

I have nothing but admiration for the scholarship of my uncle, John H. Pierse (hereafter JHP), in his thorough and laborious genealogical research, done between fifty and thirty years ago. Amateur genealogists have things much easier these days, with the availability of on-line searchable databases including those of parish registers and newspaper archives. No more need for potentially fruitless trips to libraries or churches. Now we can just sit back and surf for information from the comfort of our armchairs.

One useful new source of information is the Parish registers for Kerry which can now be searched on-line at [www.irishgenealogy.ie](http://www.irishgenealogy.ie). The registers reveal the baptisms in Listowel parish of three children to 'John Pierse' and 'Johanna Pierse' (or O'Brien): 'William Pierse' on 23 June 1803, 'Patrick Pierse' on 4 October 1809 and 'Lucy Pierse' on 5 April 1812. The first is almost certainly William Fitzmaurice Pierse (aged 37 according to the 1841 census of 6 June 1841 and aged 42 on his death certificate of 1 February 1846). The second is most likely John Patrick Pierse (the date is consistent with the age of death of 60 given on his death certificate in November 1869 although the 1841, 1851 and 1861 censuses give his ages inconsistently as 25, 39 and 50 respectively). The third baptism is a puzzle but Lucy could possibly be a transcription error for Mary de Lacy Pierse as the date is consistent with the age of 39 given in her census return taken on 30 March 1851, though De Lacy-Belingari, hereafter DLB (and, following him, JHP) gives Mary's date of birth as 1807 and her death certificate gives her age in 1878 as either 74 or 71.

What is most interesting about the baptism records is that they show that John Fitzwilliam Pierse and his wife Johanna were resident in the town of Listowel between 1803 and 1812. Previously, it had been generally assumed that all of their children were born in Newcastle West in Limerick and in a letter dated 28 October 1835, Mary de Lacy talks with familiarity of 'The Castle', making it likely that they did live there at some time as stated by DLB. The fact that no Kerry baptism records seem to exist for Maurice de Lacy Pierse or for George Pierse makes it likely that they were both born elsewhere. It also appears that Maurice de Lacy must have been born before 1803 and so was not (as hypothesised by JHP) a twin to William Fitzmaurice. Also, if Maurice was born before 1803, then he was older than 15 in 1819 when he travelled to Russia to meet his great uncle General Maurice de Lacy. On the other hand, if Lucy really is Mary de Lacy, then when Maurice was writing to her from the Russian army between 1823 and 1829, she would have been aged only between 11 and 17 which seems a little implausible.

The Kerry parish records show comparatively few Pierse (including all spelling variants) born in Listowel parish compared with the neighbouring parishes of Causeway (where Richard R. Pierse of Meenogahane and his illustrious ancestors were all baptised) or Tralee. In fact the first Pierse in the Listowel parish records seems to be William in 1803. The online baptism records list two sponsors for each baptism and two of the Listowel Pierse records mention other Pierse as sponsors: for 'Patrick Pierse' one of the sponsors in 'Mary Pierse' and for 'Lucy Pierse', a sponsor is 'Maurice Pierse'. Presumably, these would be relatives of John Fitzmaurice so may hold a clue to the mystery of his parentage.

Parish registers for London are available free to subscribers to [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) and they reveal some new information about the death of John Fitzmaurice Pierse in 1843. It was known from his death certificate that he died on 4 September 1843, aged 80, at his son John Patrick's house in Marsh Lane Greenwich. However, the parish register for St. Alphege's Church in Greenwich shows that this was just one day before the burial of John Patrick's son William, who had died, aged one, on 29 August. It is possible then that John Fitzmaurice was visiting his son for the funeral of his grandson when he died of "old age". John Fitzmaurice was himself buried at St. Alphege's on 10 September and, only a week later on 17 September, another of John Patrick's sons, John, died of dysentery, aged 10. He in turn was buried at St. Alphege's church on 21 September. What a terrible month this must have been for John Patrick and his wife Charlotte.

