

The Enigmatic Life and Literary Career of Lizzie Twigg

MILO SPILLANE

Who was Lizzie Twigg, you well might ask? This question would warrant a prompt and favourable answer from among the poets and literati of Dublin in the first decade of the last century. This paper attempts to answer that question for modernity and to awaken the city of Limerick, wherein Lizzie spent much of her life, to the mellifluous poetry which flowed, in a relatively short span of years, from the pen of this gifted poet.

On the fourth day of January 1933 a small funeral cortège wended its way through the streets of Limerick from St Michael's Church in Denmark St to Mount St Lawrence Cemetery. Of those who saw it pass on that last sad journey, very few probably realised that the simple casket in the hearse contained all that was mortal of a gifted poet, Miss Elizabeth Twigg.¹ Eliza (sometimes Elizabeth) Anne Twigg,² as was her official name, was born in 1881³ in the garrison town of Jumalpure (now Jamalpur),⁴ in Bihar, a state in the eastern part of India, where her English-born father, William,⁵ holding the rank of warrant officer or sergeant major⁶ in the British Army, was attached to the military department of the Government of India. On 21 September 1860, William, aged 18 years and 7 months, enlisted in the 62nd (Wiltshire) Regiment of Foot⁷ in the city of Belfast, in which place he had been employed as a clerk. William married a local girl, Eliza Mary Hayes, on 28 November 1867 in Belfast: he aged 25, she 21. There is reason to believe that it was a mixed marriage though performed in an Anglican church, St Anne's, in Belfast. Three children were born of the marriage: William James,⁸ born on 12 July 1872 in Buttevant, Co. Cork; Francis John, born in Dum Dum, Bengal, on 12 September 1875,

¹ A. J. O'Halloran, 'A gifted poetess passes away in Limerick', *Limerick Leader*, 14 January 1933 (hereafter, O'Halloran, 1933).

² The surname Twigg, sometimes Twig or Twigge, is of English origin and comes from an old English word meaning a small branch or shoot of a tree. It could have also come from a nickname for a particularly thin person. When William Twigg arrived in Limerick in the 1890s the surname was not unknown in Limerick's past: a Robert Twigg was mayor of Limerick in 1699.

³ The true copy of the birth certificate of Eliza Anne shows only the date of her Baptism. Neither is her date of birth recorded in ledgers held by the Presentation School, Limerick. The letters E.I. Rly. in the birth certificate refer to the East India Railway and probably indicates that RSM William Twigg had some special function or duty, probably security, in relation to the railway.

⁴ Jamal means beautiful while the suffix pore or pur (city or settlement) comes from the oldest Sanskrit language word for city. It is the equivalent of the Irish language word *baile* or Bally in English.

⁵ William Twigg was born, in 1842, in the parish of Butterton, seven miles east of Leek, Staffordshire.

⁶ A regimental sergeant major was the highest non-commissioned rank in the British Army, the holder of which was responsible for all the stores of the depot or military post and had certain responsibilities and duties in respect of the officers and enlisted men.

⁷ Like all British Army regiments, the 62nd Regiment served in various parts of the British Empire: in Canada, Ireland (during and after the Fenian Rising of 1867), India, Aden and India again.

⁸ No subsequent information on this child has been discovered.

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	Jumalpoore 10 July 1881	Eliza Anne	Christian William & Eliza Mary	Regimental Sergt. Major E.I. Rly.	F. Joseph

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and Eliza Anne, born in 1881. Eliza Mary Twigg, William's wife, died in Nainital, a British hill station in the Himalayas, on 2 April 1890. The cause of death was premature childbirth.⁹

William apparently resigned from the army later that year and came to Ireland with his children when he probably secured employment¹⁰ as a clerk in the Railway Station in Waterford.¹¹ He was baptised a Catholic in the Church of Trinity Without, Waterford city, on 10 February 1891¹², probably because he was soon to remarry, to Frances McCarthy. The family moved to Limerick in the summer of 1893. On 22 August 1893 Lizzie was registered as a pupil of the Presentation Convent School in Sexton Street.¹³ The home address was given as Mulgrave Street. Before coming to Limerick Lizzie¹⁴ had spent time in a school conducted by the Sisters of Charity in Waterford city.

