
Histories

ROGER CROSTON

The Letter

A newly-discovered letter written by George Leigh Mallory

‘Mallory! George Mallory! After all these years!’ is what I thought when I listened to the midday news on Radio 4 on May Bank Holiday 1999. Like so many others, I had been interested in the story of Mallory and Irvine since I was old enough to read about it. As both of them came from Cheshire, where I was born, bred and still live, I thought that the local press might be interested in a few items I possess which relate to the 1924 Everest Expedition. These include a copy of Norton’s book *The Fight For Everest 1924*, an Expedition post card with the special Everest postage stamp franked at the Rongbuk Glacier Base Camp, and the photograph of the memorial window in the cloisters of Chester Cathedral. So I phoned the *Daily Post* and a journalist there told me to take the items down to the paper’s Chester offices.

On the way, I decided to call at The Antiques Shop in Watergate Street, just three hundred yards short of the newspaper’s office, where, a few months previously, I had seen a copy of David Pye’s memoir of George Leigh Mallory. I had not bought the book because its condition was rather tired and I already had a copy, albeit in a library binding. But now I wondered if I should have an original. But after scanning the shelves twice, the book seemed to have gone. Just as I was turning to leave the shop, I asked the owner if he still had it and had he heard the news of the discovery.

‘Yes and yes,’ he said, ‘I’ve been listening to the radio – the book is right here behind me, and I’ve just been browsing through it. Do you know about the letter?’ he asked. The letter?

He opened the rear cover. Instantly I recognised Mallory’s handwriting from a photograph I’d seen in a book, when I was twelve years old, of Mallory’s last note written at the high camp on Everest in 1924. I was incredulous.

‘Er, is it. . .’ I asked, ‘still. . . for sale?’

‘Oh yes,’ he replied.

‘Quick,’ I thought, ‘buy it before he changes his mind!’

Hopping back onto my bicycle, I rode down to the newspaper’s office quite unable to believe my luck. It seemed like destiny that I should find the letter on this day of all days. And to think that over the last six months I had twice had the book in my hands and had not noticed the letter tucked away in the back. And it had not been sold in the meantime.

The newspaper's photographer took pictures of all that I'd brought and the office girl called the journalist and excitedly told her about the letter which I had not even yet read. The journalist was not in the least bit interested, which surprised the three of us somewhat. We then read the letter and phoned the reporter again only to get the same negative response, although she did want to make use of the other things I'd brought.

The letter had been written by Mallory on the 14th of June 1920 to a Professor Murray offering his services to the Union of the League of Nations. I wondered who this professor could be. In the letter Mallory mentions Oxford and various people, presumably scholars at the University, and as I was dropping off to sleep that night I suddenly thought 'Gilbert Murray!' and leapt out of bed to look on my shelves for a book which has his bookplate in it. This depicts the 'ivory towers' of Oxford and the Parthenon building in Athens and, referring to an encyclopaedia, I discovered that Gilbert Murray was a Professor of Classics at Oxford and a one-time Chairman of the League of Nations Union. That clinched it.

Meanwhile, as I still thought that this must surely be newsworthy, I had contacted one of the press associations in London who were most interested provided that the letter was authentic. And that is how next day the letter ended up being reported on throughout the North-west on television, radio and in the Manchester Evening News as well as the the Daily Post in Chester who had missed their scoop by two days.

In June 1999 Sir Edmund Hillary gave a lecture at the Royal Geographical Society in London. I knew about this after I got chatting to a man on an airport bus in Frankfurt who turned out to be the 1953 Everest, George Lowe. I went to the lecture and was lucky enough to get Sir Edmund to autograph the book alongside Mallory's letter. So this is now, perhaps, a unique item – the signature of the man who may have got to the top in 1924 next to that of one of the men who definitely did so in 1953.

The Book

The copy of David Pye's memoir had been given by Robert and Katherine Chapman to Lady Mary Murray, née Lady Mary Howard, the eldest daughter of the ninth Earl of Carlisle, and wife of Professor Gilbert Murray, at Christmas 1929. As Gilbert Murray was a classics scholar, the Chapmans would have known him because Robert Chapman was a fellow classicist in Oxford. Gilbert Murray must have well remembered Mallory, for he took Mallory's letter out of his papers and taped it inside the rear cover of the book some five years after Mallory's death. The paper punch holes match those of other papers and letters to be seen in Murray's archive of 1920 held at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. I have since spoken to the book dealer who thought that he may have acquired the book from the late Mark Heller's library. He was a correspondent on the *Daily Telegraph* and a keen mountaineer and skier.

The Letter

The Holt
Godalming

June 14 1920

Dear Professor Murray,

I'm writing to ask whether you think the Union of the League of Nations could find any use for my services?