The *Gentleman's Magazine*, a monthly journal that ran uninterrupted from 1731 until 1922 (the first periodical to use the word *magazine* in its title), can now be found online in searchable form. It reveals two obituary notices (Figures 1 and 2), placed in 1843 and 1846 for John Fitzmaurice Pierse and William Fitzmaurice Pierse respectively, most likely by Charles and Mary Nash. Both highlight the

## DEATHS.

### LONDON AND ITS VICINITY.

**Aug. 31.** Samuel, youngest son of the late George Maltby, esq. of Peckham.

**Sept. 4.** Near London, aged 81, John Fitzmaurice Pierse, esq. formerly of Listowell and Newcastle in Ireland. He was a descendant of the Fitzmaurice family of Lixnaw; and was married in 1795 to Johanna, daughter of Pierse O'Brien, esq. and Johanna Lacy his wife, the sister of General Maurice de Lacy, of Grodno in Russia, a native of Limerick, who valiantly served under Suwarrow, and died in 1820. She from her mother, dame Mary Herbert, inherited the blood of the Herberts. General Maurice was nephew of the celebrated Marshal Count Francis Maurice Lacy of Austria, of whom a notice

Figure 1: Notice in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1843. p. 552.

## DEATHS.

### LONDON AND ITS VICINITY.

**Feb. 1.** Aged 40, William Fitzmaurice Pierse, esq. of Prince's-street. He was a native of the co. Kerry, and was nephew to General Maurice De Lacy, of Grodno in Russia, (the last male representative of the Temple Eglentune De Lacys,) by his mother Johanna O'Brien of Newcastle in Limerick, who married John Fitzmaurice Pierse of the House of Lixnaw. In the *United Service Magazine* for November 1844, are some Letters on the Russian War in Turkey, from his brother Cornet De Lacy Pierse of the Russian service, to his sister Mrs. De Lacy Nash of London.

Figure 2: Notice in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1846, pp. 439-40.

family connection to General Maurice de Lacy (this was around the time of the *Reed v. O'Brien* court case) but, tellingly, the notice for John Fitzmaurice Pierse, though it refers to his descent from the Fitzmaurice family of Lixnaw, gives no details of his parentage.

Searchable newspaper archives are a new and invaluable source of information and access can be made through subscription to the British Newspaper Archive<sup>1</sup>. Browsing reveals numerous articles relating to (or actually written by) Mary de Lacy Pierse or her husband Charles Nash whom she married in 1836. This is particularly interesting as, in the official records, the pair appear as rather shadowy figures. JHP failed to locate them in any UK census. I did manage to track them down in the 1851 census where they were living at 30, Southampton Street, Covent Garden and Charles was employed as a parliamentary agent. However, I too have failed to locate them in any other census. They had a child, Maurice Fitzgerald de Lacy Nash, born on 12 January 1839 in Brunswick Terrace, Islington. JHP failed to find death records for any one of the three.

I have finally unearthed the death certificate of Mary de Lacy Nash, which proves to be surprisingly interesting. She died on the 3rd October 1878 of 'paralysis' at Nazareth House in Hammersmith at the age of 71. The death was recorded by a M. Tiernan who was present at the death. Nazareth House is a house for the elderly poor and also for orphans and foundlings, founded in October 1857 by Victoire Larmenier and run by the Catholic Sisters of Nazareth. The name originally given on Mary's death certificate was Johanna Nash aged 74 years but these details were subsequently corrected in the Register in a copperplate note that reads:

*In N 121. Col. 2. for Johanna read "Mary De Lacy" and in Col. 4 for "74." read "71.":  
par corrected on the 24th January 1879 by me William B. Croft Registrar on production of  
a Statutory Declaration made by Charles Nash and Patrick Devine.*

What is surprising is that, at the time of her death, Mary de Lacy was living alone in a home for the elderly poor, even though her husband was still alive. This accords with John H. Pierse's speculation in *The English Branch of the Pierse Family* that "there seems to have developed a rift between husband and wife".

I have still not been able to track down a UK death record for Charles Nash so perhaps he died outside the UK. However, I did find this notice placed in *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper* on 21 February 1892:— "NASH. Maurice Fitzgerald De Lacy Nash, son of Charles, will, on communicating with Mr. Cullmer, 59 Chancery Lane, W.C., hear of something to his advantage". This indicates that by this date, Charles Nash had died (aged around 76) and that Mr. Cullmer, presumably a solicitor, was hunting for his son as an heir to his estate.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk)

