

**From My Hands to Yours:  
Uncovering the Tynan-Wyndham  
Connection<sup>1</sup>**

PHILIP R. BISHOP  
Private collector

**Katherine Tynan.**  
*A Little Book for John O'Mahony's Friends.*  
Portland, Maine: Thomas Bird Mosher, 1909.

**B**ack in August 2004, I purchased the first American edition of Katherine Tynan's memorial, originally published in England by James Guthrie at the Pear Tree Press in 1906. Issued by Thomas Bird Mosher in 1909, it is a pleasing little volume with an Arts and Crafts flare using a cover design taken from a binding by Constance Karslake of England's Guild of Women Binders.<sup>2</sup>

Tynan's memorial is a tribute to John O'Mahony (d. 1905), the beloved brother-in-law of the Irish writer Katherine Tynan, and includes a number of her poems. This particular copy of the first American edition bears the following inscription, in pen and ink, on the upper-right corner of the first free fly-leaf: "Mr. Wyndham from his friend the writer Oct. 1912." When I acquired the book from John Hart Rare Books, Salhouse, England, I informed John Hart that I was ninety-five percent sure that "Mr. Wyndham" was in fact George Wyndham, Britain's chief secretary to Ireland between 1900 and 1905, but further investigation was needed for corroboration.

Since Wyndham had spent time in Ireland, I conjectured that he and Tynan had become friends. They both knew the writer Hilaire Belloc, with whom Wyndham was especially close. In addition, both worked for the *National Observer* early in their careers and revered its editor, W. E. Henley. Wyndham was a devotee of literature; he also wrote poetry, which he included in letters to Belloc and others.

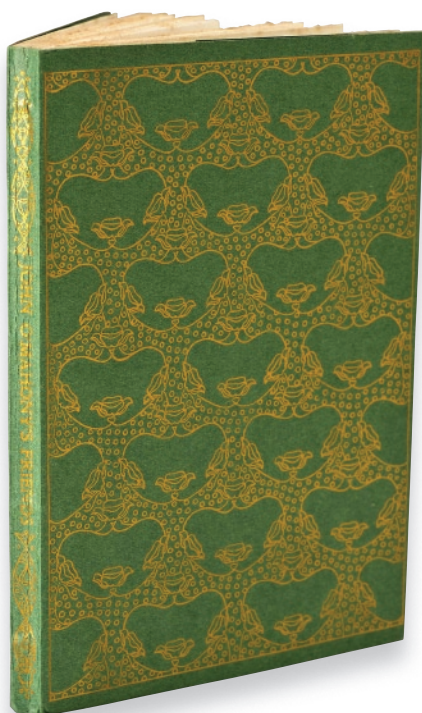
I hoped my hypothesis about the book's inscription would be confirmed in Tynan's memoirs or the

various biographies about her. But before delving into the nature of the inscription, it is important to provide further information about the principal players: the author, the publisher, and the book's owner.

Katharine Tynan (1861–1931) was an important participant in the Irish "Renaissance" or "Celtic Revival," which, in the years before and after the turn of the twentieth century, sought to infuse the arts in Ireland with a sense of native tradition and culture. Writers such as the poet W. B. Yeats (with whom Tynan was a close associate for a while) and playwright J. M. Synge were also connected with the movement. A prolific writer, Tynan produced many volumes of religious poetry and popular novels.

Thomas B. Mosher (1852–1923) was a key figure in reviving the art of fine printing in the United States in the very late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>3</sup> He was quite fond of the writers of the Irish Renaissance. The first time he published a work by Tynan was in the March 1904 issue of his periodical *The Bibelot*, a brief article on the poems of Lionel Johnson that Mosher took from the *Pall Mall Gazette*. In 1905 Mosher included her work in two anthologies: *A Little Garland of Celtic Verse* and *A Little Garland of Christmas Verse*.