It is a cause which I want to serve, and I am prepared to give up my present job. How shall I tell you about myself? You know something of my antecedents from Denis and Basil. You will gather that I think myself qualified for some form of work under the Union or I shouldn't be writing to you now. I believe that I am not without some gift for lecturing – partly from some little experience I had in France when we set about educating the Army, and partly because one can't be a schoolmaster for long without developing such talent of expression as he may be endowed with. I am to some extent a student of history – that is 'my subject' here; in a second rate sort of fashion no doubt as is almost inevitable, apart from mental gifts, in the case of a schoolmaster; still, history is an interest and a foundation which might be helpful. I have also a very great interest in literature and in writing on my own account but I expect that is not much to the purpose. Perhaps the most important thing about me which I ought to tell you is that I think and feel passionately about international politics.

Is that enough for the present? If you think anything of my suggestion you will want to know more. I know scarcely anyone in Oxford since my friend David Pye has gone to Cambridge. Urquhart and Phelps know me, but rather socially than intellectually; Arnold Toynbee could tell you as much about me, I expect, as either of them.

I have told Fletcher, naturally, of my intentions. If there were a question of my leaving at the end of this Quarter I should have to warn him before long. If necessary I could get to Oxford this next week-end.

I hope I'm not as immodest as might appear from this letter. Consider, if you find it tiresome, that the sins of the children are being visited upon the fathers and that it arises in my unconscious mind from Basil having done his worst this afternoon to swamp me in a canoe.

Yrs. sincerely
George Mallory

At the end of 1920 George Leigh Mallory went to Ireland to witness first hand the strife occurring there. Was this in any way related to this letter?

I sent copies of the letter to George Mallory's son and daughter, and received replies from them. John Mallory wrote to say that 'it has been quite amazing to me the amount of new interest in my father which has been aroused by the finding of his body.' Clare Millikan wrote: 'I am sorry the letter did not yield results. If GLM had been working there, I suppose it would have taken precedence over the ascent of Everest and my brother and sister and I would have grown up with a very interesting live father, instead of a dead hero!'

The League of Nations Union

Support for an international League of Nations started off very much at grass roots level in Britain as well as in other countries. In Britain, on November 1918, a group known as The League of Nations Society, with 2230 individual members, and another organisation, The League of Free Nations Association, with 987 members, joined together to form a combined pressure group known as The League of Nations Union – 'A British Organisation founded to promote the formation of a World League of Free Peoples for the security of International Justice, Mutual Defence and Permanent Peace.' The envisaged World League later became a reality and took for itself the title The League of Nations.

Gilbert Murray was one of the founders of the League of Nations Union, and he was the Chairman of its Executive Council between 1923 and 1938. At the beginning, the Chairman of the Executive Committee was Lord Robert Cecil and the President was Viscount Grey of Falloden. In its early months of existence, the group was mainly concerned with organisational and financial problems and it tended to be cautious in formulating its own policies.

Early in January 1919 a conference of inter-allied International League Societies was held in Brussels, and at the instigation of the (British) League of Nations Union this conference decided to institute an International Federation of League of Nations Societies. It was hoped that such a body would have more weight than the individual national societies. The conference also advocated a Covenant for a 'League of Nations' and this idea was presented to 'The Big Four' at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

At the beginning, the importance of The League of Nations on the international scene was not very clear. Its Council was setting up its own machinery and looking into minor political problems. On more important disputes, at that time, it had no standing because the Allied Supreme Council, which took the major international decisions, continued to meet in Paris until 1923, and the Red Cross and many other organisations looked after the many humanitarian affairs resulting from the Great War. An international Secretariat for it had been set up in the summer of 1919. The

League of Nations Council met nine times in Paris during 1920, and the First League of Nations Assembly met in November in Geneva that year. This assembly did not achieve much, other than to define its own rules of procedure and the setting up of new organisations to deal with Economics and Finance, Transit and Communications, and World Health. It also established committees to deal with opium and white slave traffic, and produced the final text of the Statute of the Permanent Court of International Justice. Gilbert Murray himself did not attend this first Assembly, but went to the second the following year, at the invitation of General Smuts.

The Gilbert Murray Archive

A review of the Gilbert Murray Archive held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, revealed that there is no surviving reference to Mallory's letter of June 1920 in the Union's Minutes; but he may not actually have applied to the League of Nations Union directly because he had written to Gilbert Murray personally. Nor is there a copy in Murray's surviving personal correspondence of any reply that he might have sent to Mallory.

At the Executive Committee Meeting on 7 October 1920, under item 288, consideration was given to a Miss C. M. Alexander who had made an application for part-time work and 'enquiries were to be made if her services could be used'. Apart from that there is very little in the records at this stage about employing anyone in the Union.

The League of Nations Union Committee on Ireland Wednesday 21st Oct. 1920

The General Secretary reported that both Lord Bryce and Major the Hon. Ormsby Gore M.P. had consented to serve on the proposed Irish Committee. This committee would be called early in the following week.