The Twigg family appear in the 1901 census of population now living in house No. 4, Rathbane South. The father was returned as a retired warrant officer, 2nd Battalion, Scottish Rifles;¹⁵ employed as a clerk¹⁶ with the Great Southern and Western Railway, born in England and aged 58. His wife, Frances, born in County Cork was aged 54, and Elizabeth, born in India, was aged 19. All were recorded as RCs. The Twiggs had the semblance of modest wealth, living in a second class house with six rooms and three out offices - stable, fowl house and shed. Thus, Elizabeth enjoyed a comfortable upbringing in a pleasant rural setting.

In the early 1900s Lizzie was in Dublin preparing for a commercial/clerical position and staying at St Kevin's House,¹⁷ Rutland Square West,¹⁸ now Parnell Square. Later it was designated St Kevin's House for Business Girls and had a close connection with the Dominican Order. As early as 1901 some residents of St Kevin's started a little in-house illustrative monthly of their own which they called *An Réalt* (the Star). Perhaps Elizabeth was not an inaugural member of *An Réalt* but joined later. There she began her apprenticeship in poetry-making. In August 1903 the authorities at St Kevin's purchased a house, Redesdale¹⁹ and its grounds, out in the country, south of Dublin city, in Kilmacud and established a holiday retreat there for its business girls - a veritable *rus in urbe*. It was there that Elizabeth penned her first published poem, *Hush*, lines written at sunset in St Kevin's Park, Kilmacud, which appeared in *The Irish Rosary* in August 1903.

⁹ *Times of India*, 11 April 1890, information courtesy of Brian Hodkinson.

¹⁰ This widespread practice, in Ireland, of preferment for non-Irish or members of religious minorities, common, in both public and private entities, designed to strengthen British influence, was detrimental to the employment prospects of young Catholic men and women and evoked strong criticism from discerning commentators. In 1903 it was reported that an organisation, The New Catholic Association, was in existence 'to highlight and combat unfair discrimination against Catholics by public bodies', *The Irish Rosary*, May, 1903, p. 21.

¹¹ Records of staffing in the Waterford Railway Station have not survived; information courtesy of the Irish Railway Record Society.

¹² This, and related information, courtesy of Paddy Waldron.

¹³ Information courtesy of Sister Ita, Presentation Sisters, Roxboro, Limerick.

¹⁴ O'Halloran stated that Lizzie was a mere infant when she first came, with her parents, to Limerick (O'Halloran, 1933). He is in error on the two above points of information.

¹⁵ In 1881, following Cardwell's army reforms, the 62nd Regiment was joined with the 90th Perthshire Light Infantry to become the Cameronians or Scottish Rifles.

¹⁶ William Twigg's name could not be located in the ledger showing the pay of clerks, in the 1890s at the Limerick Station. It was suggested to me that his clerkship may have been in connection with staff timekeeping, something which his years of military service, his former role as chief dispenser of army discipline and his robust appearance, well fitted him for.

¹⁷ The address she gave in her introduction to her book of poems.

¹⁸ *Thom's Directory, Dublin City*, 1903.

¹⁹ The most noted former resident of Redesdale was Richard Whately, Protestant Archbishop of Dublin from 1831 to 1863. He eschewed the luxury of the Archbishop's Palace in Stephen's Green, preferring to live in the country in Kilmacud. The house was demolished in 1998.



1880
Section 1(2) of the above mentioned Act provides that "The enactments relating to the registration of births and deaths, and marriages in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland which contain provisions authorising the admission in evidence of, and of extracts from, certified copies of registers and duplicate registers shall have effect as if the Service Departments Registers were certified copies of duplicate registers transmitted to the Registrar General in accordance with those enactments."

