

Monsieur Seton 80pp
With Compliments & kind regards
Edith Hamilton Wyndham Hill

STATEMENT OF FACTS

Re THOMAS HAMILTON

(CALLED ILIVE—AFTERWARDS AYLIFFE)

AND HIS FAMILY,

THE LATE EARL OF EGREMONT,

AND

THE WYNDHAM-ILIVE FAMILY.

C. H. W. Hill

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.

1889.



STATEMENT OF FACTS.

My grandfather, Thomas Hamilton Ilive, afterwards Ayliffe, a descendant of the Duke of Hamilton, was left with his sisters, from his third or fourth year—first with his mother—to strangers' care. When only three years old, his father, whose crime was the publication of a seditious pamphlet, and speaking publicly against the Government, fled under attainder, and the only *personal* remembrance retained of him by his son was being awakened in the dead of night and taken out of bed to kiss and bid his father farewell—for ever, as the event proved.

He, recalling the fact with distinctness, remembered that his father wore a glittering dress (uniform or court dress), a plumed hat, and that a sword hung at his side with a jewelled hilt, with which he, child-like, toyed, while the father held him on his knee, caressing him and stroking his head, and the mother clinging around her husband weeping.

Of his mother—a very beautiful woman—he remembered more, having seen her later; but from the time of his father's departure, in their

relations with her, there appears to have been mystery and restraint.

Their home was changed from a castle to a cottage buried in trees; his mother wore black clothes; was called by another name—Mrs. Ilive.¹ He mentions having asked her *why* they called her so instead of “My Lady,” and her replying that he must not speak of that, and looking terrified and weeping when she bade him be silent.

The next great event of his life seems to have been parting from this mother, at the remembrance of whom he would weep like a woman whenever he spoke of her up to the hour of his death, which took place quite suddenly in his eightieth year.

With his sisters, in the care of a priest and other servants, he was placed on board ship—he must have been eight years old then—and taken abroad to Germany, thence to France.

The sisters were placed in a convent for their education, and he was sent to school.

Three or four years later the news of their mother's death arrived, also that of their trustee and guardian, O'Brien; and it was intimated to them that the Earl of Egremont, their *sole* guardian, and trustee (I am unaware whether *sole* trustee or not) would arrive shortly to convey them to their home in England, Petworth House.

On his (the Earl's) arrival my grandfather

¹ In later years he learnt the *why* and *wherefore* of all this sorrow and mystery.

learnt that *he* was to go to college, and that at college he was to be known as "Thomas Hamilton-Ilive."

His sisters were to reside at Petworth, under the joint care of the Earl and his mother, the Dowager-Countess, of whom, however, my grandfather seemed to have no personal recollection, perhaps because the original programme was not carried out, owing to the fact that the Earl, being struck by the great beauty of Elizabeth, the eldest of the family, married her secretly in the convent in which she had resided.

Elizabeth was ten years older than Thomas, her own and only brother—not *half*-brother, as is now sought to be established by members of the family.

The Earl and Countess, with the remainder of the family, came to England, the marriage unavowed *publicly*, as it has remained unto this *very day*.¹

From the clergyman who had watched over their infancy Thomas Hamilton learnt that ILIVE was a password or sign, and had come into existence thus: Thomas Hamilton and his brother fleeing different ways, or one remaining and the other going, had put their butlers into opposite public houses—"vintners' houses" as they were named *then*—one on Holborn Hill and the other

¹ In John Wyndham's library there is an old volume of Burke which mentions the death of the last Earl, and states that he was married, but not to whom.

Cheapside. Over one house appeared the sign "Thomas Ilive," over the other "GEORGE ILIVE," and so long as these signs set up as *names* appeared, the unfortunate fugitives were neither assassinated nor captured. As a means of *future* identification, to the family's name was added Ilive, subsequently changed to Iliffe, and then, by right of purchase in my grandfather's case, to Ayliffe.

