recognition reached Katharine in 1888 when she was the subject of "Living Irish Literary Celebrities No. 1—Katharine Tynan", in the *Nation*, 3 November, at the age of twenty-nine, with the opening comment: "The first we have chosen for our subject is a writer, not old in years, but of sufficient merit in achievement to have made a distinct place for herself in the literary history of our generation."

Katharine reviewed both Wilfrid Blunt and Yeats in the following year and became one of the few women contributors to the *Scots Observer* (later the *National Observer*) then under the editorship of W. E. Henley. To Wilfrid Meynell the relationship with Yeats suggested that there was more to it than literature and mere friendship and Katharine had to rebuke him with "Willie Yeats is not a swain;—of mine;—he is too inhuman to love or to be loved,—but I have curiously baulked him for years, and feel that he has so much claim upon me" (22 May 1889). She came to England in the summer of 1889, staying first with the Meynells, then with Yeats in Chiswick, the Blunts in Sussex, friends in Oxford and the Fagans in Norfolk and finally the Meynells in London. She was now well established in England and this no doubt helped her to live in England later on. This connection with England was further reinforced when she became Godmother to the Meynells' daughter Olivia in 1890.

Naturally politics played a part in her life being Irish. She was a supporter of the Protestant politician Charles Stewart Parnell and the first chapter of her *Memories* is on Parnell, who stood for the rather vague term "Home Rule" in Ireland whereby there would an assembly looking after Irish affairs. All was well until Parnell's affair with Mrs Kitty O'Shea came to light and the subsequent divorce in November 1890 which caused a rift among his supporters. Katharine, however, still supported him and castigated the priests for their interference

It is a bad day for the Church. I can say to you what I can't to the Catholic men here, whom I try to persuade that the action of the priests cannot affect the divine impersonal Church. There is the bitterest feeling against the priests. They are autocrats here, and as insolent as autocrats are. Yesterday they went about Dublin streets meeting the black looks with faces beaming with triumph (24 December 1890 to Alice Meynell).

In the same letter she writes

Yesterday evening coming home in the steam-tram, I sat opposite two priests one of whom used to be a warm friend of mine, the other a frequent visitor here. Except to shake hands when I came in and got out, they

ignored me as if I had done something which cut me off, and they talked anti-Parnellite with ungenerous triumph all the time.

And again

I wonder what the English think now as to ~~the~~ Home Rule and Rome Rule being synonymous terms. I hope we'll never get Home Rule till the priests are made to understand that when they step down from their sacred office to be politicians they have no more right or importance or sanctity than other men.

Katharine's support for Parnell caused her anxiety and she recounts "The Parnell Split" in her *Reminiscences*.

Katharine's third volume of poetry *Ballads and Lyrics* was published in 1891 as was her *A Nun, Her Friends and Her Order: the Life of M. X. Fallon* which was heavily criticised in the *National Press* no doubt because of her support for Parnell. The *Catholic Times* noted that Katharine was unable to write prose equally as well as poetry. However, the English press was complimentary. Her *Ballads and Lyrics* was reviewed by Yeats in the *Dublin Evening Herald* who was glad that she had improved her work "by study both of the old Irish ballads and of the modern writers I have named" and that the present book "is well nigh in all things a thoroughly Irish book" rather than under English influence. This criticism of national influence was later to apply to some of her novels. Katharine's affection for Alice resulted in her appraisal "Alice Meynell" in the *Magazine of Poetry* in 1891.

Katharine's journalism increased in 1892 when she became a regular reviewer for the *Irish Daily Independent*, while Harry Hinkson wrote short titbits of university news often under the heading "Trinity Intelligence" for the same paper and he also wrote for the *Dublin Evening Herald*. Katharine published her first anthology *Irish Love-Songs* which included two poems from Yeats and two of her own. A letter to Alice in March shows that she and Harry intended to marry once Harry was settled in London as she saw her future in England among the new friends, especially the Meynells. Harry published *Student Life in Trinity College, Dublin* but she entreated Wilfrid Meynell not to look at it critically!