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Six other of her poems were published in the same magazine that year while more than a dozen of her poems were printed in the 1904 editions. By now she began using a rough translation of her name, Eilís Ní Chraoibhín²⁰ to signify her authorship, while she called herself Lizzie Twigg in the English language. In August of that year the following notice appeared in *The Irish Rosary*:

We learn with pleasure that our young contributor, Eilís Ní Chraoibhín, is about to publish a volume of poems. It is in the hands of Messrs Sealy, Bryers and Walker, Middle Abbey Street and will shortly appear under the title of *Songs of the Springtime*.²¹

The book was first published in December 1904 but under the title of *Songs and Poems* and was dedicated to her father. In a brief forward to the book Eilís wrote:

Is trua go mór liom gan mé in-ann mo chuid beag abhrán do scriobhadh i nGaedhilge, acht ta súil agam gur gearr go dtiocfaidh an lá nuair na habhráin a bheidheas ga canadh agam i dtaoibh na hEireann cuirfidh me le chéile iad i dteangain na nGaedhal.

[It is a cause of great regret to me that I cannot write my songs - small as they are - in Irish. Someday, and soon, I hope to sing my songs of Ireland in the Irish tongue].

Lizzie was already learning the Irish language.²² An appreciative introduction to the book of poems was written by Very Rev. Canon Sheehan, P.P., Doneraile, an occasional contributor to *The Irish Rosary*, and a novelist of distinction in his own right. Dr Sheehan emphasised the simplicity, sweetness, melody and beauty of the poems. In 1905 her contribution to the *Irish Rosary* was a mere four poems. She also published a few poems in *The United Irishman*, a weekly Nationalist paper published by Arthur Griffith. Lizzie's poem, *Hush*, under the title of *Flame in the Skies*, was included in *Six Songs of Ireland*, a collection put to music by Hamilton Harty²³ in 1908.²⁴ Lizzie also tried her hand at writing short stories. Three appeared in the *Irish Rosary*: *Kittie*, November 1903; *A Parcel of Lace*, January, 1904; *Gretta*, April 1904.²⁵

Lizzie was back in Limerick on census day, 2 April, 1911. By now the family had moved to house No. 9 in Rathbane South. William had retired from the GS&WR while Lizzie was now 29 years old. Tragedy struck the family at the end of January 1912 when Frances Twigg, Lizzie's step-mother, died aged 64. She and William had been married for nineteen years and had no children.²⁶

²⁰ Elizabeth of the little branch or twig.

²¹ *Irish Rosary*, August 1904, p. 656. It was a monthly magazine, founded in 1897, produced by the Irish Dominicans Order.

²² Lizzie was not long in Dublin when, with other girls from St Kevin's, she encountered *Craobh an Cheitinnigh*, a branch of the Gaelic League, composed mainly of Dublin-based Kerry people, situated right across Rutland Square in 8 North Frederick Street. Lessons in the Irish Language, at three levels, were provided twice each week.

²³ Hamilton Harty (1879-1941), Irish composer, conductor, pianist and organist was born in Hillsborough Co. Down. He moved to London in 1910 to further his career; conducted the Halle Orchestra, Manchester, from 1920 to 1933; was knighted in 1925 and died in Hove in the South of England.

²⁴ Published by Boosey and Company, 295 Regent Street, London.

²⁵ All three stories are soppy sentimental fairy tales of little merit. In each, the heroine, a girl of limited means or future prospects is swept off her feet by a Prince Charming. Perhaps Lizzie was also waiting for a knight in shining armour to call for her.

²⁶ Information from the so-called 'fertility clause' in the 1911 census, which had not been included in 1901, which asked, in the case of a married woman, how long the marriage had lasted and whether any children were born of that union. That particular question never again appeared in a census form.

