The Tennyson d’Eyncourt Nicknames

J. Murray

The Tennyson family, whatever their individual differences, was bound together by a private language of nicknames. It is well known, for example, that the Somersby Tennisons and the Tennyson d’Eyncourts of Tealby referred to their grandfather, George Tennyson (1750-1835), as “The Old Man of the Wolds”.¹ The family would also know that old George had been aptly nicknamed “Dindon” (Turkey Cock) by his schoolfellows at Beverley. He in his turn and in one of his rare jovial moods once referred to his beloved granddaughters, Julia, Clara and Ellen, as ‘cunning jades’.² However, it is in the Tennyson d’Eyncourt letters that the web of private nickname references extends most widely, providing a very vivid picture of the family’s domestic and social life.

In the second half of this paper, I shall consider the relevance of the ‘opprobrious monosyllabic nicknames’ supposed by family tradition to have been coined by Charles Tennyson d’Eyncourt (1784-1861) for five of his eight children (Table 1) so nicely described in Sir Charles Tennyson and Hope Dyson’s *The Tennysons. Background to Genius* (1974);³ but first I shall examine the many more general references to nicknames in the Tennyson d’Eyncourt family correspondence. These nicknames referred not only to members of the family but to a whole gamut of social acquaintances, employees and servants both from Bayonos Manor at Tealby and the d’Eyncourt’s town house at 4 Park Street, Westminster.

Frances Mary Hutton (1783-1878), Alfred Tennyson’s Aunt Fanny, a wealthy pretty young heiress of Morton near Gainsborough, married Charles Tennyson on New Year’s Day 1808 — the name d’Eyncourt was only assumed by Royal Licence issued on 31 July 1835.⁴ Throughout her life Fanny carried on a most lively, amusing and incisive correspondence with her husband and children. Her letters are among some of the most readable of the thousands of d’Eyncourt letters deposited in Lincolnshire Archives Office. Fanny was clever, observant and outspoken. Typical of her style and of the many nicknames she appears to have coined was a letter written to her son George Hildyard during Queen Victoria’s Coronation year 1838 referring her husband: “The Coronation is to take place in June, when report says the Rt. Honble. will be peered...”⁵ Apart from immediate family, Fanny would often nickname London and Lincolnshire neighbours, family friends and even servants. Many of these nicknames are highly imaginative, colourful and wryly humorous, though at this distance in time it is not possible positively to identify some of them. It is quite tantalising to wonder who the following character may have been - possibly a London neighbour or a social acquaintance: “Gracious God” dined here yesterday [4 Park Street, Westminster] he told me he had heard that Lady Stephany (with whom we dined at Bulver’s) is “A divil I don’t care” sort of person — he asked me where I was going; when I said I was contented to do whatever was most economical and satisfactory to the parties, he replied: “God bless you, ma’am, God bless you. I am sure of that Ma’am.”⁶

We do, however know that “How d’ye do?” recognised in the family by his idiosyncratic greeting was Lord Nugent. George Nugent Grenville (1788-1850), a family friend, was appointed Lord of the Treasury in November 1830. He resigned this post in 1832 to go out to Corfu as Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands. With him he took his protégé George Hildyard Tennyson d’Eyncourt. Fanny wrote to her husband from Tonbridge Wells, ‘I shall be glad to spend a little time with George before his departure. I have had a very nice drôle letter from him and I send you the caricature he has made of himself and the Lord of the Isles walking together...’ (Fig. 1). Julia wrote from Usselby in

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Fig. 1 Copy of caricature by George Hildyard Tennyson d’Eyncourt of himself and Lord Nugent, “Half Price and Whole Price” (Lincolnshire Archives Office).
1832. "How d'ye do" may very likely come with them [Charles and his son Louis, as he and papa are to be at a dinner give to Mr. Bulwer6 at Lincoln in Easter week. Mr. Bulwer will also come here. These are great gaieties for us, who see so little of the human face divine that we are half afraid of meeting it."

Equally tantalizing is the identity of "The Comet" referred to in another letter from Fanny at Bayons to her son: "I am sorry to say "the Comet" is not in full vigour here, nor is it to be wondered at in this dull spot, besides which I do not think the place exactly agrees with her health, which is delicate. She is today in bed from an attack of spasm which must plead for her not writing, but sends her kindest love..."