The absence of a UK death record for Mary and Charles Nash's only son Maurice F. de Lacy Nash is another puzzle that can be cleared up from information available in the newspaper archives. On 28 October, 1854, during the Crimean War, *The Catholic Weekly Telegraph* published "from Mr. de Lacy's forthcoming work on the Crimea" a short paragraph that mentions the death of Mary Nash's brother Cornet Maurice de Lacy Pierse at Adrianople in 1829. It ends with the remark that: "his nephew Maurice Nash, seeks now to tread in the footsteps or emulate the glory of his ancestors in Continental service". In another short article, published on 13 January 1855 in *The Cheshire Observer and General Advertiser*, this time on the ancestor General de Lacy Evans, almost certainly penned by Mary or Charles Nash, another reference appears to Cornet Pierse (described as "another Limerick Catholic"). After this, the paragraph states that "his kinsman, Maurice Nash, is now seeking to emulate the fame of his ancestors". Maurice Nash was then aged 15. Later that same year, on 10 November 1855, the *Manchester Examiner and Times* reported: "A youth, named Nash, had arrived at Varna on his way to Adrianople, to erect a tablet to the memory of his uncle, Cornet de Lacy Pierse, who died in the Russian service in the former wars of 1828-9 between Russia and Turkey. He had succeeded in the unusual mission of attaining Sultanic authorisation for his object".

It seems that Maurice de Lacy Nash, inspired by his uncle, did manage to enlist in the Austrian Army and was promoted to the rank of Major. He was killed, aged 20, on the 20th May 1859 at the battle of Montebello, a battle in the Second Italian War of Independence fought between the Piedmont and French armies and the Austrian army. In all the newspaper reports of the death, the name is given as M. Pierse but the fact that the French Government wrote letters of condolence to Mary and Charles confirms his real identity. Maurice may have chosen to adopt his mother's name Pierse in the army as a tribute to his late uncle.

Early newspaper reports of the death suggested that the body had been mutilated by the French. This prompted Mary de Lacy Nash to write an open letter, published in the *Cork Examiner* on 27 June 1859:

To the Minister of War, Paris,  
Strand, June 11, 1859.

Excellent Sir—We have waited in vain for some official explanation or contradiction of the barbarous act inflicted on the field of battle, on our relative, Major Maurice Pierse, of the Austrian service, while lying wounded at the battle of Montebello. We cannot believe that civilised France would overlook such an act as recorded in the journals, worthy of a savage, not of *la belle France*. The pain is increased by the fact that Pierse is from that heroic stock of Irishmen, who, during two centuries of foreign service, have ever been on the side of the French and Austrian countries, and have earned imperishable renown in the great wars (as well in the French service and the Irish brigade, as in the Russian and Austrian wars (of the last century). His relatives, De Lacy and Brown,

fill a grand page in history. The first of them conquered Crimea for the Russ, the last (De Lacy Pierse) served and fell at Adrianople, and another aided in 1856 to reconquer Crimea from Russia. Can we, then, help the painful reflections forced upon us, and ask further explanation of an act which has filled the world with surprise, but which you must be able to clear up? —We have &c.,  
De Lacy Pierse and Nash

In a response to Maurice's parents in London, General Blanchard of the Imperial French Army wrote:

To M.M. de Lacy Pierse et Nash, Londres,

Au Bivouac de Cavriani, June 28, 1859.

Monsieur le Ministre, — I read in the *Patrie* of the 25th inst. (from the London papers), a letter of your excellency in response to an inquiry of the illustrious family of M. de Lacy Pierse, major in the Austrian service, who fell at the battle of Montebello the 20th May last. I commanded at that time the 2nd brigade of the 1st division of the 1st corps. On arriving with my brigade before Montebello, I received the order of General Forey to take with a battalion of the 98th the farm of Cassina Nuova, situate on the left of the route. All the body of the farm was occupied with the enemy. I attacked the enemy with my battalion, and they were driven and chased from the farm. One of the first to enter the yard, I saw a superior Austrian officer, his face destroyed by a ball and in death, at the entrance of the farm. He carried with him a small *portfeuille*, containing several visiting cards, and superscribed 'M. Pierse, Major du Regiment, Kaloz.' I regret that I have not more of these cards, which I confided to my officer of Ordonnance, who was unfortunately killed the 24th of this month at Solferino. I can now certify that M. Pierse was killed on that spot by *coup de feu*, received in the face at the attack on the farm of Cassina Nuova, and that the reported brutalities as the cause of his death, are calumnious falsehoods. - I am, with respect, &c., &c.,  
General of Brigade commanding the 2nd brigade of the 1st division of the Imperial Guard.