²⁷ Ulysses through
²⁸ If Lizzie
presumably
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²⁹ George
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Lizzie Twigg is twice mentioned by name in that strange novel, *Ulysses*,²⁷ written by James Joyce (1882-1941). The novel, replicating the journey of the Homeric hero Odysseus (Ulysses in Latin), was an attempt to capture a day in the life of the two principal characters, Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, singly in the early part, as they traversed the streets of Dublin from early morning on Thursday, 16 June 1904 to 3.30 a.m. the following morning. Places, buildings, persons and 'Dublin characters or eccentrics', allegedly passed on the way were often referred to in disparaging and discrediting terms. Bloom set off that morning, his destination the National Library in Kildare Street. He crossed the Liffey Bridge and as he passed 31 Molesworth Street, the office of *The Irish Times*, he remembered that he had recently placed an advertisement in that newspaper: 'wanted, a smart young typist to aid gentleman in literary work'. Bloom, on impulse, entered to ascertain whether any further replies had come in, though he had received more than forty already.

Two applications were handed to him, one being from Lizzie Twigg whose *tour de force* was that her literary efforts had had the good fortune to meet with the approval²⁸ of the eminent poet, AE, aka George William Russell.²⁹ Bloom recognised the name but he



Lizzie Twigg

²⁷ *Ulysses* contained the first widely known use of the Stream of Consciousness technique in which the story is presented through a discontinuous succession of images and ideas, connected by association rather than sequential thought.

²⁸ If Lizzie ever did pen that appendage to her application or if that event ever even occurred, she may have been a little presumptuous. When AE edited *New Songs*, an anthology of young poets' work, in 1904, none of Lizzie's work was included.

²⁹ George William Russell (1867-1935) was a man of many talents: writer, poet, critic, politician, publisher and artist. He sometimes used the pseudonym AE to sign his work.

imagined that, as she was a poet, she would be too literary and, in his own mind imagined her untidily dressed, spending her day sloppily drinking tea with a book of poetry in her hand, thereby rendering herself entirely unsuitable. He was also dismissive of the rather pretentious reply from Lizzie because of her association with AE. In any event, her application would not be acceptable with Russell as a reference point. Having rejected Lizzie's application in his own mind Bloom continued on his way, passed Trinity College and as he waited to cross Nassau Street at the bottom of Grafton Street, he heard behind him a man, in a Scotch accent, holding forth about a two-headed octopus. He looked around and saw a tall bearded man, dressed in homespun, wheeling a bicycle and accompanied by a young woman who was drinking in every syllable spoken by the man. The man was

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readily recognised as the aforementioned Russell, and by means of association of ideas, Bloom assumed that the woman was Lizzie Twigg, not known to him by sight. The beard, bicycle and young woman passed behind him and as they entered Nassau Street he noticed that the stockings of the young woman were loose over her ankles. This set Bloom off again: 'poets were tasteless and careless, dreamy, cloudy, symbolistic, not existing in the real world. It must be the food they eat that produces the poetic waves in their brains'.

To understand why Lizzie was so gratuitously dragged into the narrative, not once but twice, in quick succession, needs some explanation. This episode of *Ulysses*, no. 8, is entitled *Lestrygonians*, after a tribe of strange cannibals who thwarted Odysseus on his journey. Since the novel is largely autobiographical, persons and their associates mentioned in this section were thereby Lestrygonians, who were *persona non grata*, or worse, ostensibly to Bloom, but in reality to Joyce himself. Foremost among the Lestrygonians was Russell. Russell was a well-meaning northerner, with nationalist leanings, noted for his exceptional kindness and generosity towards aspiring poets and writers. Russell had met Joyce in 1902 when the latter returned from Paris to visit his ailing mother and was, apparently, not impressed by his potential as a poet, and so Joyce was not invited to join the literary gatherings at his home. Lizzie was a member of Russell's group and, coupled with the fact that she was recommended by Russell, ensured that her application received short shrift. It was because she was deemed to be a protégé of Russell that Lizzie Twigg achieved limited, perhaps unearned and surely unwanted mention in *Ulysses*. On the other hand she has also attracted some scholarly attention due to her mention therein.