'Ireland and the League', 18th Nov 1920

A Memorandum was put before the Management Committee, at which Prof. Gilbert Murray was in the chair. The committee discussed a memorandum on the subject of 'Ireland and the League' which had been drafted by a sub-committee consisting of Lord Robert Cecil, Major the Hon. Ormsby Gore and Prof. Gilbert Murray. The Chairman stated that this memorandum had been drafted at the request of various speakers who had asked for the policy of the Union in regard to the Irish question. It was intended to be a confidential document and only for the use of such speakers. Duncan Wilson (1984) records the following: 'In Ireland ruthless terrorist operations by the IRA were being met with equal ruthlessness by the British. Asquith for the Independent Liberals condemned the British Government's policy in the strongest possible terms, and Murray was not far behind. In December 1920 Murray was due to make a speaking tour in the USA to

expound the principles of the League, but his hosts had to put off his visit owing to the "extension of the Irish Civil War to New York City". It is interesting to note that this is the same month that Mallory went to Ireland.

Also relevant is Herbert Albert Laurens Fisher (1865-1940). He was a British Delegate to The League of Nations between 1920 and 1922. According to the Murray archive, he corresponded with the Union of the League of Nations from a property at Thursley, Godalming, Surrey, in late September 1920. Mallory lived in Godalming at this time. Fisher, like Mallory, was a Wykehamist, and it is possible that they knew each other because they lived close by, shared a common background and both were interested in the League of Nations. Furthermore, Gilbert Murray's son, Basil, had until very recently been at Charterhouse school, and Fisher knew Gilbert Murray very well – they had been elected to New College, Oxford, on the same day. (Murray was to write Fisher's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.) Did Fisher perhaps influence Mallory's desire to become involved in the Union of the League of Nations?

Fisher was another character who fulfilled many roles in his lifetime. He was Vice Chancellor of Sheffield University from 1912 to 1916, an MP between 1916 and 1926 and a Cabinet Minister and President of the Board of Education from 1916 to 1922. From 1888 to 1912 he was a Fellow of New College, Oxford, where he had read for a first class degree, and was Warden there from 1925 to his death in 1940. He was also a one-time Director of the BBC and wrote much, being best remembered for his *History of Europe*.

Mallory: His politics and Ireland

Mallory's political interests at Charterhouse have been recorded to an extent. The school magazine, *The Carthusian*, for December 1914 records that he gave a lecture on 14 November entitled *Causes of the Present War*. 'He compressed into an hour and a half the most instructive and interesting lecture; in fact, very few people left the lecture-theatre without feeling that they were much more enlightened than when they went in.'

In other issues of the magazine there are references to Mallory contributing to the School's Debating Society. On 24 May 1913 he spoke in the debate 'That the unfit should not be allowed to survive'. He was the only speaker who made any real attempt to define 'unfit'. The following week, on 31 May, the society debated 'Home Rule for Ireland'. At this, the Nationalist MP for West Donegal spoke. He was reported in *The Carthusian* as saying: 'Discontent, not disloyalty, was the real keynote to the state of Ireland. Was it better, he asked, to crush resistance with a strong hand, or to enquire if a nation's complaints were real? By Home Rule, Ireland's national feeling would be satisfied, and she would be deeply loyal to the Empire. He quoted the history of Canada, where self-government had reconciled diversities of race and religion, and also South Africa. Separation

for Ireland, he said, was quite impossible. After briefly explaining the advantages of self-government, he concluded a speech which must have made all the audience feel that they were far wiser than they had been before.' Was George Mallory at this debate, and if so, what influence did it have on him?

The following is drawn almost entirely from David Robertson's biography (*George Mallory*, Faber & Faber, 1969). As a teacher of history Mallory wanted his pupils to view the subject in relation to the present. The history student must purposefully contribute to the understanding of current political affairs. After his experiences in the trenches he felt that there should be citizens of the world. This is in keeping with the times and the grassroots spirit which supported the formation of the League of Nations. But to read about political affairs was not enough – part of his Christmas holiday in 1920 was spent in Ireland then in the throes of great violence over the self-rule issue. He was determined to see for himself what was really happening because, otherwise, it was hard to get the true picture. His own sympathies, Robertson records, had for some time been in favour of Home Rule, and that contributions to the forming of his impressions had been made by contact with many who were concerned with the Home Rule movement. Robertson cites Edith Stopford and her aunt, Mrs J. R. Green (the writer, Alice Stopford Green), Conor O'Brien, Erskine Childers and Desmond Fitzgerald. Mrs Green had been involved in 1914 when O'Brien, in the ketch 'Kelpie', and Childers, with his wife in their boat 'Asgard', had been gun-running at Howth. In April the previous year Mallory and O'Brien had sailed together in the 'Kelpie' along the Irish coast between Valentia and Tralee. And O'Brien had been one of Mallory's climbing companions in North Wales in 1915 and 1919 at Pen-y-Pass, when O'Brien had climbed barefooted with a pipe in his mouth. For Mallory's visit to Ireland, Fitzgerald, as Dail Director of Propaganda, had written on the back of an identification photograph that 'Mr George Mallory is anxious to have first-hand information as to acts of oppression and terror. I shall be glad if he can be assisted.'