Blanchard.

The tragic death of their son could well have been one of the causes of the rift that may have developed between Charles and Mary. Certainly, after this date, though their names continue to appear in the columns of the press, it tends to be individually, rather than jointly as before.

Charles Nash appears occasionally in the newspapers between 1848 and 1851 in connection with his job as a parliamentary agent. On 20 October 1848, the *Durham County Advertiser* tipped him to succeed as Secretary to the Waterford and Limerick Railway Company, following the resignation of its previous Secretary and on 6 July 1849, the *Cork Examiner* reported a meeting held in London of the Waterford, Wexford, Wicklow and Dublin Railway chaired by Nash.

However, in 1850, Nash got into trouble in connection with a report he had prepared on the financial position of the Waterford, Wexford, Wicklow and Dublin Railway. This report contained a

signature of the Earl of Courtown, the Chairman of the company, which Nash later admitted as having been written in his own hand. On 15 March, 1850 and again on 19 March and 22 March, Nash was questioned before the House of Lords on this matter, defending himself and stating that the signature was not intended to be an imitation of the signature of Lord Courtown. On 12 April, Earl Granville moved that Nash be called in, reprimanded and discharged. Granville said that "he did not suppose that Mr. Nash had been influenced by any intention to perpetrate a fraud, but it certainly was a case upon which the displeasure of the house ought to be expressed". This motion being agreed to, Nash appeared at the bar and was addressed from the woolsack by Lord Campbell:— "Charles De Lacy Nash, the misconduct by which you have incurred the displeasure of the house is that of having made a return which you were not required to make, and of having made it without the authority of the railway company to which you professed to be secretary. The house has hopes that you were not actuated in this matter by any fraudulent or malicious motives; but at the same time the house has had reason to be greatly dissatisfied with your conduct, it being calculated to mislead the house, and to do injury to the company of which you are considered to have been an officer. The house has resolved that you be reprimanded, and you are reprimanded accordingly, and discharged. "

This incident was widely reported in the newspapers and Nash contemplated suing the *Times* newspaper for libel over its coverage. On 29 April 1850 a long report appeared in the *London Standard* of an application by Nash to the Bail Court for a ruling to "show cause why a criminal information should not be filed" against the printer of the *Times*. Nash accuses the *Times* of two cases of misreporting: one of implying that Mr Nash had been charged with forging the name of the Earl of Courtown and the other that in using the words "brought to the bar", the paper was implying that he had been brought before the House of Lords as a criminal. However, the Bail Court didn't agree with Nash's interpretations and rejected the ruling.

Nash continued to be employed as a parliamentary agent for a while after the incident and on 25 August 1850 he is reported in the *Cork Examiner* as being in Dublin to effect the dissolution of the Waterford, Wexford, Wicklow and Dublin Railway. However, on 9 August 1851, the *Windsor and Eton Express* reported that, on the previous Tuesday (i.e. 5th August) in the House of Lords, Lord Camoys had moved that: "in consequence of his reprehensible conduct he [Nash] should not be admitted hereafter to act as a Parliamentary agent before this House or its committees". This motion was agreed to by the House.

The following February, things got even worse for Nash. On 7 February 1852, he appeared in Bow Street charged with forging the transfer of 196 shares in the Waterford, Wexford, Wicklow and Dublin Railway Company "to himself and a relative named Pearce" in order to be "enabled to speak and take a hostile part in the proceedings of the company ". He was remanded and appeared again

on 10 and 26 February when he was found guilty. However, sentence was postponed on a point of law to be determined by the Court of Appeal and so it wasn't until 5 June that sentence was finally passed. Then, the Recorder of the Criminal Court determined that, since Nash had been imprisoned since February, the sentence would be just a further six days imprisonment in Newgate Prison<sup>2</sup>. Extraordinarily, only six months later Charles Nash and his wife appear, along with several members of the Royal Family and other aristocrats, in a list of benefactors to a memorial to the Duke of Wellington (d. 14 September 1842) published in the *Morning Post* on 13 December 1852. Their names are given respectively as Mr. De Lacy Pierse of the Imperial Service and Mrs. De Lacy Nash of Blackheath. He denoted three guineas and she two guineas, not inconsiderable sums at the time.