Zack Bowen (1934-2010), a distinguished American academic and Joycean scholar did not realise for many years that Lizzie Twigg was, in fact, a real person. He always considered her more 'fictive than factual', an object of ridicule and fun on account of the peculiar combination of her name and surname. It was on a visit to Dublin in the 1960s that he chanced upon a poem by Lizzie Twigg in a copy of *The United Irishman*. He spoke with Padraic Colum (1881-1972), who had been a member of Russell's gatherings, who filled him in.³⁰ Colum also told, more tellingly, that the young woman with stockings at half-mast was more likely Susan Langstaff Mitchell³¹ (1866-1926), poet and sub-editor of *The Irish Homestead*³² than the fastidious Lizzie. Colum also, on that occasion, spoke affectionately of Lizzy: 'everyone who met her liked her as she was warm and outgoing. Poor Liz, nobody remembers her now'. It is probable that not many copies of *Ulysses* came to Limerick in the 1920s, nor did many or any in the city associate the character in *Ulysses* with the reclusive invalid then living, or merely existing, in 27 Frederick Street, Limerick.

Zack Bowen, was not hugely enamoured of Lizzie's poetry:

Miss Twigg's literary efforts are of some interest, though principally because of their relationship to *Ulysses* rather than the deathless quality of her verse... In that spirit is set forth the text of a representative poem, *Even Song*,³³ published in the

³⁰ Zack Bowen, 'Lizzie Twigg: Gone but not Forgotten', *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 4 (Summer 1969) pp 368-70.

³¹ For more on Susan L. Mitchell see An Irishman's Diary, *Irish Times*, 4 April 2016.

³² This magazine (1895-1923), edited by George Russell, was the weekly journal of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS). Its aim was to promote agricultural co-operatives (the so-called creameries) as well as other aspects of the co-operative movement throughout Ireland.

³³ This poem is included in *Songs and Poems*. Stanza one of two: The daylight is dying/ The low breezes sighing/ The wee bird is flying home to its nest/ The shadows are falling/ The curlews are calling/ The sun slowly sinks in the west.

United Irishman, 7 February 1903... Those who would accuse me of quoting her most banal contribution to the Irish Renaissance need only examine the tripping metres of *Song in Spring*, *An Answer* and *Across the Hills Away*.³⁴

In his introduction to *Songs and Poems*, Canon Sheehan,³⁵ was more impressed, emphasising the simplicity and beauty therein:

Such is this volume of poems, which I have read with pleasure, because of their sweetness and melody, but mostly because they are the voice of one who, writing from a wilderness of brick and mortar, is clearly dreaming in the old Celtic way of all the tenderness and sweetness, the magic and glamour of nature. It is a voice of friendship and affection, of great love for Ireland, of a poet's appreciation of all the beauties that are discoverable by those who have the vision, in brown bog and barren sunsets over Eirinn.

The songs or verse produced by Lizzie in *Songs and Poems*, fifty two in number, could be regarded as lyric poetry which was originally meant to be recited to the accompaniment of the lyre: hence its name. The subject matter was, then and later, generally nature in all its many manifestations, though the poet sometimes portrayed his or her feelings, state of mind or perceptions through the medium of exquisite rhyming lines. In short, lyric poetry is a representation, in words, of the grandeur of some prospect that is spread out before the eyes of the beholder. It is now often rejected by modern poets as it relies too heavily on melodious language rather than complexity of thought.

A. J. O'Halloran,³⁶ in his 1933 newspaper article, expounded on the poetry of Lizzie. He was critical and regretful of the fact that though her poems were published in either *The Irish Rosary* or *The United Irishman* she rarely sounded a deep religious or national chord, nor did she sing of Limerick or its environs. He noted that:

She sang of love and friendship, of the beauty of nature, of the joy of youth, She sang for the same reason as the blackbird sings; sang because her heart was full of love and gladness; sang because she saw God in the sunset as in the dawn; saw Him in the fall of the leaves as in the budding blossoms of Spring.

He goes on to tell an amusing tale:

Although Lizzie rarely struck a national note, in this connection she would tell with great glee, so the story goes, of a secret meeting of all the other poets who

³⁴ Bowen, 'Lizzie Twigg'.