All the family documents proving the children's identity had been confided by their lady mother to the care of their relation, trustee, and guardian, O'Brien and Smith O'Brien, from whom they were passed for some years, by purchase of a tenant¹ right, into the hands of the Earl of Thomond; but Thomond held only a *tenant* right or interest in them, and the trust fell ultimately from the O'Brien section into the hands of George Wyndham, Earl of Egremont, who added O'Brien to his name. These particulars are carefully excluded from English records, but Irish archives furnish such evidence. And thus it will be seen how the whole of this unfortunate family and all they

¹ Egremont, by a House of Commons Bill or some other form of law, established *his* right and *his* heir to the Irish estates, which, it was shown, were derived from the Earl of Thomond Damar—Thomas Damar; but I have seen the original deeds in Ireland, and the Earl of Thomond never possessed more than a *tenant* right, a bought and sold right, from O'Byrne—afterwards, in the third generation, O'Brien, in whose trust they were a generation previously confided by Lord Archibald Hamilton (O'Neil the family name). The lands came by marriage settlement on Lady Hamilton, daughter of the Earl of Orkney.

possessed fell into the hands of the Earl of Egremont, of whom my grandfather was wont to remark, "Gold was his god."

No nearer heir appearing, the identity of the true one (my grandfather) being concealed, Lord Egremont's right was confirmed. In 1853 an old retainer of the family came to Adelaide to deliver to the family important documents. My grandfather and father were dead, my brother absent. For him the man went in search to the gold-fields of Australia, but they never met, and we heard no more of him.

Of the character of the illustrious descendant of Percys and Seymours—Briton's boasted sons—were folios of historic data and description furnished, no better idea could be conveyed than is furnished by the graceful tribute of a granddaughter of the noble Earl, when speaking of him to the writer of these lines she said, referring to her ancestor and the then Prince Regent, "They hunted in couples."

Besides hereditary estates, this unfortunate family came into vast funded property as heirs-at-law to or under the will of a great-uncle or grandfather, Sir Benjamin Aylofffe, a wealthy banker, who died in 16—. Aylofffe was a family name; the purchased name Ayliffe is a corruption of the original, I presume.¹

As per arrangement, on coming to England

¹ I am not well up in the Sir Benjamin Aylofffe particulars, many of which (having a clue) I came upon at the Record Office.

Thomas Hamilton was sent to college, where his sisters, all but Elizabeth, lived, whose position with her lord being misunderstood, was deemed equivocal. But one of them became the wife of Colonel Mead, Equerry in waiting to the then Prince Regent, another married the Hon. — Anderson, a member of the Scottish Parliament, and the youngest, Frances, known familiarly as Fanny Ayliffe, married a McCleod. She and her husband were very rich, but they lost some of their wealth in the Indian bubble, described, or the bursting of it, by Thackeray in *The Newcomes*.

During his sojourn at college, Thomas Hamilton contracted a secret marriage with a woman beneath him, and who was, worse still—at that period the penal laws against Catholics being in force—a Roman Catholic. For this offence, he not being of age, although twenty-one at the time, but by his father's will not coming of age until he was twenty-eight years of age, was declared disinherited, and was compelled to quit Cambridge, penniless and in disgrace.

By this time, Elizabeth, Countess of Egremont, had become the mother of several children—all of whom up to the present time have been and still are *declared and believed to be illegitimate*; perhaps, on account of the *second marriage* in the Protestant Church, *are so in a legal sense*.

A quarrel respecting the introduction into the

family circle of an ex-mistress of the Earl, who had relieved the Regent of her and destroyed *her* claim upon the Prince, for a consideration of course. The result of this connection was a daughter, afterwards Countess of Munster; her mother was the once famous beauty, Mrs. Crowe.

This person and her daughter the Earl sought to introduce on terms of equality into the house of his wife and children.

On the Countess raising indignant objection, the brutal Earl replied, "In the eyes of the *law*, you are no better than *she*."

On the instant the Countess, who had *insisted* on her brother being allowed an income, wrote to him informing him of what had taken place.

His indignation knew no bounds. "Leave him, and at once," was the hot advice.

