

Charlotte Frances Townsend [5D27]



Painting of Derry House



Derry ca 1900
Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland



Charlotte



Townshend Family Group at The Castle ca 1898



Miss Purdon, Geta (?), Helen Morrigh, Mrs Cairns, Miss U Somerville, Charles Loftus Townshend [5C01] (in trilby), Prof Edward (with beard) & Mrs Townshend [6B20], Miss Becher, Cherry Spaight, Edie Whitla (dau of [541]), Arthur Townshend [537] of Myross (in boater), Miss Martin, Not known man in dark suit and boater

Madam O'Donovan, Captain Gorges, Sylvia Townshend [268], B Somerville, **Miss Charlotte Townshend [5D27]**, Beatrice Townshend [5C01], Madame de Bunsen

Georgie Whitla (son of [541]), Rita Morrigh, Commander Stokes, Rev Horace Townshend [634], Col Coghill, Grace Somerville

This photo must have been taken after June 1897, when Charles Loftus Townshend purchased The Castle, and June 1898, when Charlotte Townshend married George Bernard Shaw

**Left to Right
Maria, Charlotte, Hugh Cholmondeley, Mary Payne Townshend at Derry**



Comment on Charlotte's Will

MRS. BERNARD SHAW

Mrs. Bernard Shaw's will, which bequeathed nearly £100,000 under curiously worded conditions, for cultural purposes in Ireland, has caused much discussion during the past week. The courts in London were invoked to decide whether the will should be considered valid. Many readers of the evidence will have been as much surprised as was the English judge, by the seemingly arrogant terms in which Mrs. Shaw conveyed her benevolent intentions. The long will read like an echo from remote Victorian days, with its patronising attitude towards a benighted people whom she felt it her duty to uplift. Charlotte Payne Townshend never lost her sense of belonging to the old Irish ascendancy, and even in their old age she seemed a most unlikely partner for such a natural rebel as Bernard Shaw. Yet their married life was constantly harmonious, and he knew well how much he owed to her mothering care, which imposed a dependence, and even obedience, that he gave without hesitation. He often stated in public that, like all wives, it was she who had insisted on marrying him. But he was over 40 when they married in 1898, and he was by that time already a literary celebrity, and no longer in need of her financial help.

INTENTIONS OF HER WILL

Certainly they were a surprising combination; she rather silent, but always commanding, while he talked and talked. She remained to the end a typical representative of the former landowning families of County Cork. But she always had literary tastes. One who remembers her before she married G.B.S. has told me how she loved to recite long poems, and especially Tennyson's "May Queen," at full length. She never disguised her stiff condescension towards Shaw's less celebrated friends, but she protected him from interviewers and from interruptions and begging letters, and insisted that he kept regular hours. They both came often to Ireland for holidays, and they both genuinely desired to improve conditions here. Her will expressed faithfully her desire to encourage a wide appreciation of the arts, and to give that social training which she regarded as indispensable to civilised life. Her very handsome legacy is capable of immense usefulness if it is sensibly administered. There is keen competition already for a share in it among many deserving causes which it might assist.

A CULTURAL WINDFALL.

EVERYONE with a sense of humour in Ireland will be interested to observe the reactions over here to the implications in Mrs. G. B. Shaw's will, that her munificent bequest of £100,000 or thereabouts is necessary for the promotion of cultured appreciation of art and the promotion of what the Victorians called gentility and refinement. The older generation in Ireland can easily remember how they were brought up in the belief that the Irish were a highly civilised and refined race when the English were roaming along the shores of the Wesser and Elbe clad in coats of paint. We were then taught that all the real Irish were descended from kings and chiefs who were also saints and scholars. The innate courtesy and politeness of the Irish peasant was highly commended by strangers who visited the country, and generally the Irish as a whole had fairly high opinion of themselves and tried to live up to it. In a later generation we were, in effect, told that we were too polite, and too much given to copy the manners and the accents of our oppressors. A new movement taught that normal conventions of a civilised and cultured society were marks of subserviency and the slave mind. And, of course, as the prime object in life was to drive the English language out of the country, it did not matter whether the child was taught to speak it correctly or not, and no serious progress was made in that direction in the primary schools for a quarter of a century. We mention the primary schools without any intention of making any reflection on the sorely-tried teachers, who are doing their best for the children

under difficult circumstances imposed on them by a quasi-political Department of Education under the inspiration of a wholly political Minister. The secondary schools are in a better position to look after themselves. The universities are autonomous, and whether they succeed or fail in developing a cultured mentality and outlook is a matter for themselves. This gift, the largest made within living memory for educational purposes, will, as far as it goes, tend to neutralise the effects of that particular feeling which took root in Ireland some forty or fifty years ago, that social conventions did not, or should not, matter so much. It means something more, however. No one can reasonably object to bringing the masterpieces of fine arts within the reach of the people of Ireland. "Teaching, promoting and encouraging in Ireland self-control, elocution, deportment, the arts of social intercourse and other arts of public, private, professional and business life" should be beneficial to us, even though there is a suggestion that we lack these polite amenities. Possibly, some people on this side of the border may look askance the gift, but Mrs Shaw recognised no border. If we were to refuse acceptance of our share of it, our friends on the other side would doubtless not object to taking more than their share. And apparently there would be no bar to the trustees founding chairs and