Newspaper reports show that, as well as his parliamentary work, Nash was also engaged in writing and publishing, from the 1840s through at least to the 1870s. The *Morning Post* of 13 November 1844 carried an advertisement for a pamphlet with the snappy title "Railway and Land Taxation, Law Operation and Statistics and Other Rates, Injustice and Impolicy &c." by Mr. C. de Lacy Nash, author of "Legal and Genealogical Researches", "Contributions to Daily and other Literature" and other works. Incidentally, this advertisement also contains a reference to "The Russian Service and War in Turkey in 1829" by Mrs. De Lacy Nash, "in letters from her brother, Cornet Pierse, Imperial Hussars, nephew of General Lacy of Grodno, published in the *United Service Magazine* for Nov 1.", which is reprinted here in Appendix 4. The pamphlet on railway taxation received a positive review in the *Reading Mercury* of 10 March 1849. Other pamphlets on diverse subjects were also published such as "Railway Audits" (1850), "Marriage and Divorce Laws" (1858), "Appeal in Criminal Cases" (1861) and "Public Company Tracts No. 8" (1861). An advertisement (Figure 3) for publications by De Lacy and Nashe of The Strand, London appears in the book, *Limerick; Its History and Antiquities*, 1866, by Maurice Lenihan. Various references to "Pierse and Nash, Publisher" and variants of the same appear in listings in *Kelly's Directory* and *The Post Office Directory* between 1865 and 1874, with the address usually given as "7 Adelphi Chambers, John Street, WC", the road running parallel to The Strand, close to Charing Cross station. The last reference to Pierse and Nash that I have been able to find appears in the *London Daily News* on 14 March 1887:— "COLLINS FAMILY.— In reference to Advertisement in "Daily News" of 12th, we are able to GIVE FULL INFORMATION, being connected with the family. — PIERSE and NASH, 20, Vanbrugh-hill, S.E."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Vide: London Standard* 04/02/1852, 11/02/1852, 27/02/1852, and 15/06/1852.

<sup>3</sup> Vanbrugh Hill is in Greenwich, near Blackheath, in South London.

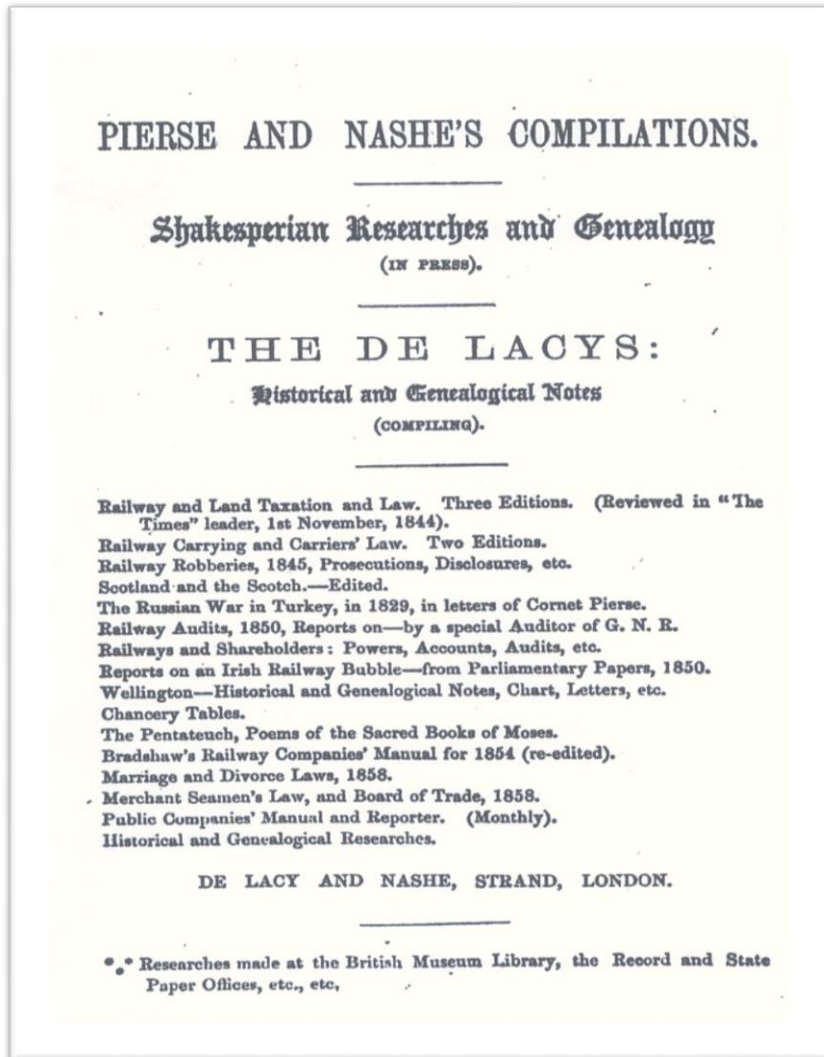


Figure 3: Advertisement in *Limerick: Its History and Antiquities* by Maurice Lenihan