³⁵ Patrick Augustus Sheehan (1852-1913), priest and novelist, was born in Mallow. He was appointed parish priest in Doneraile in 1895. Many of his novels, which displayed an acute observation of rural Ireland and the changes occurring therein, were written in the garden of his Doneraile home.

³⁶ Alphonsus John O'Halloran patriot and historian, is another denizen of Limerick who deserves to be better remembered. Born in 6 Sexton Street about 1882, he became a member of the IRB and a lieutenant in the Irish Volunteers in Limerick. He was among the party of Volunteers who marched to Killonan on Easter Sunday, 24 April 1916. O'Halloran wrote two short but important books on local history: *The Glamour of Limerick* (1928) and *Was the Treaty of Limerick signed on the Treaty Stone?* (1942). He also contributed two sections to *Limerick's Fighting Story* (1947). His papers, dealing with the Irish Volunteers in Limerick are in the Bureau of Military History in Dublin. Phons, as he was known to his acquaintances, and who later resided at no. 7, The Crescent, worked with Limerick Corporation. He died on Saturday, 9 April 1955, aged about 74 years. He was buried, with full military honours, in Mount St Lawrence Cemetery.

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contributed to *The United Irishman*. They were alleged to have met in a Martello Tower not far from Dublin, and to have drawn up an ultimatum addressed to Arthur Griffith, threatening to withhold their contributions from his journal³⁷ unless he consented to exclude Miss Twigg's work. Perhaps it was by way of rejoinder to this manifesto that she wrote her patriotic poem, *Ireland*.

The first of two mysteries, unexplained and unexplainable from what we know about her, concern the whereabouts of Lizzie from 1911 to 1923 and why did the well-spring of Lizzie's poetry, so effusive and powerful up to 1905 suddenly go dry after that year. In the census of 1911 Lizzie was at home in Rathbane without any specified rank, trade or profession: a somewhat strange occurrence. O'Halloran wrote:

In after years she took up commercial work in Dublin and in London and it was in these cities that her best work was written... For many years before her death she was an invalid.

No evidence has been found of Lizzie in London or indeed in Dublin after 1905 other than the gift of an inscribed magazine to her by Thomas Mac Donagh in 1909, indicating she was then in Dublin. Neither has any of the above mentioned 'best work' come to light. William Twigg was not living in Rathbane South according to the Register of Electors for 1914 and neither William nor, indeed, Lizzie is listed living anywhere in Limerick city in the 1919 Register of Electors. They both reappear in the 1923/4 register, living in No. 27 Frederick Street. By then Lizzie was probably house-bound or bedridden on the onset of her eventual fatal ailment, myelitis. If that was indeed the case she was deprived of independence and freedom; existing in a state of perpetual languishment; lacking the stimulation of pleasing sights of her earlier years.

O'Halloran said that when ill health chained her to the city she could no longer revel in the beauties of the countryside. Lyric Poetry requires the stimulation of outdoor scenes and her infirmity, being probably wheel-chair bound or worse, prevented her from partaking of the wonders, beauty and variety of life in the countryside. Images of delight first attract the eye and, later, are fashioned into descriptive words by the poet. Elizabeth Twigg lacked the animation and incitement of the beautiful sights and settings of her youth; the comfort of the closeness of her family and so her well of thought, feelings and imagination petered-out in her Calvary of pain and loneliness. While that would explain the complete lack of poetry in the 1920s it does not account for the lack of any output in the decade before that.

Frank Twigg, Lizzie's brother was a distinguished person in his own right. He rose from the lowly position of a commercial or office clerk in a timber importing firm, as shown by the 1911 Census to subsequently become manager and a director of that business, Graves and Company, the foremost manufacturing, importing and exporting business in Waterford. He was an excellent bass-baritone who regaled audiences at many charitable events; was the lead singer in the Franciscan church choir and performed on numerous occasions on 2RN.³⁸ On 12 January 1928 he addressed the Publicity Club in

³⁷ Arthur Griffith (1871-1922), was editor of the *United Irishman* (1899-1906) in which he set out his theories on the future of Ireland.