The June and September 1907 issues of *The Bibelot* were devoted to two of her smaller pieces: "A Little Book for John O'Mahony's Friends" and "A Little Book for Mary Gill's Friends." Mosher had the latter tribute specially bound, complete with one of C. R. Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft devices, a "pink" flower, for Tynan and himself. She thanked him "for the beautiful little special copy of Mary Gill."<sup>4</sup> The same year that Tynan's work appeared in *The Bibelot*, Mosher published her *Little Book of XXIV Carols*. Two years later, *The Bibelot's* "O'Mahony" piece appeared in book form in Mosher's Little Masterpieces Series, which, as he stated in the foreword, "we take the unasked liberty of reprinting" (later printings of Tynan's writing were done with her permission). Tynan's relationship with Mosher continued. Her memorial tribute to her father, Andrew Cullen Tynan, entitled "The Dearest of All," appeared in the June 1910 issue of *The Bibelot*. Mosher also published her work in another one of his anthologies, *Amphora* (1912). He then reissued some of Tynan's writing that he had previously published, including an expanded version of *A Little Garland of*



Entry 30.

LEFT

The design of the cover reflects an Arts and Crafts binding by a member of England's Guild of Women-Binders.

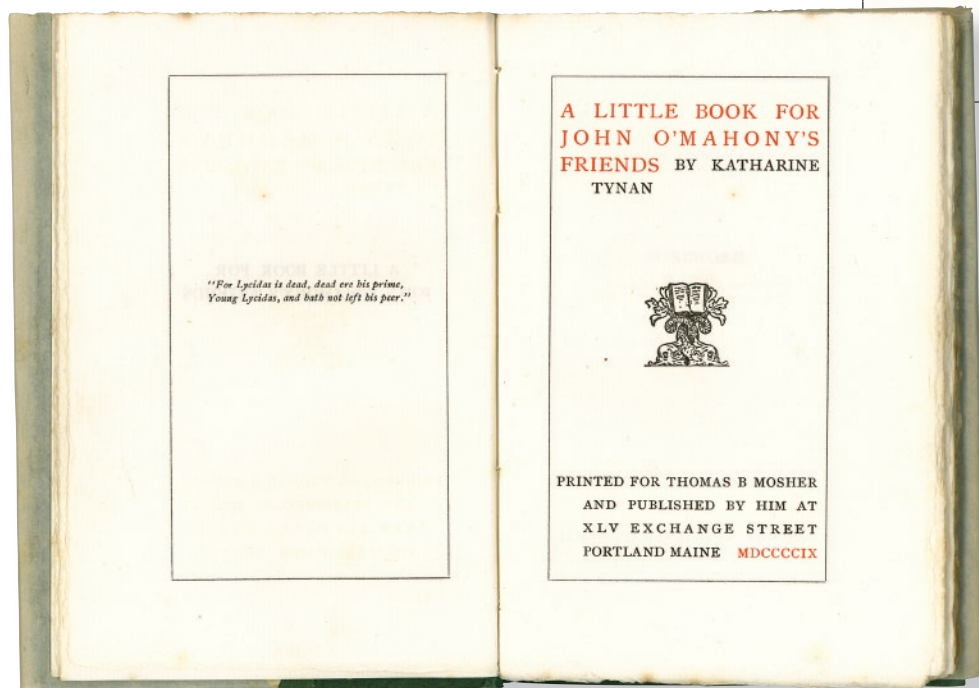
BELOW LEFT

Title-page spread.

BELOW RIGHT

The inscription at the upper right of the first free flyleaf of this volume signifies a meaningful friendship between two people—the author and book's owner—who never actually met.

*Her Wyn dhen  
from his friend  
the writer  
Oct. 1912*



*"For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer."*

A LITTLE BOOK FOR  
JOHN O'MAHONY'S  
FRIENDS BY KATHARINE  
TYNAN



PRINTED FOR THOMAS B MOSHER  
AND PUBLISHED BY HIM AT  
XLV EXCHANGE STREET  
PORTLAND MAINE MDCCCIX

*Christmas Verse* (1914), adding the poem “An Old Song Re-Sung.” Along the way, Tynan also introduced Mosher to her friend Lucy Blanche Masterman, whose *Lyrical Poems* he published in 1912 under the pseudonym Lucy Lyttelton.

