

OFFPRINT

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of

GRYLLS AND GRILLS, THE HISTORY OF A CORNISH CLAN,

by

Richard G. Grylls

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The Revd. Thomas Grylls (1790-1845), second son of
Thomas Grylls of Helston (▼2J)

The steadfast calm and intense faith of the Revd. Thomas Grylls were mentioned in the last chapter. He seems to have been the true 'gentle man', beloved and respected by all, though his gentleness may have been in part the cause of some of the problems he had with his sons.

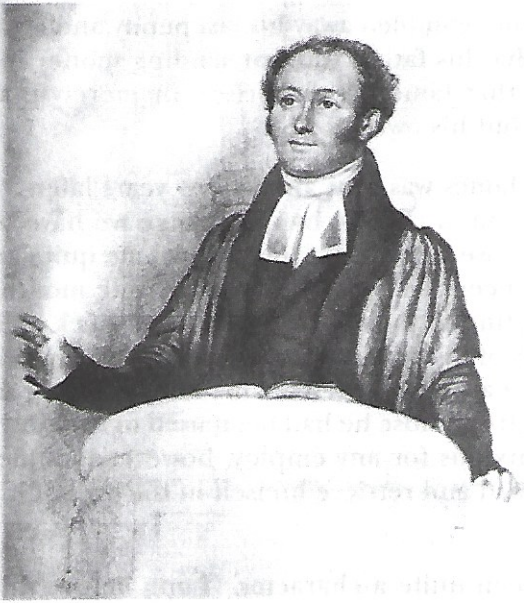
After an exceptional career at Cambridge, graduating 10th in his year, he was offered the opportunity of an academic career at the university.²⁶ His decision to decline the offer was probably due to the genuine calling he felt. He returned to Helston in 1813 to help sort out the problems caused by his father's suicide. The following year he was installed as curate to his uncle, Thomas Trevenen, the absentee rector of Cardinham. The parish was and still is a remote and peaceful place to the west of Bodmin Moor. The patronage of the parish was in the hands of the Vivians of Pencalenick, who were good friends of the Gryllses and the Trevenens, so it was quite logical that Thomas Grylls should succeed his uncle as rector two years later. He stayed in that post throughout his entire remaining 31 years.

Not until the latter part of this century have parishioners and churchwardens had any say in the appointment of rectors or vicars to their parish. Certainly the learned 24 year old graduate who arrived at Cardinham in 1814 was an unknown quantity, installed purely on the basis of his family connections. Depending on what college he had attended he might be high-church or evangelical. He might be more interested in country pursuits than caring for his flock. Even if he turned out to be a good man, he might, because of his family connections, be able to acquire a more lucrative living elsewhere and be off to fill that vacancy as soon as possible. The parishioners were entirely at the mercy of their patron, whose whims or discretion dictated who became their rector or vicar.

Choosing a vicar

As it turned out, the people of Cardinham had acquired and managed to keep the ideal rector, a highly intelligent but also a deeply caring man. Thomas Grylls was certainly of high-church inclination but he seems, in the eyes of his biographer, the Revd. John Punnett, Vicar of St. Erth, to have struck exactly the right theological note with the people of Cardinham. 'Imbued, as he was, with the spirit of our gorgeous liturgy, he read the prayers and performed the services of our Church with a reverence and devotion, that could not fail to communicate some of their effect, external though it might be, to his fellow-worshippers.' His sermons were 'in a high degree, spiritual, practical and scriptural'. In his pastoral work among the parishioners 'he afforded a bright and rare example of the Christian pastor. His very countenance and manner, on which peculiar sweetness was impressed, told his errand before he opened his lips'. The word 'saint' was quietly mentioned. No doubt such eulogistic descriptions have been made of many recently departed churchmen, but the Revd. John Punnett's words ring with sincerity.