The unfortunate lady did so. Thomas Hamilton Ilive—or Ayliffe as he was now called, bearing the latter name by right of purchase—now threatened the Earl with legal proceedings, for the recovery of his own and his sister's lost rights—trust moneys, embezzled estates, held illegal possession of. The uses to which the trust moneys had been applied were then—and more largely subsequently—purchasing in the Egremont estates (the entail being cut off). At a cost of five hundred pounds my grandfather had his pedigree compiled. Then the Earl—another act of villainy—humbly

craved his Lady's pardon and entreated her to marry him, after the Protestant form, which she did, unfortunately. Two children were born after this marriage, neither of whom survived, and so brutal was the treatment she received that she once more quitted Petworth, and lived with her brother at Hurlingham until she died.¹

With regard to monetary matters Lord Egremont executed a bond, pledging himself to pay Thomas Hamilton thirty thousand pounds a year, to portion his daughters handsomely in marriage, and by annuities to other members of the family to wipe out gradually the immense sums due to the family, and at his death to, by will, cause the Irish estates to revert to him, their true owner. The position taken up by the Earl as a justification of his conduct was that my grandfather had forfeited his rights by marrying contrary to his will, and that by his (the Earl's) marriage with the sister, he obtained a *legal* right to the wealth of her and her brother, which in due course *fell* to the lady.

In course of time, as the children of both families approached maturity, Lord Egremont

¹ Autopsy was at that period unpractised in surgery, and dark suspicion rests upon the Earl for the cause of her death, which occurred suddenly at the moment that she was to have been openly acknowledged as Countess of Egremont. The lady died with no one present but my father, to whom she had some moments previously presented a watch and seals, which my brother now wears.

arranged a programme for their disposal in marriage:—¹

Henry Wyndham Ilive, called commonly Henry Wyndham, to marry the eldest daughter of Thomas Hamilton Ilive; Cecilia, second daughter of Thomas Hamilton Ilive, to marry Francis, afterwards Viscount Gordon; George Hamilton Ilive (my father), to marry the youngest daughter of the Earl of Stanhope.

Instead of carrying out these plans, Frances Ilive married Francis de Courtney, Count de Frischecort; Cecilia, the second daughter, eloped with her drawing-master, John Martin; George married, secretly, Elizabeth Sanders (my mother). The pedigree, at the Earl's instigation, was stolen by Mrs. Jordan, the King's mistress. Lady Egremont died, as I have stated, suddenly, without having made a will, at a moment when preparations were on foot for her presentation at Court as Countess of Egremont. At the Earl's death, Thomas Hamilton Ilive's name was left out of the Earl's will, but he left a letter directing that provision should be made for the family. The "Deed of Indemnification" was in existence, and negotiations were at once opened between the solicitors of Thomas Hamilton Ilive and Colonel George Wyndham Ilive, afterwards first Lord Leconfield, the result of which was a proposal that land should be taken up in one of

¹ This arrangement was anterior to the Countess's death.

the colonies on which the family should settle.

Forty thousand pounds were to be advanced for the purpose of taking up land, stocking and farming it, and building of houses.

Frederick Mitchell was sent as agent, commissioned to take up land, twelve thousand acres, in the colony (South Australia), and to otherwise prepare for the coming of the family.

He took up land to the extent authorized, but being no judge of country, his selections proved to be of the most unsuitable character that could have been selected.

One hundred and sixty acres were taken up at Spring Bank, eight or nine miles from Adelaide. This is still in the possession of Mrs. Elizabeth, widow of George Hamilton Ilive, or Ayliffe. Some six or seven hundred acres near Clare and on the Hutt river are in possession of the Hon. Percy Scawen Wyndham Ilive, known as Wyndham. On Yorke's Peninsula there is another wide tract never yet reclaimed from the Government. I am inclined to believe that it is held illegally by those who have no claim to it.

Six or seven years after their settlement in South Australia the colony absolutely failed. The Ayliffes were particularly unfortunate. The majority of the settlers were in favour of abandoning the colony. George Hamilton Ayliffe determined on going home, but a climax in his

misfortunes was reached by a friend, for whom he had backed a bill, absconding, and leaving the debt to him. Few's stores were destroyed by fire, and the result of the shock, he being told of it suddenly, was that he broke a blood-vessel, from the effect of which he died, after a few weeks' illness, leaving a widow and six young children to the mercy of the world, and the relations who were in possession of all that remained to him of his own and his father's property.