In 1856, Charles Nash and his company of Pierse and Nash became involved in a controversy concerning the forging of a railway pass. On 1 December 1856, the *Liverpool Daily Post* carried a long report in its criminal pages about a man who had been apprehended on 28 November on the train between Crewe and Liverpool. On being asked to show his ticket, the man had produced a pass claiming that this entitled him to travel but, on inspection, the pass was found to have been originally issued in 1840 to a person named Browning but the date had been altered and the pass changed from a single journey to a pass valid for three months. The man was recognised by the railway officer and taken into custody.

Appearing in court on 29 November, the man gave his name as George Nash and was described as of middle age and respectable appearance and "a gentleman well known in London, and of considerable railway notoriety". He had described himself as "of the firm of Pierse and Nash, 48 Strand, Public Companies' Magazine Reporters, and Bradshaw's Annual Shareholders' Manual." He



was remanded to appear again in court on 6 December. On 8 December, the *Liverpool Daily Post* carried a further report on the court proceedings. A witness was cross-examined: — "Do you know Mr. Nash is a respectable man and a newspaper agent? — I know he calls himself a newspaper agent. He offered a sovereign in part payment of his fare". The prosecution was about to put some questions "as to the antecedents of the prisoner as respects the company, which he said arose out of the cross-examination" but the defence objected and he did not proceed.

In his defence, the defendant produced a paper in which he stated that "he had been many years connected with the railway — speaking, voting, reporting writing, and acting in whatever concerned it for many years, during "the battle of the gauges," and in other matters". This the prosecution vehemently denied. The accused "admitted travelling with the pass but said he frequently had unused passes in his possession." Speaking in his defence, Mr. Godfrey pleaded that "his client was recognised on every line, and spurned and despised the imputation of forgery grounded upon such a trivial circumstance. He had now been in prison eight days; he had, to his (Godfrey's) knowledge, suffered severe loss in his business; the stain of his present position could never be wiped away, and under these circumstances, he called upon the court to use its discretionary power in judging of the case". The Magistrate's ruling was that the prisoner must pay the fare and a fine of 40 shillings together with costs or be imprisoned for two months.

The details of the court case suggest very strongly that "George Nash" was none other than Charles Nash himself, and the London papers were not slow to pick up on this. The following paragraph appeared in *The Morning Chronicle* on 1 January 1857:—

*MESSRS. PEIRSE and NASH, of the STRAND*

*We yesterday inserted (says the Globe) a letter under the above signature, disclaiming all connection with parties recently before the public, the one as a perpetrator in the bullion robbery on the South-Eastern Railway, and the other as having forged a railway "pass," or free ticket on the London and North-Western Railway. A reference to the latest edition of the "Post-Office London Directory" fails to localise the firm of Messrs. Peirse and Nash, of the Strand, who have felt it necessary to address us; but in order to set one matter effectually at rest, we append the copy of a placard which has been publically exhibited at every station on the London and North-Western Railway during the current month: — "LONDON AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY, — CAUTION, Charles de Lacy Nash, of the firm of Pearce and Nash, of the Strand, London, was charged on Saturday, the 6th inst., at the Police Court, Liverpool, with having forged a "pass," and used it on the London and North-Western Railway from Crewe to Liverpool. The prisoner had altered the dates and other parts of an old pass to make it into a free ticket for three months. The prisoner having been confined seven days in gaol, the*

*magistrate fined him the full fair from London to Liverpool, £2 5s, and 40s. penalty and costs, or two months' imprisonment. — Dec. 8, 1856."*

That the railway company should go out of its way to name and shame Charles Nash by placing a placard at every one of its stations, demonstrates just how angry they must have been about the incident. They may well have borne a grudge against Nash over his previous involvements with the company, as is hinted at in comments made by the prosecution at the trial. That Pierse and Nash should try publically to deny any involvement despite having being mentioned in court evidence reported in the press, shows how out-of-touch with publicity management they were and in the event it backfired on them very badly.