The description of the event would fit both Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt's two sisters, Elizabeth and Mary. Both ladies spent a vast amount of time 'comet-like', tripping with their retinues of servants, companions and dogs between the fashionable spas and seaside resorts of Victorian England. Both were pathological hypochondriacs. Mary, in particular, was often pursued from lodgings by irate landlords, usually as a result of some unexplained outbreak of fire. She was frequently threatened with legal proceedings by various companions who had ill-treated, generally leaving a trail of havoc in her wake causing her harassed brother and nephews to pick up the pieces... a Comet indeed!!" Elizabeth, per contra, was beautiful, charming, sophisticated and exceedingly rich. She was loved by both the Somersys and Tealby Tennysons and was frequently a calming influence on the wilder elements of this volatile family. Aunt Elizabeth always encouraged her nephew Alfred with his poetry (and a yearly allowance of £100) as well as her brother Charles in his poetic endeavours. Both ladies quite often appeared out of the blue at Bayons Manor. As this letter was written in August 1835 from Bayons, a month after the funeral of the Old Man of the Wolds, at which Mary was not present, we may surmise that "The Comet" was Elizabeth Russell.12

Elizabeth herself had a nice turn of phrase when it came to nicknames. She once referred in a letter to her brother Charles to a member of the family as "Give-my-orse-two-feeds": 'if he [Louis] goes into Lincolnshire great bills will be run up by Give-my-orse-two-feeds.13 The arrogant extravagance implied by this nickname would point perhaps to Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt's least favourite of Edwin, now a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy on leave before sailing in HMS Callophone for the South American station.14 During the bitter recriminations between the Somersys and Tealby Tennysons over old George Tennyson's will in 1835 Edwin wrote to his father of cousin Alfred, "what a hog that Alfred is and what can you expect from a pig but a grunt" and called him 'a bloated ploughman'.15

But not all the subjects of Fanny d'Eyncourt's colourful nicknames remain mysteries. The Duke of Sussex and Charles were great friends and 'brother Templars and Masons' – the Duke flattering Charles by his company and allowing him entry into the highest fashionable London Society – even to Court where all the d'Eyncourt daughters, Julia, Clara and Ellen, were presented. 'His royal "Hoiness" however did not overlook us, in an evening entertainment given to the Queen, to whom he also gave a Banquet on the same day, which consisted of the Cabinet Ministers, and a select few besides', wrote Fanny on 9 June 1838.16 The family certainly knew who "His Royal Hoiness" (or "His Royal Oyness") was: 'your most humble Fanny, a most humble Fanny, in the last night respecting a further allowance to "His Royal Hoiness", the Duke of____ which I am sorry to find was not granted'.17 Then on 21 July 1838, she wrote, 'Your father was at a Grand Civic Dinner given at the Guildhall in honor of the Foreigners... he is going today to his "Royal Hoiness" who I think might have procured us an invitation to a Court-ball.18 One wonders what would have been his reaction if His Grace had found out the secret nickname given to him by the Right Honourable member for Lambeth and his family!

At the other end of the social scale, Fanny's disarmingly charming humorous nickname for her husband's Valet, Parker, presents us with a very human cameo of life in a Victorian household: "Come to cut your 'Throat Sir' with your Father, and in Park Street, but looking forward to a Policeman's situation in Hull – he is so constantly ill (the effects of brandy) that he is quite incapable of service... I fear he will not long retain his new position if his love of suction does not abate..." She later reported to George in Corfu: "Come to cut your 'Throat Sir' has got a situation through your Father of a place in the Customs of £60 per annum and if he goes on soberly and properly he may realise a hundred, but he and his wife are such bad managers with such extravagant ideas I fear they will not prosper..." So much for the lower classes! Fanny was always firm but fair with her many servants and usually treated them with amused tolerance, though she would not brook arrogance: 'Yesterday when I should have dismissed "Lady Grand" for unbearable insolence and injustice... pitty overcame all disagreeable and wounded feelings: for I cannot consider such conduct in any other light, than that of Insanity..."19