At first Dublin seemed to be almost normal, but no-one dared to talk. The army or the police might line up citizens at any time and make them raise their hands above their heads. The Castle, Mallory wrote, was 'a place of secret and sinister chambers where strange things happen in darkness'. Whenever he left his accommodation he would hide his letters, having seen the effects of house raids elsewhere. On the streets he avoided the Black and Tans, kept his hands out of his pockets, and gave up the habit of running in case it might suggest an attempted escape. One night he was woken at 1.30am by a visitor with a torch in one hand and a revolver in the other who asked 'Who are you? Where were you born? Are you a Protestant?' Mallory blessed his English accent and, after his intruder had departed, lay awake reflecting on the last question. Did his inquisitor not yet know that Protestants and Roman Catholics were equally Sinn Feiners? After

this visit to Ireland he could no longer treat with scepticism the reports of drunken behaviour by the Black and Tans, of dreadful visitations at night, of pillage and arson, brutal beatings and random shooting. He tried to understand the position of the Irish and realised that they were striving for an ideal.

He wrote: 'There has been wrong on both sides: but national aspirations, a passionate idealism, are to be found only on one side. It is to this fact that Irishmen appeal when they exclaim, 'If only people in England knew! If only they would come and see!' They believe in the truth of their idealism. But how are they to project a message from this spirit to penetrate English apathy? They say to Englishmen, 'Come and see'; they believe that for Englishmen in general to see would be enough. And it is enough.' (Robertson does not cite the original document for this statement.)

Discussion

The social and academic worlds of most of the people Mallory mentions were very tightly knit and they all interrelated to each other in a great many ways. They all shared a great deal in common in their schooling, higher education, political views and academic occupations. Mallory obviously knew them all, some more closely than others, but at the same time he appears to have been on the periphery of their circle. Of the people that he refers to, Toynbee was very much involved in international politics, and both Prof. Gilbert Murray and Francis Urquhart were greatly interested in the political situation in Ireland, and had been for a long time.

Mallory must already have known Gilbert Murray to a certain degree because he wrote referring to Murray's children on a first name basis. In those days of greater formality, he also displays an impish humour which one would only expect if he knew Murray. He states that if by writing he is being a nuisance, then he is aware that it is really all the fault of Murray's son, Basil, for having nearly swamped him in a canoe. He turns the proverb on its head, with the sins of the sons being visited on the fathers.

Later that year, in November 1920, Murray is recorded as being in the chair of the Union's Management Committee when it discussed Ireland, and he undertook to amend the Ireland document. In the following month, December, Gilbert Murray should have gone to New York to lecture about the League, but his visit had been cancelled due to the 'Irish Civil War having extended to New York City'. Did this have any influence on Mallory visiting Ireland that same month?

If there was no possibility of full-time employment for Mallory in the Union, were his services accepted, if at all, on a part-time or a voluntary basis? Did he go to Ireland in his Christmas holidays for his own personal edification or was he asked to go in order to report back directly to Gilbert Murray or to the Union or both? Or did he go to gain more political

experience, perhaps at Murray's suggestion, in an attempt to obtain employment working for the Union or the League of Nations itself? What influence, if any, did the League delegate, or Herbert Fisher have? And also Mallory's close friend, Toynbee, who had married Murray's daughter? Unless more information is found in the future, these questions may never be answered.

Mallory was soon to be invited to join the 1921 Everest expedition. He was unsure about his future employment after his return, and it appears that neither the Union nor the League of Nations featured in his plans.¹ He was greatly interested in political affairs and had hoped that there might have been an opportunity in a new international organisation where his writing and teaching experiences might have been of use. Perhaps his academic record was simply not of the required standard. However, he eventually did leave schoolteaching and took up an administrative and part-time lecturing post at Cambridge University.

The People Referred to in the Letter (listed alphabetically).

Robert William Chapman (5 October 1881–20 April 1960)

Katherine Chapman

R W Chapman was aged 38 when Mallory wrote to Prof. Gilbert Murray. The pair presented the copy of David Pye's memoir of Mallory to Lady Mary Murray at Christmas 1929. As both Robert Chapman and Prof. Gilbert Murray were Greek classics scholars at Oxford, they would obviously have known each other. In the early 1920s Robert produced editions of Boswell's works. Boswell was also an interest of Mallory's and in 1909 he had published a study of him.