Several other interesting newspaper pieces involving the Nashes can be found. On 15 November 1845, a strange notice appeared in the *Morning Post* offering a reward of one hundred and fifty pounds for "such information and evidence as may lead to the discovery and conviction of the writer or writers" of threatening anonymous letters to Nash on the subject of railway robberies. Applicants for the reward were invited to apply to Superintendent Pierse, H Division or Mr. Nash, Frederick Place, Old Jewry. Superintendent Pierse of course is Nash's brother-in-law, William Fitzmaurice Pierse, but the story behind this notice is unknown though it mentions facsimiles of the letters as having appeared in the *Times* newspaper on 22 October 1845.

Newspaper reports help clear up the mystery surrounding the reward that William Fitzmaurice Pierse's widow may or may not have received for her husband's part in saving the Crown Jewels from the fire at the Tower of London on 30 October 1841. On 10 May 1862 the *London Evening Standard* reported: "Our (*Athenaeum*) readers will learn with satisfaction that her Majesty, on the recommendation of Viscount Palmerston, has acknowledged the services of the late Mr. Superintendent Pierse in saving the Crown Jewels in the fire at the Tower, in 1841, by a munificent gift from the Royal bounty, to his sister, Mrs. Nash." This story is reported in several other newspapers without comment. However, the *Hereford Times* on 17 May 1862 had the following wry comment to make: — "The stale proverb of "better late than never" has just been exemplified. You may remember at the fire in the Tower, in 1841, the Crown Jewels were saved by the *late* Supt. Pierse. Last year the case was brought before the public in the columns of the *Athenaeum*, and *now* the Crown acknowledges the superintendent's services by a munificent gift from the Royal Bounty to Pierse's sister, a Mrs. Nash; this recognition and reward have been more than twenty years on the journey, and now the only person really deserving of them is dead!"

Further controversy ensued. Somehow, Elizabeth Pierse (William Fitzmaurice's widow living in Australia) was made aware of this gift and wrote a letter published in the *Athenaeum* magazine, criticising the government's decision. On October 22 1864, the *London Evening Standard* reported:—

"In answer to the letter of Mrs. Pierse, widow of the person who saved the Crown Jewels from destruction (and of whose existence in Australia we (*Athenaeum*) suppose the Crown was unaware, at the time of granting a pension for that service to his sister, Mrs. Nash), we have received the following odd communication: "Mr. Nash begs the editor to permit him to say that the writers of letters in those terms and feelings preclude information or reply, and render any justification of the sagacity or decision of government uncalled for. If persons will write their letters with gall they can expect no information, however conclusively it can be given, and such persons should make the acquaintance of Cicero's *De Officiis*, or the more modern Chesterfield, and observe the popular translation of the maxim, *ne sutor ultra crepidam*."<sup>4</sup> The nasty tone of Charles Nash's letter is quite surprising and it skirts the main issue. Though it is reasonable to assume that the Crown was unaware of the existence of William Fitzmaurice's widow Elizabeth, Charles and Mary must have been well aware so that applying for a pension for Mary at the expense of Elizabeth amounts to an attempt to defraud.

Finally, an amusing interchange of letters in the *Catholic Telegraph* in 1852 shows how hypersensitive Charles Nash was to the history and reputation of the Pierse family. On 4 June 1853, the *Catholic Telegraph* published the following letter signed by E. Hannigan:—

*THE BROWNES AGAIN*

*12 Earl-Street, London-road, London, 29th May 1853.*

*Sir — In my boyish days I well knew the family of Mr. Browne, of Kilmeedy, a few miles from where I first saw the light, Castleishen, near Drumcolloher, the property of Sir James Fitzgerald, Bart., a descendent of the illustrious Earls of Desmond. Mr. James Murphy, lonely, and reduced in circumstances, after the death of his wife, Lucy, the niece of General Grodno, became tutor to our family, which enables me to give Mr. Browne O'K. the information he requires, from the papers and correspondence left for safety in the hands of my late father; the greater part having emanated from the uproar caused by a Mr. Devine, a commissioner, pretending to have the highest authority to investigate property claims of all persons belonging to the De lacy and Browne families of the county Limerick. And though Mr. Murphy never considered Devine any thing but an arrant imposter, he replied to his letters, because upon some occasions, he was enclosed some trifling sums that were quite acceptable to relieve urgent expenses. The number of letters by post sent him in 1841-42, and the visits paid him were incredible.*

