

Kattie Bellasis (Mrs Katherine Bowring) 1840 - ?

Kattie Bellasis was the third daughter of Mr Edward Bellasis, Serjeant-at-Law, staunch friend and trusted legal adviser to Cornelia Connelly. Kattie wrote her autobiography for her children, and her daughter, Clara Bowring, presented it to the Society when she herself was an old lady. Kattie had first been sent to the Sacred Heart School at Roehampton, but she was not happy there and her health suffered. When she was 14 she was taken out of school for a year and then went to St Leonards in April 1855. She left when she was 17 in 1857. Her autobiography shows her to have been a lively, and at times, rather unruly girl!

“I had been at home about a year when Mr. Hope Scott suggested it was time I went to school again, and as Roehampton had not agreed with my health, Father went down to St. Leonards to inspect the Convent of the Holy Child Jesus – recommended to him by Mr. Marshall the School Inspector – who spoke very highly of its educational advantages. The Order had been formed by a Mrs Connolly [*sic*] – an American who had passed her Noviceship at the Sacred Heart Convent [*sic*] – She was an extremely clever woman, and having been married in early life, and had three children she knew something about the care of them....

Mother Connolly [*sic*] as I knew her was a very beautiful woman – she was Spanish looking and had splendid eyes and a pretty American brogue, not too pronounced – a quaint way of turning her phrases.

.... I must have changed very much in the year I had been at home, as I went to St. Leonards not desirous to win any ribbon of merit. Revd. Mother gave me a long rein, and when I used to meet her at the cloisters she would smile and shake her finger at me, and always called me her “scapegrace”!

I was not strong, so I was allowed to learn my lessons in the garden in fine weather, and I used to sit on the top of a hay rick and read Walter Scott’s novels – during recreations I learnt to milk one of the cows in an evening and had a cup of the warm milk....

There was a great mixture of Irish and English girls – and there were so many rows on St. George’s Day and St. Patrick’s that we were forbidden to sport red ribbons or roses or shamrocks on the feast day.

The biggest scrape I got into was buying red ribbon and distributing it for St. George's feast – it was asked in class who had done this mean and dishonorable thing – and I remember jumping up and saying “I did, but I never have done anything mean or dishonorable in my life.”

Revd. Mother wisely put an end to the strife by making all the English girls invite the Irish girls to a feast on St. Patrick's Day, and they in their turn feasted us of St. George's!”