Robert Chapman took a first in Classical Honours at St. Andrews. He won the Guthrie and Adam de Brome scholarships and went to Oriel College, Oxford, where he won the Gaisford Prize for Greek prose in 1903. He obtained a first class in Classical Moderations in 1904 and in Literae Humaniores in 1906. In 1913 he married Katherine Marion Metcalfe, the daughter of Arthur Wharton Metcalfe, a Somerset engineer. She obtained a first class honours degree in English Language and Literature in 1910 at Lady Margaret Hall, from where she moved to Somerville to be an assistant English tutor.

Robert was interested in lexicography and both he and Katherine worked on editions of Jane Austen's novels. He was described as being tall and lean and had a distinct stoop when walking. He was a tireless walker and a keen cyclist who was seldom parted from his bicycle clips. He was an avid collector of silver spoons. It was noted that his efforts to roll a cigarette were persistent but unsuccessful. The Chapmans had three sons and a daughter.

Sir Frank Fletcher (3 May 1870-17 November 1954)

Aged 50 when Mallory wrote the letter to Prof. Gilbert Murray

He was headmaster at Charterhouse school, arriving a year after Mallory. As a young man, he was a keen Alpine mountaineer. He would have known Prof. Gilbert Murray because Murray's son, Basil, went to Charterhouse as a pupil between the autumn term of 1915 and the summer term of 1920. Fletcher, as well as being headmaster, was the housemaster of 'Saunderites' where Basil Murray, in his final year, was a house monitor.

He was born in Atherton, near Manchester, into a family which had been colliery owners for a hundred years. At the age of twelve he went as a scholar to Rossall School. From there he went as a classical scholar to Balliol, Oxford, where he obtained a double first in Honour Moderations and Greats, and won the Craven, Ireland and Derby scholarships. His heart was set on schoolmastering and he took his first teaching post at Rugby in 1894. In 1903 he was appointed Master of Marlborough, the youngest headmaster of his day and the first lay headmaster of a great school. In 1911 he moved to Charterhouse where he was to remain as headmaster for 24 years. He introduced major changes by setting new standards and by making improvements in teaching, the curriculum and to the fabric of classrooms, laboratories and the school grounds. He was keen on sports of all sorts – he had been a keen cricketer, footballer, runner, hockey player and climber. He was a member of the Alpine Club. Also, he wrote several hymns for the school. On several occasions he was chairman of the Headmasters' Conference and was knighted in 1937.

Basil Andrew Murray (1902 -1937)

Aged 18 when Mallory wrote to Gilbert Murray.

He went to Charterhouse school from the autumn term of 1915 to the summer term of 1920. It is possible that Mallory taught him, and obviously, from the letter, he knew him by first name and went canoeing with him. In his last term, Basil is recorded as being a house monitor of Saunderites, where Frank Fletcher was housemaster as well as the school's headmaster.

The fourth child, and second son, of the Murrays, he was in his teens during the Great War and was affected by the general restlessness of young men then caused by the possibility of having to go to the fighting when they left school. This disturbance carried on into his undergraduate days at New College, Oxford. Here he won the Charles Oldham Prize. Michael Davie, who edited Waugh's diaries in 1976, writes that Basil could be regarded as an undesirable friend and described him as being satanic. Waugh used him as a model for Basil Seal, a casualty of a lost generation of young men who might have died in the war; and perhaps, in part, for Lord Sebastian Flyte in *Brideshead Revisited*. After leaving university he read for the Bar, but continually ran up debts and failed to make a long-term success in any particular career – he also failed in three marriages. He wrote a

biography of Lloyd George, whose secretary he had been, and served for a time on the staff of the *Daily Express* in 1930, as well as for Gainsborough Films that year. By 1935 he had launched himself into journalism and became directly involved in politics as a Liberal and stood, unsuccessfully, in the General Election of 1936 in Argyll. He was involved in a notorious incident in May that year in disrupting a meeting of the British Union of Fascists, addressed by Oswald Mosley.

In 1937 he had decided to work for the anti-Fascist cause as a war correspondent for the International News Service during the civil war in Spain and travelled there at the end of January. He appears to have had terrible experiences and died of pneumonia within three months, at sea, on board the hospital ship *Maine* on his return voyage from Alicante to Marseilles.

Denis George Murray (1892 -1930)

Aged 28 when Mallory wrote to Gilbert Murray.

He arrived at Winchester College the term after Mallory left. At Winchester he was taken climbing by Mallory's former teacher and friend, R.L.G. Irving and may have met Mallory via Irving, or could have known Mallory through his younger brother Basil who was at school at Charterhouse where Mallory taught. In any case, Mallory was on first name terms with him.