George Wyndham (1863–1913) was a veteran of the Coldstream Guards, a Conservative politician and member of Parliament and, as previously mentioned, for five years chief secretary to Ireland. In the latter role, he was responsible for the Irish Land Purchase Act of 1903, also known as the Wyndham Land Purchase, which alleviated problems between landlords and peasants concerning farm ownership. Also a man of letters, Wyndham wrote not only for the *National Observer*, but also for the *New Review*. He edited *The Poems of Shakespeare* (1898), *Ronsard & la Pleiade* (1906), and Thomas North’s *Plutarch’s Lives* (1895); and wrote about numerous other authors and poets such as Wilfred Blunt, Sir Walter Scott, and Percy Bysshe Shelly. Being both a politician and a man of letters was an unusual combination for a twentieth-century figure.

It turned out not to be difficult to link Tynan and Wyndham. Tynan devoted chapter 17 of her 1916 memoir *The Middle Years* to Wyndham. I quote her at some length:

Some time in November, 1900, I find the entry in my diary, “Letter, Mr. Wyndham”; and a day later, “Wrote to Mr. Wyndham”; and again, “Letter, Mr. Wyndham.” These bare entries have relation to one of the most golden happenings of my life. I had come into personal touch with the one who to me stood for so much romance: who was half Lord Edward [Fitzgerald] and half his gracious, charming self to me then and to the end. And these were not his first letters by any manner of means. . . .

What is it in the case of certain men which makes their plain “Mr.” prouder than any title? It is so especially with statesmen — Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox, Mr. Canning, Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Balfour. For these to be anything else than “Mr.” is inconceivable. It is a case of “King I could not be: prince I would not be. I am De Rohan.”

So mysteriously one always thinks of Mr. Wyndham. The simple title of the commoner, shared with the whole world of men, assumes its own pride, and its own beauty in his case. The sounding titles could give him nothing.

He was out of his due time and place in nineteenth- and twentieth-century England. He belonged to a more romantic age. The spacious days would not have misbecome his charming personality, his gifts of imagination and poetry, his courtesy, his graciousness, his spirit and gaiety, his beautiful presence.<sup>5</sup>

The above explains the formal way in which Tynan addressed her friend in the book’s inscription. Tynan admitted that even though, seven years before, she had “emptied herself of all the hero-worship I had to give,” she nonetheless sent a volume of her verse to the politician because she was “attracted by the things I had heard of Mr. Wyndham, who seemed to me Lord Edward come to life again.” Thus began a long exchange of rather touching communication “before *finis* was reached in 1913.” Tynan inscribed many of her books to “Mr. Wyndham,” called herself a “True Blue Wyndham Person,” and dedicated *Innocencies* (1905) and *Collected Poems* (1930) to him. She continued to send him her books “now and again . . . reminding Mr. Wyndham of my existence.” Their friendship through letters deepened to the point of sharing details about life’s travails. Tynan related how Wyndham spoke “of his love for his [deceased] father in words which are too sacred to reprint” and mentioned that in “those [letters] which followed I seem to see a greater warmth, a more intimate kindness, as though the shadow of the end was coming and he must touch with his friends while he might.” Wyndham wrote her, “I can only thank you with all my heart for unseen but nearly felt friendship which you have given me.”

Tynan and Wyndham never met. She did ask him to visit her on his way through Dublin in the autumn of 1912, but he did not do so, pleading the fast pace of a “Flying Dutchman.” He asked her if she would visit him to “look at pictures that would interest you and at the downs. . . .” He also invited Tynan and her husband to the wedding of his son, Percy, on April 17, 1913. “Unfortunately,” wrote Tynan, “we did not

go, and I shall always regret it.” Wyndham died less than two months later.