1893 was a momentous year for Katharine: marriage and settling in England in May. Prior to the move she had to meet Lady Aberdeen to discuss her own visit to Donegal as she contributed an article "The Cottage Industries of Donegal" in the *Guide to The Irish Industrial Village and Blarney Castle* for the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1 May to 30 October 1893. This meeting led to a lifelong friendship with Lord and Lady Aberdeen despite the social differences. She contributed articles on



Alice Meynell in the *Sketch* and W. B. Yeats in the *Sketch* and the *Bookman* and was herself interviewed for the *Sketch*. She was now a regular contributor to the *Bookman* and she was signing herself with either surname or both. Harry had advertised in the *Weekly Register* as a private tutor for university and army entrance and eventually found employment at a Mr Maguire's, an army crammer. Katharine was now leading a full literary and social life and her *Middle Years* gives ample proof. Yeats and she continued to meet whenever he was in London. Unfortunately she had a miscarriage in July.

The next year brought more sadness: Katharine had a stillborn child. The birth was looked for more so than normal as Harry, a Protestant, had agreed to the child being brought up as a Catholic. Katharine wrote to Alice

I have been wanting to tell you that Harry has yielded about the baby after all; it is to be a Catholic in any case, and Father Dawson is to baptize it. I know how glad you and Wilfrid will be. When I say "yielded" it is scarcely the right word, for there was no pressure. I had only to ask him. He made no concession of it. I love him so much better every day it grows almost too much (10 May 1894).

In July Katharine and Harry spent a month in Ireland for recuperation but as usual Katharine was reviewing as she requested John Lane to send her books. From February 1894 to August the following year Katharine wrote a monthly "London Letter" for the American *Literary World*. Despite her sadness Katharine managed to publish two books in 1894, *Cuckoo Songs* and the prose *A Cluster of Nuts: being Sketches among My Own People*. Katharine reviewed the first issue of the *Yellow Book* in the *Literary World* commenting that it was "not differing greatly from other magazines except by displaying the eccentric influence of Mr. Aubrey Beardsley, which gives it its individuality". Harry left his teaching post at Maguire's as there had been complaints about his attitude towards the boys and concentrated on writing although this was not very financially rewarding.

A major scoop occurred in late 1895 or early 1896 when Katharine became one of the unsigned women-only contributors to the "Wares of Autolycus" column in the *Pall Mall Gazette* a post she shared with Alice Meynell. Katharine published her first collection of stories *An Isle in the Water* in 1895 to mixed reviews. The *Academy* damned the book saying that she could not write prose and that it was a trait not uncommon in the Irish, but there were complimentary reviews. Harry published his *Dublin Verses by Members of Trinity College*. Another disaster befell Katharine and Harry when their son Godfrey Assumption Francis who was born on

17 August 1895 died of rickets dyspepsia on 30 September. Harry was still looking for permanent employment. With May Probyn Katharine published a very slim *Christmas Verses* in 1895 which consisted of four poems by May and two by Katharine.

The following year Katharine suffered rejections from *Blackwoods Magazine* but was successful with the *National Observer*. In June they moved to 107 Blenheim Crescent, London: "We did it really to be near to the Meynells" (*Middle Years*, 154). They then went to Dublin until the end of October.

Theobald ("Toby") Henry Hinkson was born on 12 August 1897 and Harry went to Ireland in September.

Katharine published *The Wind in the Trees: A Book of Country Verses* dedicated to Alice Meynell in 1898 although there had been some dispute with Yeats over the title. Katharine had suggested some titles for her book to the publisher Grant Richards and in a letter to Yeats (13 May 1898) wrote: "I sent him [Richards] a list, showing my preference for *Country Airs*. At the end of the letter I wrote—'Only for W. B. Yeats's *Wind Among the Reeds* *The Wind in the Trees* might be a bad title'." There were more rejections from Blackwoods, and also one from John Lane as a result of a reader's assessment.

This year was the first mention of Katharine's financial problems as she thanked Wilfrid Meynell for a loan, an arrangement that lasted for the rest of her life. Harry's publications and teaching did not provide them with enough financial security and the rewards for Katharine's writing were small and inconsistent. Some sense of financial stability only came later with her novels, or "pot-boilers" as she called them.