One wonders also who "Growly", "Gobbls", "Pudder", "Fish", "S'pose", "Dulcinacea" and "Trout" were who figure briefly in the d'Eyncourt family correspondence. Certainly "Old Mackeral Back" referred to by Edwin is a reminiscence of his long-suffering naval superiors. "Goo" was the diminutive term of endearment for Gustaveus Hamilton, Emma Hamilton's son. Elizabeth Russell's friend, Mary ("Polly") Thornhill (with whom Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt is said to have had an affair) was known intimately as "The Beast".20 Writing from Brenchepath Castle Elizabeth reported to Charles, 'you would see Col. Thornhill's death in the "Times"; your poor "Beast" is now alone in her Wormbourne Cage, having lost his brother's [sic], none by natural deaths unless indeed this last may be so termed'.21

The many nicknames earned by Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt himself are unmistakable. During his long and unjustly unrewarded parliamentary career,22 he became used to invective hurled at him by his political opponents. Nonetheless, he was sensitive throughout his thirty years as an MP to epithets describing him as a 'blackguard and dastardly poltroon'. Indeed, in June 1831, he fought a duel at Wormwood Scrubs with Lord Thomas Cecil, brother of the Marquis of Exeter, arising out of allegations of bribery when Charles was successful at the election for Stamford. Later, he was dubbed in the press as "The Lambeth Spouter" after being elected member for that Metropolitan Borough in December 1832. This nickname stuck for many years.

His political aspirations naturally gave rise to several nicknames. These reflected his alleged pomposity and were often used scornfully and variously as "Member for Lambeth", "The Right Hon." and similar. Typical of these was the story retailed around the county when the new Bayons at Tealby was the wonder of society. A gentleman called on d'Eyncourt at Bayons to be greeted by a solemn butler with "The Right Honourable Gentleman is walking on the barbarian",23 But political nicknames when used by the family were mostly affectionate and enduring as when his beloved daughter, Julia, wrote to him from Bayons, 'vos aver raison... mon cher Right Honourable Il est mon cher Right Honourable..."24 His youngest daughter Ellen once wrote, 'I am going to a race-ball here [Cheltenham]... and will the "Old English Gentleman" be my Chaperon?"25 The beautiful and fabulously wealthy Elizabeth Russell, for whom Charles always had a warm affection, invariably referred to her brother as "dear Charles..." in flippant intimacy which neither his wife nor his children probably ever dared imitate. Elizabeth once
wrote to him on her idiosyncratic flamboyant green note-
paper, 'I see your poor melancholy Charles the First face
smiling at that last sentence...'. It was Elizabeth who
encouraged him to publish his elegiac poem 
Eustace to his son
who died of yellow fever in Barbados in March 1842, whilst
serving as a Captain in the 46th Regiment. 'When are your
Cantos to be printed? Let us shew how on this side of our
House "We are Poets", she wrote from Cheltenham on 13
June 1850.36

During the period 1832 to 1840, when the re-building
of Bayons Manor was in full swing, d'Eyncourt's four sons,
George Hildeyard, Edwin Clayton, Louis Charles and Eustace
Alexander, always alluded to their father among themselves
as "The Governor". George, Edwin and Louis took it in turns
and all did lengthy stints at Bayons. They acted as their father's
agent and unskilled clerk of works, supervising construction
and workmen and the army of craftsmen building the romantic
castellated edifice. A remorseless frenetic welter of punctilious
instructions would arrive daily from their fretting father in
London. Eustace counted himself lucky to be posted away on
garrison duty with his regiment in Ireland. The main burden
of the work fell on George, home from Corfu. Edwin escaped
thankfully to sea and Louis to his legal practice in London.

One of the frequent acrimonious disputes with local con-
tractors at Bayons caused Edwin to write to one of his
brothers in 1837, 'This is a little bit of spite for which the
Governor will have to pay £2.'29 Again, on 29 November
1837, he wrote to George from HMS Calliope at Sheerness,
'We hear nothing about the Peerage or an Embassy for the
Governor and as sure as fate if another election took place the
Whigs would be d._d for ever'.30 Eustace, who considered
Ireland 'a detestable country', looked forward to leave to
allow him to attend the Coronation of Queen Victoria. He
wrote from Kinsale Barracks on 26 April 1838: 'I think if the
Government had intended to make the Governor a Peer at the
Coronation, they would have told him before this... I
suppose the Governor and family will not return to Lincoln
until after the Coronation.' And later: 'I mean to get plenty
of leave when I get to England and to ask the Governor to
give me a regular allowance... tell me how you and the
Governor get on now...'.31

In the late summer of 1837, there was considerable specu-
lation in the family and in the London press that Charles was
to be offered a Peersage at the forthcoming Coronation of
Victoria. In fact, the Peerage (and indeed any title) always
ecluted Charles in spite of his long years of dedicated public
service. Although family correspondence hummed with rum-
our, Charles remained modest about the whole matter. He
must have chuckled when a deferential, respectful tradesman
in Lincolnshire mistakenly referred to him, with what must
have seemed intelligent anticipation, as 'Sir Charles Tennyson
d'Eyncourt'. Nonetheless, it must have galled him when his
scruffy nephew Alfred was elected Poet Laureate (and his
family, when in later life Alfred received the peerage which
had so eluded their father).