³⁸ The name of Ireland's first radio broadcasting service which commenced transmission on 1 January 1926.

Dublin on the topic 'A simple remedy for the ills of Ireland'.³⁹ The remedy is as compelling today as it was in 1928: Irish people should only purchase goods made or produced in Ireland to the detriment of like imports. He said that the entire outlook of a nation could be changed by 'moulding in the national schools, the plastic minds of children of tender years'. How to put this doctrine to work?: a quarter of an hour, at least, each day should be devoted to the inculcation of a spirit of enthusiasm for Ireland - its history, folklore, culture, language, games, pastimes and especially its industrial potential. Frank moved to Dublin from Waterford in later years and died, a widower and childless, on 10 September 1954. He is buried in Deansgrange Cemetery, South Dublin.

No. 27 Frederick Street, now O'Curry street, where Lizzie was living in 1923 was a large, commodious, three-storey house, rented out in flats or rooms. The house has been demolished and the site is now occupied by a workshop/storage facility of Hodkinson, Ecclesiastical Painters, Henry Street. Her father, William, died on 3 April 1927⁴⁰ from a sudden attack of influenza while on a holiday trip to Waterford to visit his son Frank. He is buried in Ballygunner Cemetery, Waterford City. Lizzie, without any immediate family in the vicinity, continued to reside in No. 27 and is so registered in the 1931 Register of Electors. It lists ten voters in the house,⁴¹ suggesting that it was essentially a tenement dwelling. She was now bed-ridden and reportedly bore her sufferings with great patience. A few lady friends visited her, as well as the Sisters of Mercy. She passed away peacefully on Tuesday, 3 January 1933 in Barrington's Hospital. The cause of death, according to her death certificate, was Myelitis (inflammation of the spinal cord) and cardiac failure. Elizabeth Anne Twigg lies in an unmarked grave, in Section N, plot Cb:111, in Mount Saint Lawrence Cemetery, in the same grave as her step-mother, Frances.

If Lizzie is worthy of remembrance by future generations it should, arguably, be for her stirring poem, *Ireland* which deserved a better fate than to have been read by comparatively few people at that time, and, which if better known then might well have been used as a rallying call by those who fought and died for Ireland's freedom during the Easter Rising of 1916 and subsequently. The last of the four stanzas gives a flavour of what she was thinking and how she expressed it:

*For aliens long your sons have bled,
Ireland, Ireland,
For aliens' wrongs their life-blood shed,
Ireland, Ireland,
Yet, welded in one mighty band
Beneath the Rebel Flag they stand
To dare or die for Ireland,
For Ireland, Ireland!
Aye, strong in the thought of your wrongs and ruth
Rich in your love, your patriot youth
Will strike for Liberty and truth,
Ireland, Ireland!*

³⁹ The address was given wide publicity in both the *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* on the following day, Friday, 13 January 1928. The latter paper also featured a photograph of the speaker, Frank G.(sic) Twigg. A copy of the address is available in the NLI, I 94109 P1.

⁴⁰ Death notice, *Irish Independent*, 5 April 1927.

⁴¹ John, Mary and Thomas Shanahan; Elizabeth Twigg; Daniel and Kitty Sheehan; Arthur and Elizabeth Lyons; Lena Ryan; Agnus Mulrooney.

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This poem, which was not previously published in either *The Irish Rosary* or *The United Irishman*, but included in the book of poems in 1904, was written when Home Rule was the only show in town; when the Irish Republican Brotherhood existed mainly in America with only few adherents in Ireland; three years before Thomas J. Clarke opened his tobacco and sedition shop in 75A Great Britain Street, and most notably, twelve years before the 1916 Rising. The poem shows a knowledge and understanding of Ireland's past history and gives a gentle reminder to the younger generation of her day that the misery, deprivation and oppression of the Irish nation should not be allowed to continue any longer. Whence did Lizzie get this burst of nationalist ardour? Hardly from her English born father or from her home; certainly not from the *Irish Rosary* and scarcely from *The United Irishman* wherein the editor and proprietor, Arthur Griffith, was busily propagating his plan for Ireland's future, a dual monarchy modelled on Hungary.