Every aspect of Thomas Grylls's life was conducted with a quiet missionary zeal. Even the simple task of recording events in the Parish Register was done in greater detail than was required, thus providing for historians and genealogists an unusual wealth of detail. His work extended beyond the parish of Cardinham on his appointment as rural dean. It spread further still with his active support for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and the Church Missionary Society. In 1833 he was appointed by the Bishop of Exeter a



The Revd. Thomas Grylls, painted by R.R.Scantlon, 1835

prebendary in Exeter Cathedral. The appointment was in reality merely an honour, but it did give Thomas the opportunity to preach in the Cathedral. 'The sensation attending his first appearance in the pulpit of the Cathedral will, we are persuaded, be long remembered here.'²⁷

Possibly in his capacity as rural dean, Thomas Grylls was a founder member of a small group of four or five clerics who met regularly to discuss religious matters. This kind of meeting was somewhat of a rarity then, but, in view of the troubled state of the Church of England at that time, such meetings were sorely needed. The Revd. Punnett, a younger man than Thomas Grylls, recorded with immense gratitude his own attendance at the meetings of this small group, which often took place in Cardinham. For him it was more a matter of sitting at the masters' feet, but he was well aware of the mutual support and deepening of understanding that the more senior members of the group derived from one another.

The picture painted so far of Thomas Grylls, the man and his life, is one of quiet success in his own small world, relatively insulated from the problems of industrialisation and increasing population. It was the sort of delightfully sheltered world in which his wife was able, with the help of friends, to produce over a period of 20 years a remarkable piece of quilt work. The highly intricate *petit point* bedspread is now at the Royal County Museum in Truro. One problem Thomas perhaps did not foresee was that some of his ten children, bred of intelligent parents and well educated, might rebel at the narrow and sheltered confines of their lives. There can be no doubt that 'home' at Cardinham Rectory was a caring and loving place, but, compared with the inactivity of Cardinham, visits to relations in Truro and Helston must have seemed like heaven to the children. The boys, James Willyams (b.1815), John (b.1819), Humphry Millett (b.1821) and Thomas (b.1825), must have relished their visits to Uncle Humphry at Bosahan or his Helston town-house, and after the latter's death their visits to Uncle Glynn in his new house in Helston. There were further relations on their mother's side in Truro whom they also visited. Their education too led the boys to places of far more activity and interest than Cardinham. James, the eldest boy was probably a weekly boarder at a nearby grammar school, Liskeard or Bodmin perhaps, while the three younger boys went to Blundell's School in Tiverton for six years each. The Revd. Thomas Grylls certainly planned and prepared for the boys' futures, which he well knew lay far beyond Cardinham, but he seems to have been unprepared for the lack of commitment to settle down to useful occupations that two of his sons were to display.

Four marvellous letters from Thomas to his younger brother Glynn in Helston tell of his problems with James and Humphry.²⁸ Reading between the lines of the first letter written in March 1842, James, aged 26 by then, had recently sent 'a miserable communication from Paris' begging for money. How he had spent his all on the gay life in the French capital can well be imagined. After much thought and discussion with his brothers Glynn and Charles, whom he met up with at Lanhydrock, the Revd. Thomas Grylls decided to send £5 to a man named Harris, probably someone Glynn knew in Paris through his banking connections. With it were instructions to be given to James 'that he may take £2 on clothing and the remainder to go on at the rate of 5s a week from the present time for food, and that no more will be advanced till the 12 weeks are out, nor without a certificate in James's hand that he has had the money



James Wilyams Grylls,
1815-1861

or the benefit of it'. Had James gambled away his last penny and even his clothes? Does the fact that his father was not sending money for the journey home indicate that James was in prison or merely that James should be left to sort out his own life?

The next letter concerning James was sent almost two years later. 'I cannot refrain from telling you of the happy change we have to rejoice over in him. As far as we can see he has become quite an altered character'. He had been living as a lodger for nine months with a 'humble' family, adapting to their 'early hours and quick habits' and proving, in the words of his landlady, most 'steady and regular in his habits and cheerful and contented'. This tonic of living in very different circumstances from those he had been used to obviously worked well. 'He is most anxious for any employ, however humble, by which he may earn his bread and retrieve himself in the eyes of his family and friends.'