The eldest child of the Murrays, he went to Winchester in 1905, and was sufficiently noticeable to have been taken on one of the traditional climbing parties by R.L.G. Irving in 1910. In the autumn of that year he went to read Classics at New College, Oxford, but withdrew in 1911 to go to Birmingham University to study Engineering with a view to becoming an aeroplane engineer. Again he did not complete his degree and in 1912 joined Vickers Ltd. In 1914 he became a pilot, passed his sea-plane test in September 1914 and was posted to France. Having been shot down near to the Dutch coast, suffering burns, he was interned at Groningen in Holland, a neutral country, in 1915. His mother, Lady Mary Murray, visited the prison camp in 1916 and was shocked by the aimlessness of the lives of the young prisoners: 'So foolish, so wild, so ungovernable, their careers ruined and in Denis's case, so bitter and so angry.' He was released in 1917 suffering from genuine pleurisy, having previously tried to escape by feigning illness. This imprisonment had the bad effects that Lady Mary had foreseen. After the war Denis was unable to settle down, and the drinking which had seemed a way to bear the boredom and frustrations of the camp became chronic. In spite of being both happily married and receiving devoted care from his mother and her sister, Cecilia Roberts, who found him jobs on the Cumberland estates, he never recovered. In March 1930 he died suddenly and unexpectedly, as much a casualty of the war as those who had been killed in the fighting.

George Gilbert Aime Murray (1866 -1957)

Aged 54 when Mallory wrote to him.

He obviously knew Mallory through all the people mentioned in the letter. Murray was born in Sydney, Australia, the third son of Sir Terence Aubrey Murray, President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales. His early formative years were spent in a culture which had much greater social equality than that which he later found in England.

From childhood he hated all forms of cruelty, especially to animals, and he developed strong anti-religious feelings. As an adult he was a teetotaler and a vegetarian. At the age of eleven, his widowed mother having returned to England, he was sent to Merchant Taylor's School where he received a first-rate classical training. At school, aged 15, he became more and more politically aware and spoke in a school debate in favour of a separate existence for Ireland. In 1884 he entered St. John's College, Oxford. Besides a double first in Honour Moderations and Literae Humaniores, he won the Hertford and Ireland scholarships, a Craven scholarship, two Gaisford Prizes and a Chancellor's Prize for Latin verse. In 1888 he was elected a Fellow of New College and was awarded the Derby Scholarship in 1889.

At Oxford he became increasingly concerned with politics, and nearest to his heart was the question of Irish Home Rule – perhaps the most hotly debated issue of the time, though not a popular cause then in Oxford. In 1886, with Walter Ashburner, a St. John's friend of American origin, he founded an Oxford Home Rule League. There was a 'Great Home Rule Meeting' in December 1887, and in February 1888 Murray was one of the principal speakers in a formal Home Rule debate at the Oxford Union in opposition to Lord Randolph Churchill. He later joined a local branch of the Irish League which thanked him profusely when he left Oxford for Glasgow for 'many good offices received'. In the spring of 1889 he visited Ireland and attended elections at Falcarragh, but addressed no meetings and kept within the law, but was 'followed by spies day and night'. He reported his experiences to Lady Carlisle, his soon-to-be mother-in-law, herself deeply committed to Home Rule.

He married, on 30 November 1889, in the chapel of Castle Howard, the beautiful and ardent Lady Mary Henrietta Howard, the eldest daughter of the ninth Earl of Carlisle, and also that year, at the age of only 23, he was elected Professor of Greek at Glasgow University which offered him a marriageable income.

At Glasgow he proved to be a great teacher and a striking lecturer. He produced brilliant translations of classical Greek dramas, of which nearly 400,000 copies had been sold at the time of his death. His intense imagination brought the literature alive and he had a great power of communicating the life of the subject. His dramatisations filled West End

theatres and cockney Music Halls alike and drew audiences from all classes of society. However, in 1899 he retired from his Professorship; exhaustion was mistaken for a fatal disease. Murray was something of a hypochondriac throughout his life. But in 1905 he returned to Oxford, to teach privately at New College, and in 1908 he was nominated by the Crown as Regius Professor of Greek.

He took an active part in the women's suffrage movement, and, as a lover of peace, he was distressed and horrified by the outbreak of the Great War. By 1914 he was a man of considerable influence and his circle of friends included political leaders of the two main parties. Having denounced nationalism in 1900 with great ferocity, he recognised that conciliation had failed, and so he assisted the government in London in a variety of ways throughout the war. After the Armistice he felt it his duty to try to prevent further wars through international action. He threw himself heart and soul into the work of the League of Nations Union of which he was a founder and the chairman of the Executive Council from 1923 until 1938. For this organisation he worked with the zeal of a missionary. He thought no branch too small to address, no detailed committee work too dull to attend to, and in writing and speaking his purpose was to inform public opinion of the aims and achievements of the League. He wanted to impart accurate knowledge to its supporters. After the Second World War he was the joint president and then the sole president of the United Nations Association in Britain. To his 90th year he travelled indefatigably, lecturing in these causes.

He was always a strong supporter of the cause of women's education, and was President of Somerville College from 1916 to 1919. He was a fellow of the British Academy, a trustee of the British Museum and served as President of the Society of Psychical Research in 1915. In 1926 he was Professor of Poetry at Harvard. He retired in 1936 and was awarded the Order of Merit in 1941.