As the building of Bayons Manor progressed, Charles was
increasingly open to attack for his alleged pomposity and
delusions of grandeur by the local Lincolnshire gentry. He was
ridiculed and scorned for his adoption of the name d'Eyncourt.
The 'Country cousins' at Somersby took unconcealed delight
in his discomfort and he began to be nicknamed "The Baron
(of Bayons)". His recalcitrant nephew Frederick Tennyson
(1807-1898), wrote to his cousin George, now Resident Gov-
ernor in Cergio in the Ionian Islands, 'As I do not keep a
horse I find it inconvenient to pay many visits to Charles,'32
so that the Baron's otiosa dignitas is seldom interrupted.33
Even d'Eyncourt's best friend, Bulwer-Lytton, referred to him
as "The Pilgrim Baron". In 1851, inviting Ellen, Fanny and
Charles to his seat at Knebworth, he wrote of the 'great
pleasure it will give me to welcome the Chatelaine, the
Donzelle & the Baron of Bayons!'34

Although we are not always able to identify positively the
subjects of many of the d'Eyncourt nicknames, we can be
certain of those which refer to Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt
himself and his children. Sir Charles Tennyson records that
d'Eyncourt coined opprobrious monosyllabic nicknames for
five of his eight children: "The Sot", "The Saint", "The
Snob", "The Stone" and "The Shrew" (Table 1). Although
there is no record in the voluminous d'Eyncourt correspon-
dence to any of these alleged nicknames, they do seem to be
almost fiendishly apt, quite as much as the many family
nicknames which actually do occur in the letters.35

George Hildeyard ("The Sot"), the eldest son, 'a man
generally beloved even by the Somersby family', was variously
known as 'The King of Cephalonia', 'Prince Regent of
Cephalonia' and 'Deputy King of Greece'.36 George went
out to the Ionian Islands in the early 1830s as a member of
Lord Nugent's diplomatic staff. He was appointed British
Resident in Cergio in 1833 and was eventually honoured with
KCME. He appeared to have a brilliant diplomatic career
ahead of him when, for reasons which seem unclear, he sud-
denly resigned his post and returned to England. He spent
much of the rest of his life at Bayons Manor, occupying
several relatively minor magisterial posts in Lincolnshire. As
a young man, he had fallen in love with Bulwer-Lytton's
daughter, Emily Elizabeth (born 17 June 1829). When Bulwer

Table 1 The Tensyonse Tennysons
Children of Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt (1784-1861) and Frances Mary Hutton (1783-1878) married New Year's Day 1808.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Died</th>
<th>Aged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Hildeyard (The Sot)</td>
<td>10 July 1809</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>23 February 1871</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Frances (The Saint)</td>
<td>13 October 1810</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>27 March 1879</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin Clayton (The Snob)</td>
<td>4 July 1813</td>
<td>Henrietta Pelham Clinton</td>
<td>14 January 1903</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Charles (The Stone)</td>
<td>23 July 1814</td>
<td>Sophie Ashton Yates</td>
<td>11 December 1896</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eustace Alexander</td>
<td>24 March 1816</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>9 March 1842</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clara Maria</td>
<td>June 1817</td>
<td>John Hinde Palmer QC</td>
<td>4 October 1863</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Elizabeth (The Shrew)</td>
<td>? 1818</td>
<td>Henry Mills Bunbury</td>
<td>12 February 1900</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Henry</td>
<td>29 August 1819</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5 September 1819</td>
<td>1 week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The monosyllabic nicknames recorded in parentheses are supposed to have been given by Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt to his children.