Giles ("Bunny"/"Patrick") Aylmer Hinkson was born 7 February 1899 in London after they returned from Pilot View, Dalkey, Co. Dublin for the birth. They then returned to Ireland until late April or early May. Katharine was commissioned to revise the four volume *The Cabinet of Irish Literature: Selections from the Works of the Chief Poets, Orators, and Prose Writers of Ireland* which had been published in 1879-80. This was a major undertaking and was published in 1902-03. She did not include herself but included an extract from Harry's latest book *The King's Deputy*. A notable exclusion was Oscar Wilde and writing to Fr Russell, 29 April 1903, she remarked

I believe I did make up my mind to exclude Oscar Wilde, as I thought his name would do the book no good. Of course it was compiled before he had made any sign of repentance: but anyhow I should have been afraid to include him.

Further success came in the Spring of 1899 when Katharine learnt that McClurg of Chicago had bought editions of her work.

The Hinksons moved back to Ealing in the first week of June 1900 and their daughter Pamela was born on 19 November. Katharine's well-known poem "Sheep and Lambs" ("All in the April evening") was included in Quiller-Couch's *Oxford Book of English Verse*. There is one intriguing issue for this year as Katharine is reported to have obtained a grant of £400 from the Royal Bounty Fund *and* also a grant of £300 from the Royal Literary Fund. This was in a letter from Downing Street to the secretary of the Royal Literary Fund, 5 November 1925, with the request "let me have your observations in regard to this case". There is no mention of these amounts in Katharine's letters of 1900 or at any other time.

Katharine had met the writer May Sinclair at a Women Writers' Dinner in the summer of 1900 and they began a correspondence with Sinclair becoming a frequent visitor.

Katharine's affection for Alice was again shown by her unsigned poem "Alice" in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 November 1900, which was later included in her *Collected Poems*.

The Hinksons went to Dublin in late April 1901 visiting an old friend Mary Gill and returning in early March to Ealing. Katharine turned to the well-known literary agent J. B. Pinker to help with publication. In July the Hinksons spent their holiday at Pounds Farm, Oakley, Surrey, before staying at the King's Arms at Oakley in August until early September when they returned to Ealing. Katharine published her novel *A Union of Hearts* and her *Poems* towards the end of the year. The Boer war had started in October 1899 and in 1901 Katharine wrote an article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* about James Anderson, the son of a friend, who had been killed the previous year. This was the first of articles, poems and correspondence about war which later marked an important era of her life during the Great War.

In late April 1902 Harry was called to the Bar of the Inner Temple and the Hinksons went to Ireland for about a month. In August they spent three weeks at Ambleuse on the French coast at the suggestion of York Powell, Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, a holiday Katharine recounts in her *Middle Years* (288-91). They then returned to the King's Arms for three weeks, returning to Ealing on 1 October. The return was saddened by the death of their friend the poet Lionel Johnson and Katharine and Harry attended the funeral. The *Athenaeum* of 8 November noted that Katharine was to publish an edition of Lionel Johnson's poems but his family vetoed this. However, Katharine's *Pall Mall Gazette* article of 6 October 1902 was used as an introduction to

“Poems by Lionel Johnson” in the *Bibelot* (1904).

There are a few surviving letters for 1903. Much was taken up with visiting or receiving friends such as the Meynells and May Sinclair. Katharine declined to offer work to *T.T's Weekly* as they set a word limit which she found too low. She and Harry entertained the publisher Eveleigh Nash for dinner in May and he eventually published Katharine's *Memories* in 1924. In October they were back at the King's Arms while the water pipes were unblocked at home: a stay of about two weeks!

In a letter to Pinker Katharine commented on her *A Union of Hearts*, first published by Nisbet in 1901

I am sorry the book did so badly, for I know it is a good book: but I have come belatedly to the conclusion that it is their Irishism that is against the success of my books, & intend to devote myself to England for the future.

This was true and she did write strongly for the English market but her heart was still in Ireland.

The art collector and dealer Hugh Percy Lane wished to include John Butler Yeats's portrait of Katharine in the Irish art section at the World's Fair in St Louis in 1904. Unfortunately for Katharine Lane found the cost of insurance for shipping prohibitive and instead held an exhibition at the Guildhall, London, in the summer of 1903. That summer they spent on the French coast. In July Katharine had suggested to the Governing Body at Winchester College that a memorial tablet be erected to the memory of its old boy Lionel Johnson. No action was taken until July 1904 when a design was approved. Katharine and Harry each gave a pound and a plaque in Latin was erected and Katharine acted as a collector of subscriptions in England and Ireland.