Tynan did send a wedding gift, a painting by A. E. (George Russell), which Percy Wyndham appreciated for the way it captured the “Spirit of Ireland.” After his father’s death, Tynan sent him some poems and a letter. In response he wrote that his father “often spoke of you to me and I loved your friendship.” He added that he wanted to present her with a special book of her choosing from his father’s library because “I know what a dear and uncommon friend you were to him, and I have long wanted to do this.” Less than one year later, Tynan received word that Percy Wyndham was killed on September 14, 1914, while leading his platoon against the Germans. So ended Tynan’s last important link to her Mr. George Wyndham. As a parting tribute, she dedicated her 1916 book *Lord Edward: A Study in Romance* as follows: “To the Wyndhams / Lord Edward’s Great-Grandchildren: / To Him Especially Who Loved Ireland / Deep Down, With a Passion: / To His Memory / And to the Memory of Their Sons Dead / On the Field of Honour.”

So this inscribed copy of Tynan’s *Little Book for John O’Mahony’s Friends*, itself written in memory

of her late brother-in-law, has become through this unraveling of a tale much more than just another inscribed Mosher publication. It is part of a chain of books sent by their author to a very dear friend. It was a book lovingly held by that same George Wyndham who likewise occupied her thoughts and precipitated her writing in it to “Mr. Wyndham from his friend the writer Oct. 1912” perhaps just to “remind [him] of my existence.” It passed on to his son, under whose stewardship the chain was broken. Now one can see why the book is to be valued. It stands as a testament of an “uncommon friendship” shared between two people who so dearly loved Ireland and reveled in their mutual correspondence. As the publisher Thomas Bird Mosher was himself forever trying to “reach out through intellectual sympathy and touch hands”<sup>6</sup> with his readership both through his books and his captivating correspondence, it would have been particularly gratifying to him that his edition of Tynan’s book was the very vehicle the author used to reach out and touch her Mr. Wyndham. As such, this association copy now resides in its own place of honor in the Mosher Collection here at the Bishopric of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

<sup>1</sup> This essay is dedicated to Dr. G. Krishnamurti, compiler of *The Eighteen-Nineties — A Literary Exhibition* (London: National Book League, 1973) and *Women Writers of the 1890’s* (London: Sotheman, Ltd., 1991), with whom I had a brief correspondence.

<sup>2</sup> The dealer’s description of the book includes the following: “Original green semistiff wrappers, printed glassine dust-wrapper, slipcase. 12 mo. pp. x. 56. Bishop 208; Colbeck p. 886. Presentation copy. . . . Dust-wrapper slightly creased, otherwise a fine copy.”

The book’s overall Art Nouveau design first appeared in *The Bindings of Tomorrow* (London: Guild of Women-Binders, 1902), which pictures Karslake’s

binding on Maurice de Guérin’s *Centaur and the Bacchante* (London: Vale Press, 1902), and was used by Mosher for the twelve titles in his Ideal Series of Little Masterpieces. The book’s pages reflect more traditional Old Style Roman type, with Chiswick embellishments and ruled-page format. The printed dust jacket and slipcase complete the private-press appearance of the period.

<sup>3</sup> Mosher was a member of the DoFobs and Caxton Club of Chicago; the latter being publisher of the present book.

<sup>4</sup> Katherine Tynan Hinkson to Mosher, Aug. 11, 1991 (Houghton Library, Harvard University, -bMS Am 1096 [656]). A copy of one of these specially bound tributes is in my Mosher

collection and is more fully described in my book *Thomas Bird Mosher — Private Prince of Publishers* (New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press; London: The British Library, 1998), p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> Katharine Tynan, *The Middle Years* (London: Constable, 1916), pp. 222–38. All subsequent quotes of Tynan, Wyndham, and Wyndham’s son, Percy, are from this source.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas B. Mosher, foreword, *The Mosher Books* (Portland, Me.: Thomas B. Mosher, 1905), p. 5.