On the other hand, the seeds of radicalism may have been sown, years before, as she witnessed the harsh treatment meted out, by the British Raj to the natives in Bengal. More probably, however, it came from only one source - *Craobh an Cheitinnigh*, where lectures and follow-up discussions on the history of Ireland were staple diets. Many of the radical generation that led the struggle for Irish Independence, went, to borrow Patrick Pearse's phrase, to school in the Gaelic League. Amongst those 'who went to school' in *Craobh an Cheitinnigh* was Thomas Mac Donagh, a signatory of the 1916 Proclamation and also a friend of Lizzie, who later presented her with a copy of *An Macaomh*.⁴² It is inscribed 'do mo charaid, Eilis Ni Chraoibhin,⁴³ 23.xii.1909 and signed Tomas Mac Donnchada'. Eliza Anne Twigg was a graduate of that same school as was her friend, Tomás Mac Donnchada.

A. J. O'Halloran clearly did not know the circumstances surrounding Lizzie's departure from Bengal and her subsequent arrival in Waterford and, later, Limerick. He got to know her in her later years in Limerick when she was living in 27 Frederick Street; virtually friendless and, to make matters worse for her, an invalid and 'chained to the city'. On the other hand, Zack Bowen, in his article entitled, 'Lizzie Twigg: Gone but not Forgotten',⁴⁴ also gave some account of Lizzie's later years, based on a conversation he had, in December 1968, with Pádraic Colum, who knew Lizzie from meeting her in Dublin at Russell's poetic gatherings. It is difficult to differentiate between what Colum, who, with his wife, Mary, apparently kept in touch with Lizzie until her death, told Bowen at their meeting or what the latter subsequently surmised when writing his article. In this, the reason why Lizzie chose to settle in Limerick seems not to have been fully understood by either Colum or Bowen, 'she, Lizzie, journeyed a little southward to Limerick', nor is it credible as stated in the said article 'that her latter days were spent in the improvement of housing conditions in Ireland and in general social work'. Bearing in mind what O'Halloran wrote in 1933 concerning Lizzie's disability, 'she was an invalid for many years before her death', it seems reasonable to assume that the second part of the above quotation is, to quote or misuse Bowen's own words, more fictive than factual. Lizzie, like the omission of her birth date, her hidden life between 1911 and 1923, the

⁴² *An Macaomh*, 1909-13, the school magazine of St Enda's, Rathfarnham. It was edited by Patrick Pearse and the material was supplied by the masters and pupils and it was published three times annually. It ceased publication in 1913.

⁴³ Thomas Mac Donagh was a teacher at St Colman's College, Fermoy from 1903 to 1908. In the latter year he came to Dublin to become assistant headmaster in St Enda's. It was then he became a friend to Eilis. Was the presentation, in December 1909, a remembrance gift to a departing friend?

⁴⁴ Bowen, 'Lizzie Twigg'.

timing of her return to Limerick due to infirmity, kept many secrets. Therefore, relevant and interesting aspects of her life form part of an insoluble riddle and are likely to remain so. Her life is an enigma for sure!

Acknowledgments

When I embarked on this voyage of discovery I felt like Odysseus of old but I, fortunately, encountered no Lestrogonians. Therefore I wish to record my thanks to my former teaching colleague, Joseph Scallan, who put me in the way of acquiring a first edition of *Songs and Poems* at a book fair in Limerick many years ago; to Dr Matthew Potter and William O'Neill of the Limerick Archives; Canon Donough O'Malley; Sister Ita; Paddy Waldron; Dr Tadhg Moloney; Randel Hodkinson; Brian Hodkinson; James Doherty; Liam Irwin; Dr Vivien Igoe, who sourced the photograph of Lizzie, and my son-in-law, Tony Colgan, who engineered the finding of the seemingly elusive birth certificate of Lizzie.

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