James Wilyams Grylls must have been quite a character. Long before this episode, starting when he was about 17, he had served for a period as a Lieutenant in the army in India.²⁹ During his leaves he went on wild-game hunting expeditions. With the help of his native guides, one day he would hunt bull-elephants, on another day wild pigs, on another day bears and so forth. Each day's hunting was written up in the form of an adventure, and these, over a period of time, were published in Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine*. The total disregard for the sanctity of life of not only the animals but also the natives, that was prevalent at the time, make reading James's articles today a less than pleasant experience. It is good to notice that even he became squeamish when by chance he attended, sitting in the front row, the execution of two Bengali thieves. He was a good raconteur and his writing style has an arrogant charm. It certainly conveys the thrill he derived both from the environment of the jungle and from the hunting expeditions. Whether people who went on such expeditions were rare or whether James just stood out as a young man is not known, but he was sufficiently well known to appear in a book of lithographs entitled *Public Characters of Calcutta* by C. Grant, published in Calcutta in 1850.³⁰

By mid 1848, despite one further brush with law, James had settled down and held onto a job as a clerk in the Miner's Bank in Camborne.³¹ It was during that year that his various articles were gathered together under one cover and published as *The Out Station: or Jaunts in the Jungle*.³² It was also the year that he married, a clergyman's daughter. Did he perhaps meet, while working at the Miner's Bank and later becoming its manager, a certain Reginald Thomas Grylls whose renegade youth was described in Chapter 7? If so, did they struggle, as their descendants have, to try to find a relationship between the two families? James Wilyams Grylls died without issue in 1861.

His younger brother, Humphry Millett Grylls, named after his illustrious uncle and godfather, had a less eventful but equally indecisive start to his career. The death of his uncle in 1834 had scuppered plans that he should be trained up to be a partner in the family firm of solicitors in Helston. However, a career as a solicitor was still thought suitable for him and Humphry spent an 'apprenticeship' period as a clerk at the Helston office, which ended in 1842 when he was twenty. The Revd. Thomas Grylls wrote to his brother Glynn requesting that Humphry might be taken on as an assistant for a few years, with of course no thought of his becoming a partner later – though Thomas must have secretly wished this. 'I have but one fault to find with him – his want of self-control in his expenses', wrote Thomas. He was most anxious that

Humphry Millett
Grylls II, 1821-1876

Humphry should not go up to London since that was where the greatest temptations would lie.

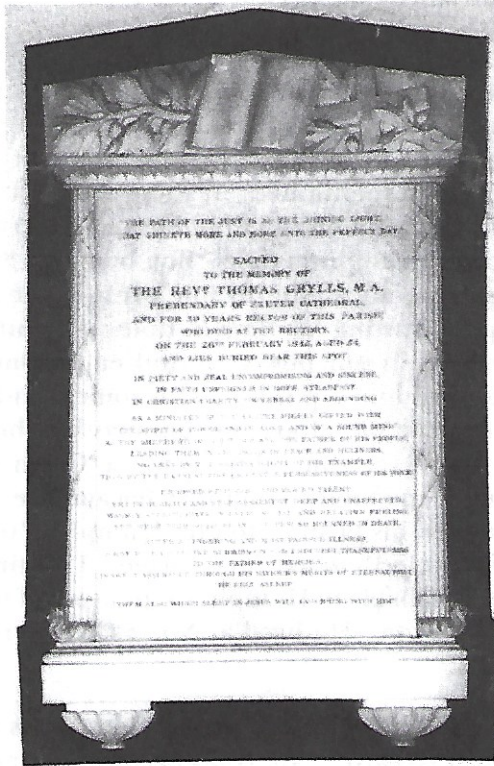
Glynn Grylls and his partner Frederick Hill obviously did not accede to the request, or managed at least to brush it aside. They presumably had reservations about employing Humphry, because they had also become aware of the problems with money which his father had mentioned. If there wasn't a job in Helston for Humphry then legal contacts in London would have to be tried. Humphry went up to London to be available for interviews. But, by early 1844, the Revd. Thomas Grylls was getting desperate about his son. 'It is so great a pain and anxiety to me to see Humphry wasting his time in doing absolutely nothing whilst we are using every means in our power to find employment for him.' Frederick Hill had tried to find him a position with some London attorneys but had failed. An India scheme was afoot, but Thomas had been advised by 'wiser heads than our own' of its unsuitability. It was a 'Catch 22' situation, in that no one seemed to want to employ Humphry because he was unemployed. Thomas once again begged his brother to give Humphry 'temporary employment for a very limited period', to get him started. This time, to Thomas's absolute delight, and very probably to Humphry's great relief too, Glynn agreed. Humphry set off for Helston. He lived at No. 3 Cross Street with his grandmother for several years.³³