He was described as a man of singular grace and charm, well built and lissom, with a long swinging gait, a high domed brow, and long delicate hands. Agile and foot-sure he was a capable boxer in his youth and a fearless glacier walker into his sixties – indeed, he had climbed unguided in the Alps at the end of December 1884 with A.W. Verral and in the Dolomites in 1886 with Gore. He again climbed on a rope in the Alps in 1923, after a gap of many years, when attending League of Nations business. He looked what he was – a scholar, with a wide outlook and a strong sense of humour – a born mimic and a brilliant parodist. His speeches were amusing, closely reasoned and persuasive, made the more effective by a melodious voice. He was at home in any good humoured society. Yet there was about him a certain detachment, as though his truest life was lived with his books and his thoughts. He had three sons and two daughters of whom three predeceased him. His wife, Lady Mary Murray, died on 2 September 1956.

Lancelot Ridley Phelps (1853 -1936)

Aged 66 when Mallory wrote to Murray.

He was closely involved with Charterhouse school, and would probably have met Mallory there or known him through some of Mallory's former pupils when they went up to Oxford.

Born at Ridley, Kent, and educated at Charterhouse where, later, he was for many years on the governing body. He went to Oriel College, Oxford, as a scholar in 1872 and was elected a fellow in 1877. In 1879 he was ordained a deacon, and a priest in 1896. He became a tutor at Oriel between 1893 and 1914, and Provost from 1914 to 1929 after which he was an honorary fellow until 1936. Between 1921 and 1929 he was Pro-Vice Chancellor. He was a member of Oriel for 64 years and was deeply interested in the fabric of the college and its estates. As steward of the common room he insisted that there be good general conversation and was himself an admirable talker and raconteur.

He was responsible for supervising many undergraduates and was the friend of a great many, with whom he kept up a lifelong correspondence. He taught political economy both theoretical and practical and was a popular lecturer on classics. He influenced many probationary civil servants of both India and the Sudan.

For many years he was an Oxford councillor and afterwards an alderman, and was a member of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws (1905-1909) and was later the chairman of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy. He was greatly interested in the days before social security, in the welfare of the poor and as early as 1887 had published a pamphlet entitled 'Poor Law and Charity.' He was influenced by Arnold Toynbee, with whom Mallory was at Winchester College, to become a member of the Oxford Board of Guardians.

He always sported a long flowing beard and had a springing gait. He affected a black straw hat year round and made a point of knowing every Carthusian in residence in Oxford. He spent a year in Göttingen prior to working at Oriel and highly recommended this *Wunderjahr* to his students. He was always accessible to new ideas, for example the distribution of university funding.

Sir David Randall Pye (1886 -1960)

Aged 34 when Mallory wrote to Murray.

He was the same age as Mallory and they presumably met when they were undergraduates at Cambridge. He wrote the memoir of George Leigh Mallory published in 1927, and was a close friend and climbing companion. In 1905 he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, from Tonbridge School, and obtained a first class in the Mechanical Science Tripos in 1908. He joined the new Engineering Laboratories at Oxford in 1909 and was elected a Fellow of New College in 1911. His pioneering research concentrated on

the thermal properties of refrigerants. During the Great War he became an Experimental Officer in the Royal Flying Corps. Following demobilisation, he moved to Trinity College, Cambridge, a move referred to by Mallory in his letter.

Here he worked on the character of fuels in internal combustion engines with particular reference to the aircraft engine. In 1925 he moved to the Air Ministry, and in 1937 he became its Director of Scientific Research. He bore the heavy responsibility of introducing new methods and equipment into the RAF which were to prove of inestimable value during the Second World War. Between 1943 and 1951 he was Provost of University College, London.

He had many cultural interests and was an enthusiastic mountaineer and rock climber. His memoir on his devoted friend and climbing companion, George Leigh Mallory, was described as a 'gem of its kind.'

Professor Arnold Joseph Toynbee (1889-1975)

Aged 31 when Mallory wrote to Murray.

A close, slightly younger friend of Mallory's, who was a pupil with him at Winchester College. He became an historian and was described as being among the outstanding intellectual figures of his time. Gilbert Murray was his father-in-law.

At Balliol College, Oxford, he was awarded the Craven Scholarship and took a first in Mods and Greats. Shortly after the outbreak of the Great War he entered government service and in 1919 was a member of the Middle Eastern section of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. Also in 1919 he was appointed to the newly founded Koraes Professorship of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language, Literature and History at King's College, London.

In 1926 he became Professor of History in the University of London – a new post which had been founded by Sir Daniel Stevenson who was convinced that hatreds were generated by the nationalistic teaching of history; and he desired that the subject be taught and studied 'internationally and as far as possible without bias'. Toynbee used this position to issue the annual *Surveys of International Affairs* which, throughout the period between the two world wars, established themselves as indispensable works of reference. He was not wholly uncritical in his exposition of international developments and he was above all things a moralist. When he came upon conduct which violated his ethical standards his detachment fell away and he became merciless in his castigation.