In April 1905 Katharine received a commission worth £150 to write a serial for the *British Weekly* which was subsequently published as “For Maisie” in 1906 and later in book form. This joy was tempered by the death in May of her old friend and Pamela's Godmother Mary Gill of Dublin. Katharine's *A Little Book for Mary Gill's Friends* appeared in 1906. Katharine's interest in literature and death resulted in *A Book of Memory, the Birthday Book of the Blessed Dead* with extracts from poetry and prose for every day. The Hinksons paid their third visit to France staying at Audresselles, Pas de Calais (*Middle Years*, 298-300). Katharine's father died on 7 September 1905 and is briefly mentioned in a letter of 24 June 1907 to Fr Daniel Hudson: “I miss him more sadly than ever since we have come to the country.”

In November 1906 Katharine wrote to *The Times* being shocked that the suffrage women in prison should be treated as common criminals and

ends with telling remark: "I have never hitherto desired to vote, but these doings make me think. I ask myself why my gardener should have a vote and I not have one."

In a letter to Mrs Keith Gilbert Chesterton (5 November 1906) Katharine thanks her for an invitation to visit one evening but writes

I am so blind that for a long time now I have not been able to get about unaccompanied after dark. I realized how very blind I was the other day when I took my working glasses to an optician to ask if I could have anything stronger, & he told me, after taking a deal of trouble that they could do nothing for me. I had reached the limit.

Katharine's brother-in-law John O'Mahony had died in 1904 and Katharine published *A Little Book for John O'Mahony's Friends* in 1906.

Another friend died in early 1907, the journalist Vernon Blackburn. Katharine was now suffering from "wheel" headaches something she had in common with Alice Meynell. April saw Katharine support the successful application to the Royal Literary Fund by the short story writer and journalist Alexander Gordon. The Hinksons were now house hunting and on 16 June moved to Greenhurst, Chipperfield, King's Langley, and in a letter to Dora Shorter (18 May 1907) they are thinking of getting a horse which they did. Katharine was to attend the Women Writers' Dinner in London on 17 June acting as hostess to Lady Augusta Gregory but was unwell and Alice Meynell stepped into the breach. In August Katharine wrote to both Wilfrid Blunt and Lord Rothschild seeking financial support for a small Catholic mission in Chipperfield ("in this very bigoted corner of England") but it did not materialise. In November 1907 Francis Thompson died and Wilfrid Meynell telegraphed to Katharine asking her to "pay tribute to him in *Pall Mall*". Katharine's "Francis Thompson: An Appreciation" appeared on 23 November. In December the *Tablet* noted that

Mrs. Katharine Tynan Hinkson will contribute to the forthcoming number of *The Fortnightly Review* an appreciation of the poetry of Francis Thompson, a poet to whom she was personally known.

This did not happen and Katharine's article was finally published in February 1910. No reason for the delay has been found.

Since 1887 Katharine had been corresponding with the editor of *Ave Maria* Fr Daniel Hudson and in early 1908 she asked him to send used stamps from around the world for her children which he did. She had also been corresponding with the author Frank James Mathew since 1900, who

had lived near them when they were in Blenheim Crescent. In May 1908 Katharine writes to Frank Mathew about Toby: "We put him into a very jolly preparatory school at Watford to come home week-ends: but he ran away three times & we have now given it up." Katharine published "The Neglect of Irish Writers" in the *Catholic World*, April 1908 stating that "a great tragedy...is the disappearance of the Irish writer" and that "the Irish are not a reading people" but rather oral. She then balances this with the emergence of new writers but is anyone reading them? Harry published *Father Alphonsus*, a story questioning those who become priests without a vocation which received a fair review in the *Tablet* although Katharine writes that the *Tablet* was denounced for its lenient review. At the end of the year Katharine published her volume of poetry *Experiences*.

*A Little Book for John O'Mahony's Friends* was reprinted by Thomas Mosher in 1909. Writing to Frank Mathews on 6 January 1909 she complains that reviewers "take it for granted that I'm at my usual game of boiling the pot & writing down to girls,—who are in my experience a most thankless audience". Katharine was forced to write for financial gain to support her family and she makes the point that she does not write poetry for the same ends.

