

Correspondence

Sir,

For anyone interested in the historical implications of genealogy it was disappointing to find your contributor, R. P. Davis (Vol. 1, No. 2, 'Sir George Grey and Irish Nationalism'), quoting James Collier as an authority for his statement that Grey's descent from the Greys of Groby is indisputable. In this respect Collier was no more reliable than Henderson before him or Rutherford after him, which is strange when it is remembered that Grey had already provided the editors of Burke's *History of the Colonial Gentry* with an account of his family history much more acceptable than the nonsensical version Collier adopted from Henderson, both apparently unaware of the many generations of Greys (or Grays) in Ireland.

The Lord Stamford loosely described by Rutherford as Grey's cousin was senior representative of the Greys of Groby but had no idea how Sir George fitted into the family and, even today, the Stamford pedigree describes Grey's claimed ancestor, Lord Leonard Grey, uncle of the first Lord Grey of Groby, as having died without issue. Lord Leonard Grey, Viscount Grane, was attainted for high treason and beheaded on Tower Hill, 28 June 1541, after forfeiting his peerage and estates. He is said, however, to have married as his third wife a daughter of the rebel Con O'Neil, later Earl of Tyrone, and to have left a son in Ireland, Neil Gray, from whom a wavering line has been traced to Sir George's grandfather, Owen Wynne Gray of Castletown, co. Sligo, who also married an O'Neill. The mother of this Owen Wynne Gray belonged to the Sligo Wynnes and it was apparently this connection which took the Grays into the army after generations of obscurity in Ireland. Sir George's father adopted the spelling Grey.

The bare facts, if facts they all are, were stated in the *Colonial Gentry* in 1895 and they have been more recently expanded for the 1958 edition of Burke's *Landed Gentry of Ireland* by the present representative of the Grays of Carn Park, who is himself a council member of the Irish Genealogical Society. But his still sketchy account of the family's early history in Ireland falls back on vague expressions like 'as we gather' or 'it would certainly seem' and it leaves several generations unaccounted for.

Curiously enough, Sir George Grey's entry in the *Colonial Gentry* gives the history of his mother's family, the Vignoleses, before his father's family. Perhaps he was simply more certain of it. But at least it shows that there was only a short residence in Ireland on his mother's side and the only non-French name is that of his grandmother, Anna Low, the wife of

Lt. Col. the Revd. John Vignoles. On the other hand there was nearly three hundred years residence by the Gray family and much rebellious Irish blood, an inheritance which may well have played a greater part in shaping Grey's later character than those sentimental tales of Lady Jane Grey told him by his mother in Professor Rutherford's account.

It is not generally known that Major John Gray, with the Fencibles at Panmure until dismissed in 1850, was a half-brother of Sir George Grey's father. The ill-feeling which existed between this scarcely acquainted uncle and nephew has never been exactly explained. Can their relationship have foundered simply on the spelling of a name?

Yours etc.,

John Stacpoole

Auckland

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