36
wrote to him on 28 April 1845, only four hours after her death, George was shattered: ‘I was so shocked on finding your note last night that I have scarcely closed my eyes since…’ 37 It may be that the tragic loss at the age of twenty of ‘so fair, pure, tender and delicate a flower’ drove him to drink. Some time around 1850, his sister Julia wrote to him from her convent near Coventry, exhorting him to give up his wasted life of dissipation and his ‘one single vice’ and ‘poisonous antidote!’:

I see the merciful hand of God stretched out to save you from the perils that are now endangering your salvation. In other words, dear George to withdraw you from the sad habits you acquired in the solitary and unoccupied existence that you have led… 38

George died unmarried at Bayons Manor on 23 February 1871, aged 62.

The three daughters of the family, Julia Frances, Clara Maria and Ellen Elizabeth, were dubbed by their mother ‘The Divinities’. She wrote to George in Corfu in 1833: ‘“The Divinities” are looking “charming well” after their sojourn in the country’, 39 and again in 1836, ‘“The Divinities” have just gone to have their Pugs examined, which you ought to have had before you left Town…’ 40 All three d’Eyncourt girls were attractive and gifted, both artistically and linguistically. They were much sought after for their grace and charm, in both London and Lincolnshire county society. Through their father’s friend, the Duke of Sussex, they were presented at Court. Julia even danced in the same quadrille as the young Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. They were never short of partners for the many Balls, soirées and ‘drawing rooms’ to which they were constantly invited. The three eldest Tennyson brothers, Frederick, Charles and Alfred, all were enchanted by their Tealby cousins. Fiercely determined chaperoning by Aunt Fanny d’Eyncourt did not prevent the Somersby ladies from trying their luck. In 1836, Frederick Tennyson startled cousin Julia by making a sudden secret and totally unexpected proposal of marriage to her which she managed to conceal from the family. 41 Charles Tennyson (later Turner), languishing as curate in Tealby after an unfortunate affair with a young governess and showing deplorable signs of opium addiction, was considered by the d’Eyncourt family to be a menace to their pretty daughters on account of his dangerous proximity at Tealby. Bayons was much relieved when Charles came to live at Grasby. Aunt Fanny, as usual, inveighed against any hint of temptation. In 1833, Julia Tennyson married one of the ‘most splendid pedigrees in England… it will read very well indeed.’ He never disguised his snobbish dislike and arrogant contempt for his Somersby cousins: ‘The Somersby family… really are quite hogs…’ 42 Edwin was known in the family as ‘The Captain’ or sometimes ‘The Bold Captain’. ‘The Captain has managed to mess all matters there [Cheltenham and Burwarton]. He is and ever will be the Pest of the Family…’ 43, wrote his father in 1851. In 1836, he spent Christmas with Aunt Russell (who doted on him) in Lennington Spa after a spell of duty as Mate on HMS Excellent, a gunnery vessel at Portsmouth. She wrote on 14 December 1836 to her brother Charles ‘This is the most harrying disagreeable damp place I know… I supposed Edwin to be tolerably contented… as all the girls make advances to him, this encourages his good opinion of himself, which as a good Aunt I take some trouble to counteract. Mothers enquire whether he is the elder son, yet after my reply. “The Scorpion” is still courted…’ 44 His mother wrote on 27 April 1837 from Usselby, when Edwin was on leave and helping with the building of Bayons: ‘[The Inspector General of the Forces (Edwin), who is most admirably suited to such purposes, and very active, attentive and managing] rides [to Bayons] daily…’ 45 Edwin certainly was a snob. He wrote to his father from HMS Calliope at Sheerness on 29 November 1837: ‘The other Lieutenants are young men of family. I live in the first circles which just bear me as I hate other Society but the first.’ 46 He could never resist name-dropping in his letters home from various naval postings. Eventually, his father disowned him like Julia (for reasons which research has yet failed to disclose), referring to him in 1851 as ‘a venomous unnatural animal’ and writing in 1855: ‘I have made up my mind to abandon this unworthy son… he is, in my opinion, a disgrace socially and morally to our family and to any class of civilians whom I do not feel sufficient of this worthless being!’ 47 Edwin’s naval career prospered, however. He married Lady Henrietta Pelham Clinton (1819-1890), daughter of the 4th Duke of Newcastle. He was ultimately promoted to Admiral and died on 14 January 1903 – a snob to the end.