In the same letter she explains why the family is always on the move: "We are wanting to get away from here for a bit,—not that we are not happy but that at long last I am impatient of being always in the one spot." Her *Experiences*, published the previous year, received poor reviews and Katharine felt it necessary to write to Lascelles Abercrombie to express her gratitude for his positive review. In May the family spent some weeks in Malvern with the intention of finding a school for Toby but the right school could not be found. In August Alice Meynell and Ezra Pound visited. In a letter to Fr Hudson (22 October 1909) Katharine sheds light on the governess's use of language in relation to a child when

On one occasion it was because she required Pamela to read a line in Beth-Gelert... "Hell-hound, thou hast devoured my child", the governess required to be read as "Bad dog, thou hast devoured my child". Pamela thought the substitution inadequate & refused to read it: so I agree with you as to the sufferings of children from the stupidity of grown-ups.

In 1910 Katharine introduced the writer Lucy Lyttelton to the American publisher Thomas Mosher who published Lyttelton's *Lyrical Poems* the same year. Katharine was now an irregular contributor to the American *Collier's Weekly*. Writing to Kathleen McDonnell in America in April Katharine says they were about to move to Southborough in Kent, a stay described in a chapter of *Middle Years*. Southborough was chosen so

that Toby and Giles could go to Tonbridge School as day-boys, which they did. They had rented the house for twenty-one years, their longest intention to say in one place, but realised that they had made a mistake and eventually managed to lease the house and they stayed at various addresses until, after a holiday in Ireland in the summer of 1911 and a return to Southborough, they finally moved to Ireland for Christmas 1911. During this unsettled period Katharine contributed poems to *McClure's Magazine* and published *Paradise Farm* and *Princess Katharine* in America. She also published *New Poems*. In May she attended the Women Writers' Dinner in London.

Once settled in Ireland the family took on a country life with an orchard and a hundred chickens. Even though they had made a permanent base in Ireland they hoped to spend summers in London. In July Katharine reviewed May Sinclair's *The Three Brontës* in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Toby won a Foundation Scholarship to Tonbridge and became a boarder. Unfortunately this did not last and he ran away and finally he went to the Dublin High School which both Harry and W. B. Yeats had attended and where Giles was also. In July Katharine made the first reference to a post for Harry: "I want a comfortable opportunity for H. for our old age. A Resident Magistracy in Wicklow, Kildare or Meath would do: but I won't go to the hinterland." This hope was filled through the generosity of Lord Aberdeen in 1914 but in Co. Mayo. In 1912 Katharine started on her first autobiography *Reminiscences* published the following year.

Early in 1913 Katharine wrote to the *Irish Times* concerning a cruelty to animals case, a cause very dear to her. Her major publications that year were her selection of Irish poetry, *The Wild Harp*, *Reminiscences* and her *Irish Poems*. Although she had never met the politician George Wyndham, one time Chief Secretary for Ireland, they had corresponded and in 1913 she and Harry were invited to Wyndham's son's wedding in April but were unable to attend. George Wyndham died later that year and his son Percy was killed in 1914. Katharine once more praised Alice with her "Mrs Meynell and her Poetry" in the *Catholic World* in August. In October Katharine stayed at the home of Judge John Ross, later Lord Chancellor of Ireland, in Co. Tyrone. The year closed with Yeats writing about *Reminiscences* to Lady Gregory on 9 November (*Yeats Letters*) that

It contains—without permission—pages of my letters when I was twenty one or two, to me now very curious letters. I recognize the thought, but the personality seems to me someone else. The book which is careless & sometimes stupid contains a great deal that moves me, for it is a very vivid picture of that Dublin of my youth.

Katharine wrote to Yeats on 17 December

Mrs Meynell told me that you were not angry with me for using your letters in *Reminiscences* I was afraid to ask you lest you should say no. Anyhow I didn't think I had committed any indiscretion, and I am glad to see that people recognising you as one of the heroes of the book.

Yeats replied on 19 December 1913

I liked your book very much and not merely because it brought back so many memories. You have the gift to describe many people with sympathy and even with admiration, and yet to leave them their distinct characters. Most people have to choose between caricature & insipidity. I was especially interested in all that period just before I knew you. You called up the romance of a forgotten phase of politics and gave it dignity.

Katharine was happily settled in Ireland but she wrote to Frank Mathew on 16 December 1913 that

Harry obstinately refuses to settle. He is really happy but doesn't know it. We are both far better in health than we were in England. He gets very good health & as for me I have never been so well before thanks to the giver of all good things. He sighs for London & the Savage Club.