After his period with Grylls and Hill in Helston, Humphry Millett Grylls became a partner in a solicitors firm in Liskeard.³⁴ In 1859 he married, and, like his elder brother James, chose a clergyman's daughter. They had a family of five, but Humphry did not survive to see them grow into adults. He died in 1876 leaving his widow to deal with one wayward son, Humphry John Maxwell Grylls. In the nick of time that young man was saved from losing a fortune on the gambling tables of London and dispatched to Canada – but his story must wait till Chapter 15.

Before describing some of the other children of the Revd. Thomas Grylls and his wife Sarah (née Willyams) it is necessary to return to Thomas himself. In early 1839, a little before the time when his sons gave him such problems, he had problems of his own. Through various connections he was appointed Dean of Exeter Cathedral by the Crown. However, the canons of Exeter Cathedral refused to accept this on the basis that the appointment had always been made from among their number. They had already rejected one Crown appointment since that person had been neither a canon nor a prebendary of the Cathedral, a condition laid down in their charter. The Crown's second appointee, Thomas Grylls, was at least a prebendary but the canons dug in their heels and said that the tradition had always been that they did the choosing, despite the wording of the charter. They proceeded therefore to elect their own nominee. No doubt Thomas Grylls was sickened by all this but was persuaded by the law officers of the Crown to take the matter to court. After several months of uncertainty which finally led to litigation, Thomas and the Crown lost. In revenge the Crown promptly had the law changed to prevent further losses in battles with canons. Thomas, meanwhile, returned to his quiet ministry in Cardinham.

*Thomas Grylls, Dean of
Exeter*

By 1843 the Revd. Thomas Grylls's health had begun to fail. A tumour in his neck had turned malignant. He was persuaded in the following year to take a cure in Switzerland. This may have prolonged his life a little but failed to improve his condition. His last days were most movingly described by the Revd. Punnett and Thomas's wife, Sarah.³⁵ The intense pain caused by the disease and the attempted remedies was borne without any complaint. He continued preaching each Sunday against the advice of his wife and doctors.



*Memorial in
Cardingham Church*

*Thomas Glynn Grylls,
1825-1867, his wife
and children*

'On the last Sunday of his officiating in church being unable to ascend or to stand in the pulpit, he went through the entire service from the reading desk, there supported on either side by pillows.' Only his final complete disability prevented him continuing. For several weeks he was bedridden and only occasionally able to speak. His family gathered at the Rectory; they sang hymns to the dying man and his wife read his favourite Bible passages. Just before his death his whole family were gathered in 'perfect stillness' around his bedside. 'Fifteen minutes before twelve, we were struck with a sudden and remarkable change in his appearance; his eyes which had been fixed and lustreless were suddenly raised with a startling earnestness to Heaven. His countenance became radiant with a joy full of immortality, and then succeeded such a smile! Who can forget his smile?' The Revd. Thomas Grylls died on February 26th, 1845.

The sermons Thomas had preached at Exeter Cathedral were published shortly after his death, and were prefaced by a biographical sketch and tribute written by Revd. Punnett. Another moving tribute appeared in the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* on March 7th 1845, while the account of his last three days, written by his widow, was printed privately in 1867, five years before her death.