Louis Charles (‘The Stone’), who became a barrister like his father, may have given the impression of being rather a cold formal legal personality. His father is said to have considered him deficient in filial affection. Indeed, his diaries show that Louis liked a life of orderliness and regularity. He seems to have been a man guided by reason rather than imagination. ‘Look to both ends of the ladder’ was a maxim...
he was fond of repeating to his children. In 1853, Ellen described her brother as retaining 'his senatorial dignity in his grave countenance'. Nonetheless, he appears to have brought good humour, understanding, compassion and humanity to his magisterial duties. In Queen Victoria’s Coronation Year, he took the lead in the celebrations held in Tealby with evident panache and enjoyment, organising music and dancing. He loved children (he had six) and used to stand on his head to amuse them. On one occasion, he caused hoots of juvenile laughter when he lost his topee (but kept his dignity) during this acrobatic. Louis appears very frequently in the family correspondence as ‘The Professor’. Fanny once reported, ‘the poor Professor has been one of the general sufferers from the prevailing epidemic…’; Edwin wrote in December 1837, ‘The Professor yesterday carried away all his things in a Fish Cart to Carey Street where he has lodgings over a Tallow Chandler’s.’ Julia wrote from Bayons Manor to her father in London on 1 September 1835 (or 1834): ‘I & the Organ Pedlar, Pig & Fire like flax & steel – but he is so provocingly good in the main that I cannot help feeling a certain respect & awe of him which is the last thing I wish to feel, because he wishes to inspire it. (Oh for shame Judy).’ After many years as Metropolitan Police Stipendiary Magistrate, Louis retired to be squire of Bayons which Edwin, not having a male heir and being disinclined to pay for its upkeep, handed over to him. He died there on 11 December 1856 – ‘Stone-like he may have been superficially but warm-hearted to those who knew him well.

Ellen Elizabeth (‘The Shrew’), Charles Tennyson d’Eyncourt’s youngest and longest lived daughter, seems to have been a charming, artistically gifted young lady, perhaps somewhat unfairly described as shrewish. Her correspondence scarcely indicates that she was of a particularly vicious disposition. In June 1837, she wrote to her father from Paris where, like her sister Julia, she was being educated at the house of Mrs. Forster. ‘This is a little present for Puss [Clara], next Saturday being her birthday… I suppose you have resumed your wicked ways, and sit up late at night &c for you are an incorrigible sinner… Your most affectionate and plague,[] Nelly.’ But there was certainly a shrewish streak in her observation recalling her cousin Alfred’s view of the growing grandeur of Bayons Manor when she wrote to her brother George in Corfu on 26 April 1837, ‘Really the House is quite a Palace (not “gw-gaw” however) now that the North Wing is nearly up.’ And there is clear evidence that, in later life, she could be very sharp-tongued indeed. In 1852, Ellen behaved so badly to Jenny Simpson, Fanny’s maid, leading her ‘a sorry life of it at times’, that the girl’s sister wrote to Charles, ‘I know but too well what Miss Ellen’s temper is…’, implying to him to set matters right between Ellen and her sister as it needed ‘very little more to send me to my grave…’ Ellen made some rather shrewish remarks about Queen Victoria whom she had seen at the theatre sometime in 1852, attending a French play: ‘The Queen was there and she and Prince Albert were conversed with laughter, but what a common little hody-dody woman she is grown! – she looks 40 at least!’ There is no record in the family correspondence of any nickname for Ellen. She and Julia were known simply as Nelly and Judy respectively.

Clara Maria, Charles’ second daughter, was good-natured and a peacemaker. She was nicknamed in the family endearingly “Puss”, “Pussy Cat” or “Pussy”. Fanny wrote to her husband from Bayons in December 1833: “Pussy-Cat, and General Foth [Eustace] and myself are very comfortable…” Bulwer-Lytton wrote a flirtatious letter to Clara from Malvern in May 1847 (the year before her marriage to John Hinde Palmer QC),

The White Mouse would have no chance of longevity if he came across you – judging by the name affectionately & appropriately given to you in your family. And it is only in the absence of the Cat that mice, whether white or brown, have the privilege of disposing themselves, with a whole skin. Voilà the reason why the White Mouse does not jump on the chairs – tho’ no doubt the carnivorous instincts familiar to the mildest of your feline species makes you continually on the qui vive for his appearance…

Adieu, may you find plenty of mice in the corners & little birds in the garden and not tumble into the Fountain to share the fate of your prototype commemorated by Mr. Gray in his poem on the Drowned Cat…

Sir Charles Tennyson asserts that Clara was responsible for bringing the Bayons and Somersby branches of the family together after her father’s death in July 1861, thus healing the rift caused by the alleged ‘disinheritance’ of the Somersbyites as a result of old George Tennyson’s will in 1835. Clara certainly was a character who played an important role in many family dramas. It is likely, therefore, that had she been alive when the obnoxious nicknames were coined, there would have been one for her. There was none.