In 1914 John Butler Yeats's portrait of Katharine appeared with an entry in the *Catholic Who's Who*. In June she published *The Flower of Peace: a Collection of Devotional Poetry* an interesting title in view of the coming conflict. At the end of April Katharine accompanied Lady Aberdeen to Rome for the Quinquennial Meeting of the International Congress of Women in Rome of which Lady Aberdeen was President (*Years of the Shadow*, ch. XIII "Rome"). While in Rome she had an audience with the Pope and wrote articles for the *Westminster Gazette*, *Freeman's Journal* and *The Times*.

The rest of the year and the three succeeding years were highly influenced by the Great War, a period dealt with in her *Years of the Shadow*. Finally Harry had found, or been given, a full-time post. *The Times*, 7 October 1914, had a short announcement that the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (Lord Aberdeen) had appointed Harry as Resident Magistrate for Co. Mayo to be stationed at Castlebar. The *Irish Independent* of 10 October published

The Council of the Incorporated Law Society has passed a resolution against the appointment of Mr. H. A. Hinkson, a member of the English



Bar, as resident magistrate in Ireland. The Council regard the appointment as a slight upon the legal profession in Ireland, and repeat their protest against the action of the Executive in ignoring the claims of members of the solicitors' profession for such appointments.

In the *Wandering Years* (54) Katharine includes the following

To Mr. Hinkson, R.M.

There was a bit of a kick-up about your appointment as an R.M., but you have well justified the opinion of those who put you here. You are a gentleman every inch, and your decisions are always of such a nature as to give satisfaction. You are incapable of even a scintilla of prejudice, and you have no political humours. Your estimable lady has made her name in the world of letters you have established yours here as a high-minded and impartial magistrate.

Katharine visited Harry in Castlebar to help him settle in. The Great War now began to take its toll of Katharine's friends and acquaintances. Many of her letters of the period contained references to the young men who were killed and Katharine wrote commemorative verse and also published two volumes of poetry, *Flower of Youth: Poems in War Time* in 1915 and *The Holy War* in 1916.

In a letter to Harry, 23 November 1914, Katharine writes: "I've been writing war poems, four this morning & I've got a happy idea. I'm going to put together an Anniversary Book of those killed in the war." She later refers to this as *The Roll of Honour: A Book of Glories & Illusion* and it appears it was written but not published. It was written on the lines of *A Book of Memory*. In December she stayed with the Aberdeens in Dublin.

Katharine's last stay with the Aberdeens was in February 1915 before they left office to return to England and she wrote two newspaper reports about their departure. Katharine and the children moved to Carradoyne, Claremorris, Co. Mayo, to be with Harry. In May Katharine published a study of her friend and poet George William Russell (AE) in *T. Ps Weekly*. She wrote to the *Irish Times* complaining that she had to pay to send vegetables by train for soldiers in city hospitals and suggested free carriage or a nominal sum. The title poem of *The Flower of Youth* became so popular that the publishers issued it as a separate item. Since the start of the Great War Katharine had kept a

War Book...mainly a collection of conversations & letters & may make me famous in a century or so. It will take that time to mellow. When all the War books have been long forgotten this will give a glimpse of what was being talked of & written about in 1914-15-16. (12 November 1915).

This she called *A Woman's Notes in War-Time: Observations from a Quiet Corner* but it was never published. Giles went to Sandhurst on 27 November 1916 and passed out on 30 April 1917 to join the Royal Dublin Fusiliers as a 2nd Lt. Toby was already serving as a 2nd Lt. in the 3rd Royal Irish Regiment. On 8 December 1916 writing to Wilfrid Meynell Katharine makes passing reference to the Easter Rising in April: "Did you not feel for me in our own little war here. It was terrible but very wonderful too." Chapters cover the Rising in *Years of the Shadow*. There is no discussion on the Rising in the letters I have seen. It is possible her concern for her two soldier sons and the sons of friends was paramount. Writing to Alice in December Katharine remarks that

You will be amused to hear that I spoke at a Recruiting Meeting at Ballinasloe 14 miles from here the other night! Got a tremendous reception. I have written a recruiting song to be printed on the recruiting circulars for the West.

In July 1916 Katharine and Pamela moved to Brookhill, a house in Claremorris, which she describes in *Years of the Shadow*.