All his nine surviving children had gathered at Thomas's bedside as he died. The lives of two of the sons, James Willyams Grylls and Humphry Millett Grylls, have already been described. The second son, John Gerveys Grylls, practised for a while as a surgeon and then retired, remaining in Cardingham.³⁶ Of the youngest son, Thomas Glynn Grylls, only the outline of his career is known.

After graduating from Cambridge in 1848 Thomas Glynn Grylls taught at Truro Grammar School, but two years later was entrusted with the reopening of Penzance Grammar School as its new headmaster. He was 25 years old and had recently been ordained. It is recorded that he widened the curriculum 'to include modern subjects' such as History and English Literature.³⁷ During his nine year tenure of the headmastership he married Henrietta, one of the daughters of Colonel Charles Campbell of Quebec and his wife Charlotte. How Thomas and Henrietta happened to meet is a pleasant mystery, though she did spend some time at her uncle's house in Madron, near Penzance. Henrietta's elder sister, Sophia, was 'considered the most beautiful woman of her day in Canada'. Their brother reckoned that Henrietta 'was also very handsome, but her beauty was as the moon to the sun compared with Lady McMahon's (Sophia)'.³⁸ Thomas and Henrietta produced a large number of children, several of whom died in infancy.

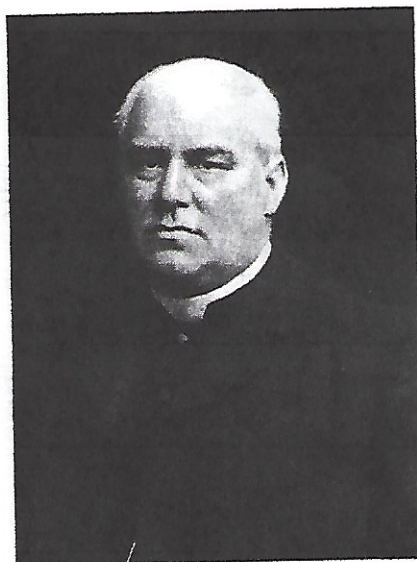
The Revd. Thomas Glynn Grylls moved from Penzance Grammar School in 1859, and became second master at Somersetshire College in Bath.³⁹ In 1864, at the age of 39, he seems to have retired and moved to Salford Manor, near Woburn, Bedfordshire. He may have retired for reasons of ill health since he died in Southport two years later. His widow, who was pregnant at the time of his death, shortly thereafter returned to Canada with some of the children. She left her four year old twins, Archie and Julia, at 'a gardener's cottage' in Bath. Henrietta survived her husband by 49 years, returning to England some time before her death. Of Thomas and Henrietta's children, Thomas Saxton Grylls moved from Canada to the United States. He married in Rhode Island, but nothing further is known of him. Cordelia, the youngest child, was a fine



LEFT:
Henrietta Julia Grylls,
1864-1941

CENTRE:
Her husband, Revd.
John Jowitt Wilson

RIGHT:
Her twin brother,
Archibald Campbell
Grylls, 1864-1950

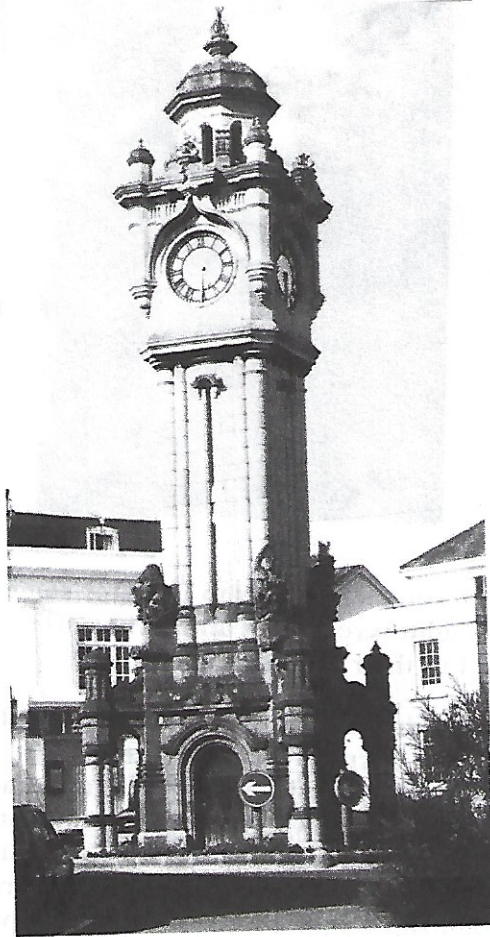


semi-professional singer, who lived for some time in British Columbia. Two of the daughters remained unmarried, eventually returning to England where they died in their seventies.