The nicknames recorded by Sir Charles Tennyson do seem accurate but their attribution to Charles Tennyson d’Eyncourt must be in doubt. Clearly, George was a Sot, Edwin a Snob, Julia a Saint, Louis a Stone and Ellen a Shrew: all to a greater or lesser degree. But, in spite of his constant squabbles and running battles with his children and the many trials and tribulations that he felt they visited on him, there is no doubt that Charles loved them and would therefore never have indulged in the cruel, malicious apiece of such nicknames. Similarly, it is improbable for this reason that the nicknames may have been coined, as has been suggested, by Aunt Elizabeth Russell. She was clever enough and astute enough to have invented them, but she would never have been deliberately cruel to any of her nephews and nieces. That would have been quite out of character. In any case, if she nicknamed her Tealby relatives, she would certainly have coined a parallel set of nicknames for their Somersby cousins. She never did. Aunt Elizabeth was never spiteful.

The fact that there were no nicknames for either Clara or Eustace seems to indicate that they were dead when the names were coined. They were, in fact, the first two of the d’Eyncourt children to die. If that is the case, Charles could not have been responsible for the names as Clara did not die until 4 October 1863 – two years after his father’s death. Also, not one of the nicknames ever appeared in the d’Eyncourt family correspondence. Had the names been coined, therefore, by one of the Bayons family, they would certainly have been used in family letters. They never were. It is the view of the present writer that these nicknames were coined and secretly used by the Somersby branch of the family sometime after the death of the Old Man of the Wolds in 1835 and the consequent enmity resulting from the terms of his will. They would have constituted a secret family tradition at Somersby until ultimately recorded by Sir Charles.

The death of his beloved son, Eustace, was the subject of Charles Tennyson d’Eyncourt’s elegy of 1851, upstaged by his nephew’s In Memoriam A.H.H. It might, therefore, be appropriate to end this paper with a brief account of his short life, crucial as it was to that of his father and suggesting, as it does, the close affection within the d’Eyncourt family, revealed in their charming nicknames.

Eustace Alexander Tennyson d’Eyncourt, Charles’ youngest son, was destined early in life for a dazzling military career. He was known as ‘The Fair Boy’ on account of his handsome good looks and blond hair (untypical for a scion of the Tennyson family). Elizabeth Russell wrote on 30 May 1837 from Leamington: ‘Eustace’s] acceptance of an adjutancy may be all for the best; and the choice falling upon his young head crowns it with laurels which I fancy will always flourish there and may they be as garnish to his white hair…’ In 1833, his mother Fanny wrote ironically,
"The Fair Boy" is it I trust making the best of his time at Sandhurst... and with perseverance may obtain a commission. "Eustace wasn't and didn't. A few months later, he was expelled by the Authorities for his leading part in an affray at Bagshot where there had been several 'broken heads' and the driver of the Southampton coach badly maltreated by rioting gentleman cadets. Young Eustace was 'returned to his friends', as the euphemism has it. His father eventually bought him a commission and he became a captain in the 46th Regiment, settling down to a military gentleman's life, chasing foxes and women with a courage bordering on foolhardiness. The family proudly nicknamed him "General Foth", possibly after a character in one of the amateur dramatic productions much loved by all the D'Eyeconcours. Ellen wrote: 'I see by the Papers that poor Foth's regiment is one amongst many to be sent out on foreign service this year..." After service in Ireland, Gibraltar and Jersey, Eustace was posted to Barbados. Before his departure, there was a magnificent banquet in his honour in the great hall at Bayons, given by his father. It was a glittering affair, graced by "The Divinities", "The King of Cephalonia" and "The Professor". Only brother Edwin was absent. Hundreds of guests applauded as young "General Foth" was presented with a handsome silver bowl and a beautiful pocket watch to remind him of Bayons. A month later (9 March 1842), he lay dead of yellow fever in his barracks in Barbados. He was twenty-five years old. Charles Tenneyn d'Eyncourt never recovered from his grief.