A year passed before any notice was taken of the widow or her children, but the grandfather insisted on a provision being made by his nephew, Colonel George Wyndham Ilive, commonly called George Wyndham, who then fixed on the widow a small annuity. Captain Bagot came out as agent for the Colonel, and in the name of his employer took possession of everything possible to seize upon. Some of the land fell into his hands—I believe at Barrossa, on which copper was ultimately discovered. The proceeds of the mine rendered Bagot wealthy, but it is, I believe, now worked out. "The Barrossa" was the name of the mine. Captain Bagot intimated to my mother, *officially*, that Colonel George Wyndham Ilive was prepared to receive her children—the youngest son, a baby, only twelve hours old when his father died, to remain with her—the other three sons to be brought home and educated for the Army, the Navy, and the Church.

Lonely, far distant, and timid of result, these terms were declined by the widow; that is to say, she did not send her children home, and thus condemned them and herself to a life of penury.

Other proposals were pending when the grandfather died suddenly; and but for her husband's will, she would have had no hold upon those who were pillaging her family.

After a short period, as soon as he felt safe in doing so—safe from legal proceedings—twelve years after the granting, or *paying* rather, of her income to her, Mrs. Ayliffe's annuity was stopped. Trifling gifts, an occasional fifty or twenty pounds or so, was all she has since received.

In the years 1851 to 1853 Henry Hamilton Ayliffe was put through the medical profession by the first Lord Leconfield.

The last transaction between Wyndham Ilives and Hamilton Ilives, or Ayliffes, was in land, in 1882, 1883, or 1884.

The family quitted England in 1837 or 1838. George Hamilton Ilive died in 1844.

In closing this brief record of the extinction of my father, grandfather, and us their children, descendants of an illustrious but unfortunate line, I wish to place this solemn fact on record, *i.e.*, that I came twelve months since to this country, a widow, alone, and in an almost dying state, from the effect of the American blizzard, by which I was struck while passing over the Northern Pacific Railway, and which

nearly resulted in my death ; that for the *time* being I was in absolute want of the necessities of life, and on friends, unknown to me, communicating that fact to the various members of the family, I was left to my *fate*, and that from then up to the *present moment*, although I have been in the deepest trouble and sickness, I have been left to strive and suffer *alone*. I am the widow of a Freemason. These kinsmen *are Freemasons as well as relations ! ! ! !*

NOTE.

Well might Lady Daly (first cousin to the first Lady Leconfield, whose husband was Governor of South Australia at the time) after entertaining some of the family, say—as she did say—to a mutual friend : “ How deeply I sympathize with that most ill-used, most wronged family ! There is nothing that I *could* do that I would not to *atone* to them even in a small degree for all they have suffered, but Sir Dominick is too poor to help them with money.”

Lady Daly never lost an opportunity of being kind, and at her instance Sir Dominick obtained for young George Hamilton Ayliffe, a handsome, elegant lad of nineteen, a Government appointment. “ He is fit for the Guards,” she used to say, and was as proud of his beauty and fine figure as though he had been her own son. She thought no ball or dance complete without him.

Even very good-looking fellows were envious enough of the lad’s handsome face and figure, with the envious Iago to have said, as he said of Cassio,

“ He hath a daily beauty in his life
That makes me ugly.”

George Hamilton Ayliffe is my second brother.
C. H. W. HILL.

*Copy of MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE of the EARL
and COUNTESS OF EGREMONT.*

THE YEAR 1801.

PAGE 37.

No. 146—George O'Brien, Earl of Egremont, of this Parish, Batchelor, and Elizabeth Ilive of the same Parish, Spinster, were Married in this Church by Licence, this 16th day of July, in the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and One, by me,

THOS. VERNON,
Curate.

This Marriage } O'BRIEN EGREMONT.
was solemnized }
between us } ELIZABETH ILIVE.

In the } WILLIAM TAYLOR.
presence of } JOHN UPTON.

I certify that the above is a faithful extract from the Register Book of Marriages in the Parish of Petworth, in the County of Sussex.

Witness my hand this 17th July, 1889.

CHARLES HOLLAND,
Rector.