The upbringing of the twins was decidedly strange.⁴⁰ Had the Revd. Thomas Glynn Grylls decreed plans for their future when he was dying? He did not leave a will. After a short period Julia was adopted by a quaker couple, Joel and Maria Cadbury, who lived in Birmingham. She was educated at Cheltenham Ladies College and in 1889 married John Jowitt Wilson, who subsequently became the much loved vicar of a slum parish, Angel Meadow, in Manchester. Archibald Campbell Grylls became separated from his twin sister when she was adopted. He was sent to a school for orphans and later to St. Edmund's School in Canterbury for the sons of clergy. Even if deserted by his mother, he seems not to have been forgotten by his cousins, with two of whom, Miles Vicars-Miles and Charlie Cave-Childs, he spent many holidays.⁴¹ He distinguished himself during his time at school and university and then, by foreign travel, added three modern languages to his skills. However, he found it hard to settle in any of the various teaching posts he held, so spent much of his time tutoring and writing articles on such diverse subjects as Cornish History and Health Resorts in Europe, and making translations of classical Greek and modern German poets. At some point his mother cut him off from his inheritance since he refused to follow his late father's wish that he should become a clergyman. Lack of both money and a steady job eventually resulted in the break up of his marriage, his famous daughter, Rosalie Glynn Grylls (to be mentioned in Chapter 16), being brought up by her mother in her grandmother's house. During his retirement, Archibald Campbell Grylls transcribed all the ancient Lanreath parish registers.⁴²

Of the five daughters that had waited and watched at the bedside of their saintly father at Cardinham, three married clergymen and one a naval commander, while the eldest, Louisa Ann was the last to wed, marrying in her fifties William Miles, a man of considerable property in and around Exeter. It was his second marriage. He was a J.P., a fine painter and an expert on horses. Two books by him, one on stabling, another on horses' feet, went into several editions. The first book became the standard text book of the Prussian Cavalry. He was a leading light in the society formed to provide drinking troughs for horses. William and Louisa Miles lived at Dix's Fields, Exeter, and Louisa's mother, Sarah, the widow of the Revd. Thomas Grylls, spent her final

Louisa Ann Miles, née
Grylls, 1817-1907,
and Cordelia Vicars,
née Grylls, 1831-1878

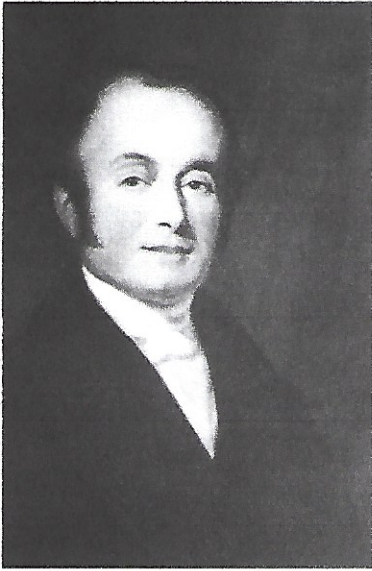


ABOVE:
*Clocktower and horse trough, Exeter –
memorial to William Miles*

RIGHT:
*Louisa Ann Miles, née Grylls, painted by
R.R.Scannon in 1835, and a painting
c1870*

years living there with them. On the death of William Miles, in 1881, his widow Louisa chose a most fitting memorial to him. An impressive clock-tower with an ornamental horsetrough at its base was erected at the junction of Queen Street and New North Road, Exeter. Louisa, having no children of her own, took upon herself the role of proxy-mother to her nephew and godson Matthew John Miles Vicars, whose mother Cordelia had died in 1878 when Miles was only 13. Cordelia Vicars née Grylls, who was nicknamed 'The Pocket Venus', had been a great beauty and a hunting enthusiast, but was afflicted with much ill-health. In an attempt to find an environment more suitable for Cordelia's health, her husband, the Revd. John Vicars, swapped his living at Lapford, Devon, with the Vicar of Calbourne, Isle of Wight. Miles Vicars was their only child and when his mother died he no doubt appreciated the concern his Aunt Louisa showed for him.