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NOTES
1. For background to the family founded by George Tennyson (1750-1835), see Sir Charles Tennyson and Hope Dyson, The Tennysons, since founded by Gennni (London, 1974) and Robert Bernard Martin, Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart (Oxford, 1983).
2. Lincolnshire Archives Office (hereafter L.A.O.) 2 T.d'E. H64/34.
3. 1861, p.148. Old George Tennyson heartily disliked the idea of adopting 'this Frenchified name', L.A.O. 2 T.d'E. H64/34. To overcome this, Charles Tennyson (1784-1861) inserted a clause into his father's will, making his inheritance at the estates of Usselby conditional upon his adopting the name d'Eyncourt in addition to Tennyson; thus neatly implying that the new name was his father's idea.
7. Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873), 1st Baron Lytton of Knebworth. He was MP for Lincoln from 1832 to 1841. Bulwer was one of Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt's few close friends and was a frequent guest at Bayons where he wrote his novel, Harold, in the Tapestry Room. He dedicated the novel to d'Eyncourt.
8. L.A.O. T.d'E. H122/67. The d'Eyncourts were living temporarily at their grandfather's estate at Usselby near Tealby, pending completion of the re-building of Bayons.
10. Mary Tennyson (1777-1864) married John Bourne JP of Dalby, Lincolnshire, who died 15 December 1850. Tennyson & Dyson, p.34.
11. Elizabeth Tennyson (1776-1865) married in 1798 to Major Matthew Russell MP of Bracebroth Castle, Co. Durham, heir to colliery undeps and reputed to be one of the richest commoners in Britain. Their daughter, Emma, married Lord Boyne. Tennyson & Dyson, pp.33, 177 et seq.
14. Edwin Tennyson d'Eyncourt (1813-1903), second son of Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt. For his naval career, see Lean's Navy List (1903). Edwin disliked Lincolnshire and, not having a male heir, passed over the estate at Bayons, which he had inherited on the death of George Hilliard in 1871, to his younger brother, Louis Charles.
23. Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt (1784-1861) served in ten successive parliaments. He was MP for Grimsby, 1818-1826; Berwick, 1826-1831; Stamford, 1831; Lambeth, 1832-1852. He has been called the Father of Modern Reform.
24. Tennyson & Dyson, p.91.
25. L.A.O. T.d.E. H30/10. Charles was appointed Clerk of the Ordnance on 30 December 1830 and resigned when he was appointed to the Privy Council on 6 February 1832.
29. L.A.O. T.d.E. H121/30. D'Eyncourt had confiscated a workman's tools during an on-site dispute at Bayons. The workman, Sam Broadgate, sullenly had Charles prosecuted for not displaying his name on the side of his wagons and carts.
31. Charles Tennyson (later Turner, 1808-1879), brother of Frederick and Alfred. He was, for a while, curate at Tealby and became vicar of Grasby after inheriting from his great uncle, Samuel Turner, and adopting the additional surname. On 24 May 1856, he married Louisa Sellwood (died May 1879), whose sister, Emily, married Alfred Tennyson on 13 June 1850. Martin, pp.136, 176.
34. Tennyson & Dyson, p.138.
42. L.A.O. T.d.E. H113/59.
43. e.g., L.A.O. T.d.E. H20/10.
44. For Julia's love of Bulwer, see H.R.O. D/EK C 22/142-145.
45. L.A.O. T.d.E. H84/19.
46. H.R.O. D/EK C 18/128.
47. Lang & Shannon, pp.135-36.
48. L.A.O. T.d.E. H113/64. Edwin was mentioned in dispatches after suffering wounds in action at Boca Tigris in February 1841. Later, as Commander RN, he was court-martialled for causing his vessel off Montevede in the River Plate, in 1848. He was exonerated.
55. L.A.O. T.d.E. H113/41. There is a possibility that Julia could here be referring not to her brother but to Bulwer, with whom she was falling in love. She once called Bulwer her 'Walking, talking, and quarelling companion...'. H.R.O. D/EK C 143.
56. Mrs Lavinia Forster, wife of the Revd Edward Forster, Chaplain to the British Embassy in Paris. They lived at no. 70 Grande Rue de Chalott, where all three d'Eyncourt girls were in her care. Mrs Forster corresponded with Charles for many years after his daughters' departure from Paris.
64. Martin, pp.353-54.