1917 saw Katharine applying to the Royal Literary Fund for £100 outlying her and Harry's financial incomes and admitting that she "never was a popular writer". George Wyndham's sister the Countess of Wemyss wrote in support as did AE. The application was successful and she received £50. Part of the money was needed to pay for a car for Harry. Her financial straits forced her to sell some seventy odd letters from W. B. Yeats to the American book buyer George D. Smith for £100 in the following year. Harry had been contributing to the *Bookman* since 1911 as a reviewer. Katharine wrote to the *Irish Times* concerning the welfare of Irish girls arriving at Irish and English ports seeking employment. She published *Late Songs* and published an article "Recent Irish Poetry".

Finance was still a problem and early in 1918 she approached the journalist Clement King Shorter, who had become a friend, for £20. She had published an introduction to the poems of Shorter's late wife Dora and also two articles. She also reviewed John Butler Yeats's *Essays: Irish and American*. During the summer Lord Linlithgow as Colonel of the Royal Scots spent ten weeks at the Hinksons' house, an episode recounted in *Years of the Shadow*.

1919 opened with a disaster, Harry, as a Catholic, died quite suddenly on 11 January at home after a week's illness. Katharine and Pamela's life changed and they moved to Killiney, Co. Dublin, on 14 February. In May they and Pamela returned to England visiting friends in Scotland and

returning to Ireland in October. The major publishing event for Katharine was *The Years of the Shadow* which generally received good reviews, although she was attacked in one review for her alleged snobbery.

Katharine applied to the Royal Literary Fund in 1920 and received £150. Giles Hinkson went to Magdalene College, Cambridge, in 1920 under a government scheme for returning officers. Christmas 1920 was spent in London.

There was major civil unrest in Ireland, the Anglo-Irish war, at this time but it hardly merits a mention in Katharine's letters, although it is dealt with in *The Wandering Years*. Katharine had hoped to secure a financial future through film rights in America for one or more of her books but nothing came of it.

Toby was married in Dublin in January 1921 although Katharine and Pamela did not attend as it was to be a quiet one. In February Katharine and Pamela went to Italy returning to London and then to Ireland in May. Once again Katharine applied to the Royal Literary Fund but was refused. She wrote to *The Times* in September to counter a quotation in a book review which criticized the Aberdeens. The Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in December 1921 and in an article in the *Star* Katharine expressed her admiration for Lloyd George.

Katharine's concern for social issues resulted in a letter to *The Times* on the employment of daughters as a result of correspondence on the employment of sons. In May Katharine and Pamela left for Cologne an adventure recorded in Katharine's *Life in the Occupied Zone* which gives an insight into the relationships between the Allies and the German people and this is reflected in her letters of the period. While abroad she still kept in touch with events in Ireland and on the killing of Michael Collins she wrote to *The Times* expressing her admiration for the eloquence of General Mulcahy in the *Dial*. While in Germany Katharine visited an oculist as her eyesight was becoming worse. The end of the year brought a major disaster for Katharine as her beloved friend Alice died in November and Katharine contributed "Alice Meynell. The Poets' Poet" in *The Times*. Katharine's *Evensong* was published in 1922 but was not universally well received.

Clement Shorter commissioned Katharine to write of her experiences in Germany for the *Sphere* which she did in 1923. Katharine wrote to the *Irish Times* complaining about the suffering of animals in the current civil unrest pleading for concern for them should their owners' houses have to be burnt. They returned to London for a quick visit in June and then back to Cologne. In December they were back in Dublin until a permanent move to London in 1924. Pamela's *The End of All Dreams* was published

in 1923 and earned good reviews. Katharine's *Memories* was rejected by Constables but published by Nash and Grayson in 1924. Toby went to East Africa without his wife and daughter who were to follow and Giles had found employment in South America in late 1924. Katharine's letter to *The Times* pleaded better conditions for shop girls. She submitted a story of Pam's who wrote under the name Peter Deane to Macmillans but it was rejected.

Katharine and Pamela, together with Toby's son and nurse, went to France in October 1924 and did not return until the end of November 1925. In a letter to Patterson Webb (26 April 1925) Katharine writes that she was "terribly blind", however, her handwriting was still legible. Later in the year in a dictated letter to Wilfrid Meynell, 16 November, she writes

I know you will be sorry the hear I have had eye trouble more or less since last May which first took my reading from me, & for the last six or seven weeks my writing. You can imagine what that means to me, but I have been under treatment with a very good oculist, & though I can still see only dimly, I have actually got back to work today.