During the Second World War, Toynbee became director of the Foreign Office Research Department. In 1952 he delivered the Reith Lectures and in 1955 he retired. His retirement was spent in almost incessant travel, lecturing and writing, and included an 18-month round-the-world journey. Throughout his life he published prolifically and his abridgment, in 1947,

of his magnum opus *A Study of History* made his views widely known, especially in America where his name became almost a household word. He displayed vast erudition, great industry and had a wonderful style enriched by all the resources of a classical learning and a deep literary familiarity with the Christian scriptures. He attempted to solve some of the most fundamental human problems.

In 1913 he married Rosalind, daughter of Professor Gilbert Murray; the marriage was dissolved in 1946. He was made a Companion of Honour in 1956 and was showered with honorary degrees by universities in Britain and America.

Francis Fortesque 'Sligger' Urquart (1 Sept 1868-18 Sept 1934)

Aged 51 when Mallory wrote to Prof. Gilbert Murray. He corresponded with Mallory and Mallory visited him at Balliol at Easter 1911.

Born in Geneva, Switzerland, he spent the summers of his early years in a chalet at St. Gervais, and the winters in Montreux. In 1879 his widowed mother decided that he should be educated at Jesuit Public Schools in England including Beaumont College, Windsor, and then at Stonyhurst where he worked for London University exams and took his BA in 1889 in Latin and Greek. He took up residence at Balliol College, Oxford, in October 1890 having won an exhibition in Modern History, and he won the Stanhope prize in 1894. From 1893 he was in post for 39 years and was the first Roman Catholic to hold a Tutorial Fellowship in Oxford. He was an historian who always insisted that the subject be read with a map.

During the Great War he helped the Foreign Office and also wrote pamphlets, including 'A Plan for International Law' and 'Restoration of the Law of Nations' – to the effect that nations must be bound by the moral law as much as are individual people, and that 'The International Policeman' was of no use unless backed by law on consent and agreement.

His friendship to many undergraduates was a unique and central element in their Oxford experience; he had the gift of making the gulf of years vanish. He was a great correspondent and eased the relationship between students and dons, though some complained that he devoted too much time to Etonians and Wykehamists. He held the view that the only time that one could really meet people was over a meal. He knew English and French literature very widely, and took student reading parties away, sometimes to the Alpine chalet where he had spent his childhood. This was regarded as a coveted honour by students and other visitors. Here he divided work and play. The chalet lay in full sight of Mont Blanc and he often went to the summit of the Prarion. He was more of a mountain walker than a mountaineer as such, but he did climb the Aiguille de Gouter in 1891, Mont Blanc in 1900 with Gertrude Bell and Mount Olympus in 1909. His chalet was 3000ft above the village of St. Gervais and he held annual competitions taken at breakneck speed to see who could make the fastest

ascents and descents. He held the record for a considerable time, some 14 minutes down and 55 up! In 1931, leaving the chalet for the last time due to ill health, he found it the bitterest parting he had ever had to make.

He was nicknamed 'Sligger' with allusion to his smooth face, 'Sleeker' being corrupted to 'Sligger'; he was known to all and sundry by this name for the rest of his life. Of more than average height, he was of sturdy build with thick and clumsy hands. He had fine features, a ruddy countenance and clear blue eyes. He was a great mountain walker.

Ireland was always of deep interest to him as he had Irish ancestry. On 13 September 1919 he wrote:

The whole situation makes me perfectly sick. Why won't our politicians face the problem instead of letting things drift month after month – and meanwhile their military occupation is making things worse and worse and ruining the Irish character, while it is hopelessly against our ideals and all our professions. There seems so much indolence, mental indolence, in all our recent Irish policy – the refusal to face the situation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Since writing this paragraph, Audrey Salkeld provided the author with the following quotation from Geoffrey Winthrop Young's obituary of Mallory written in July 1924:

' ... The interruption of the war – during which he served with distinction in the Artillery – diverted his enthusiasm for education into wider channels. He worked out an original scheme for promoting international understanding by a development of geography teaching, in connection with the work of the League of Nations. The adventure of Mount Everest intervened; and he was not a little influenced in his decision to undertake it – a decision involving the sacrifice of his peculiarly happy home life – by the support which success in this grim field might lead to his crusade. After his second, and all but fatal, journey, his unselfish ambition was realised by his appointment to kindred work, of national importance, at Cambridge. Dr Cranage has already written of the effect which his sympathetic enthusiasm, his powers both as organizer and lecturer, produced in those few short months ... '

From obituary in *The Nation and the Athenaeum*, 5 July, 1924

The author would be grateful to any reader who can provide this reference to Dr. Cranage.

- 2 George Mallory, *Boswell The Biographer*. Smith, Elder & Co, 1912

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