When Louisa died in 1907, she left the bulk of the Miles fortune to Miles Vicars, on condition that he change his surname to Vicars-Miles and assume the arms of the Miles family. A further condition in Louisa's will stated that he should not live in the Isle of Wight. Louisa seems to have been a lady of strong opinions, and her nephew's marriage to Frances Maria Moulton-Barrett



*The Revd. Thomas
Grylls, painted by
S. West c1840*

must have raised her eyebrows considerably. Frances's aunt, Elizabeth Barrett, the poetess, had eloped with Robert Browning, while her mother's side of the family had connections with the stage as proprietors of the Haymarket Theatre. Exile from the Isle of Wight was perhaps one way of keeping Miles from the 'disreputable' influence of the Moulton-Barrett family. Miles complied with his Aunt Louisa's conditions, though he moved the shortest distance away from the Isle of Wight possible. He gave up his job as a solicitor and bought himself Stanleys, a large house with over 400 acres of land near Hordle, Hampshire.⁴³

Miles Vicars-Miles also inherited from his aunt Louisa several fine portraits, which have happily been passed down to one of his present day descendants. The portrait of Louisa herself, painted shortly after her marriage to William Miles in about 1870, is very striking. There are also two portraits of Louisa's father, the Revd. Thomas Grylls of Cardinham. He was painted for the first time in 1835 by R.R. Scanlon, a portrait of him standing preaching, and a companion portrait of Louisa his daughter was made at the same time. He was painted a second time in about 1840, a fine portrait by S. West. Thomas had a copy of this portrait made and lithographed, so that he could send copies to his relations and friends. The legendary smile is shown. The portrait painter perhaps could not capture the magical effect that smile seems to have had on people, but he certainly captured the warmth of the man.⁴⁴

The Revd. Charles Grylls (1812-1876), youngest son of
Thomas Grylls of Helston (▼2N)

The Revd. Charles Grylls⁴⁵ was the fifth and last Grylls young man of that generation to become a vicar. He was the youngest son of Thomas Grylls of Helston and was only a year old when his father died. After being educated at Helston Grammar School and Trinity College, Cambridge, he was ordained at Exeter in 1835. He was curate of Illogan for a spell and then he transferred to Bodmin in 1841. It was while he was curate there that he preached a course of sermons which achieved some notoriety. Charles's sermons were very topical, addressing the issues that were troubling the church at the time. He leaned towards evangelicalism, the populist approach, and tried to demystify the traditional ritual. Because his ideas were so down-to-earth and because his presentation of them was so clear, he was encouraged to publish the sermons, which he did in 1845.⁴⁶

High church doctrine had always demanded belief in transubstantiation – the *real presence* of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Revd. Charles Grylls was a 'Sacramentarian' and far more pragmatic. 'The Sacraments are only the word of God preached and exhibited in symbolic form', he said, a doctrine that the members of his congregation were much more likely to find acceptable. However, when Bishop Phillpotts of Exeter received a copy of the sermons, he immediately wrote to Charles rebuking him in no uncertain terms for his pragmatic views. 'The general tone of the sermons is such as seems to me little accordant with the spirit of our church. Several passages are positively objectionable; one, in particular [the one quoted above], is so glaringly unsound that I cannot pass it over without grave animadversion.' Without spelling it out precisely Bishop Phillpotts was essentially accusing Charles Grylls of heresy. Charles's views on the sacraments

*The Revd. Charles
Grylls vs the Bishop of
Exeter*