Pamela achieved success with *The Victors* a novel which depicted the lack of help and acknowledgement for returning officers seeking employment. Late June and July were spent in Ireland as house guests of the widow of the late Nicholas Synnott and the party included John Betjeman and the future Warden of Wadham, Oxford, Maurice Bowra and this resulted in an article in the *Star*. Katharine still owed money to Wilfrid and sent a fifth of her debt to him in July. Katharine appealed for funds to help the setting up of a Dublin animal sanctuary in a letter to the *Irish Times*. In November she opened a sale of work in support of the sanctuary in Dublin. December saw her apply again to the Royal Literary Fund and she received £125 in January 1927. Katharine's final single volume of poetry *Twilight Songs* was published. Later in the year they were again living in Dublin and back in London by June 1928. In late October they were back in Ireland and in London by May 1930, their final English destination. Sometime in the autumn of 1928, either September or early October, they visited Dr Hermann Pagenstecher at the famous eye hospital in Wiesbaden so Katharine could have some treatment. She hoped to have another volume of verse published but it was not so and in 1930 her *Collected Poems* was published with a foreword by AE, W. B. Yeats having declined to edit the book, a task then undertaken by Monk Gibbon. She had hoped for an American edition as well but it did not happen. She wrote to *The Times* in April 1930 on the demise of the weekly *Irish Statesman*. Katharine's last community undertaking was to collect books and manuscripts from well-

known writers to support the British Legion of Ex-Servicemen Donnybrook Fair which was held from 12 to 14 June 1930 in Dublin. Among the writers who donated books for Katharine were Edmund Blunden, Siegfried Sassoon, R. C. Sherriff, A. P. Herbert, Arnold Zweig, and Wilfrid Owen's mother. Katharine donated a Yeats letter and an AE letter. G. K. Chesterton gave a copy of his *Collected Poems*. At the end of 1930 Katharine had a nervous breakdown and in January 1931 she again applied to the Royal Literary Fund and received £100 while she was in a nursing home. Walter de la Mare was instrumental in obtaining this. In March Katharine was awarded a Civil List Pension of £80. An appeal was launched among her friends in Ireland. In her letter to Wilfrid Meynell, 14 January 1931, Katharine writes: "We are so lonely."

Katharine died on 2 April 1931 and was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, London, her grave beside that of Alice Meynell.

Writing of her own work to Frank Mathew (16 December 1913) she says: "You'd be amazed to know how very unsuccessful I am, although I earn a decent income by doing all sorts of chores. But a handful of people whose approval I dearly prize like my poetry & my prose at its best."

Katharine was both Irish and English in her literary output and outlook: she felt affinity for both countries.

I had lived eighteen years in England. I had come to believe that affection for England and love of Ireland could quite well go hand in hand. I was enthusiastically pro-Ally. Both my boys were pledged to the War—by their own choice. They had grown up to adore Ireland without ever doubting that they might have an affection for the country in which they were born. During those years of English life we had never suffered because we were Irish (*Years of the Shadow*, 204-5).

And "I don't think Imperialism incompatible with broad Irish nationalism. I am an Imperialist myself & I wish we were all quiet & at peace..." (to James Louis Garvin, 4 December 1913).

## EDITORIAL PROCEDURES

No edition of Katharine's letters has previously been published but many to her have been published, notably in *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats* (text and electronic versions). The current selection of Katharine's letters consists of three hundred and eighty-one letters. The layout of the letters has been standardised. The holding institution is indicated to the left of the letterhead. Any previous major publication or quotation of a letter is then noted. The position of the address is to the right irrespective of its original position and a printed or embossed address is signified by italics. Below the address the date has been standardised. Postscripts are retained after the closure, whether written as an afterthought at the letterhead or not. Katharine's spelling has been retained throughout, as has her punctuation, except where clarity demands an alteration or insertion. Cancelled passages are generally silently excised and illegible words are indicated within square brackets and words inserted by Katharine have been silently included. Where the sense demands, an apparently omitted word may be added within square brackets. The closing of the letters has been centralised irrespective of the original position. Her handwriting gradually became worse with age and very poor eyesight which she termed "purblind".

Where a reference in the text is unidentified a footnote has, in most cases, not been added.