*From a letter signed W. F. Pierse, superintendent of police, dated May, 1841, Prince's-street, Spitalfields, London, it appears that Devine was no other than an attorney's clerk, married*

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<sup>4</sup> The correct quotation is *sutor, ne ultra crepidam* meaning literally 'cobbler, no further than the sandal!', attributed to the painter Apelles in response to a cobbler who, when asked for advice on the painting of the sandals of a soldier, started offering advice on other parts of the painting. As a maxim it means 'don't offer your opinion on things outside your competence'.

to his sister Mary, in April, 1836. These are his words:- "I called at 183, Strand, and from the description, he is no other than my precious brother-in-law Nash, a thin, alight person about five feet six or seven inches, sallow complexion, wearing a one-eye bit of glass, which he sticks on his eye to assist his near-sightedness". A conversation I had last Sunday with my father leaves no doubt to my conviction that Devine and Nash are one and the same person. M. De Lacy Nash I take to be Devina. Nash's wife was sister to Maurice, who died of fatigue and hardship of climate on the Balkan expedition, before the army reached Varna; he was no cornet of horse or foot, being appointed and attached to the artillery, at the instance of Count Sacken, on the recommendation of the Russian ambassador at London, through the influence of the late Sir Mathew Tierney. Mr. Murphy's memoranda mention that General Lacy, of Grodno, sent £2,000 each year for five consecutive years to his niece, Miss Mary Murphy, the only person in Ireland with whom he corresponded, to be divided amongst the descendants of his three sisters— Benedicta, Catherine, and Mary. Benedicta was the mother of Miss Mary, and of Lacy, the wife of James Murphy; Catherine married a person named Pierce O'Brien; her daughter Johanna, was the mother of Mary Pierse, of the superintendent of police, and of the Balkan artillery sergeant, and was wife to John Pierse, a country harness-saddler, who resided in the small town of Listowell, in the county Kerry, up to the years of the distribution of General Lacy's benevolence to his Irish relatives, when he took up his abode in the town of Newcastle, county Limerick, where the distributor lived up to her death.

These papers I hold for any person who can prove to me that he has a just right to them. Hoping that these extracts will satisfy the inquiry, — I have the pleasure to be, Sir, yours truly,

E. HANNIGAN

On 11th June, 1853 and reprinted the following week, the *Catholic Telegraph* published a lengthy reply to this letter penned by Charles Nash:

*THE BROWNE AND DE LACY FAMILIES - MR. NASH*

Sir — in the *Telegraph* of 4th June a letter, signed "E. Hannigan," appeared, which contains statements of a calumnious and unfounded nature as to members of the Pierse family, and to which we desire to give a full contradiction.

From sources which are authentic we find that —

1. That E. Hannigan is not a real being: the name should be Hourigan - a relation of T. McEligot, who has addressed us under the name of "T. Lascy," and who was well known in Cork some years since.
2. There is no such person as Hannigan or Lascy.
3. It is not true that old James Murphy was "tutor in our family;" i.e., The Hannigan or Hourigan's, save the mark. How those who knew the families will laugh at this presumptuous statement from a labourer, when it is also recollected that James Murphy always said that "that branch was never known or acknowledged as legitimate;" and he, in conjunction with Mr. Nash, offered a reward for the arrest of a Cork butter merchant some years since.

4. *There is no doubt the letters "T. Lascy," "E. Hannigan," and "Browne O'Keefe," are the offspring of one manufactory—pre-arranged questions and answers on existing persons, and not illustrative of ancient genealogy.*

5. *Maurice De S. Pierse was a cornet in the Archduke Ferdinand's regiment of Hussars, after passing through the College of Cadets in Russia. His letters, published by the Russian authorities during the tour in Turkey, and his own letters in the United Service Magazine for 1844, dispose of this calumny. His recommendations to the imperial service were of the highest character, signed by above two hundred of the nobility and gentry of Kerry, Limerick, and Cork. the following also settle this point:-*

*Letter of Sept. 1838 from the Foreign Office, stating that dispatches had been received from St. Petersburg that the death of Cornet M. D. L. Pierse, of the Archduke Ferdinand's Hussars, took place before Adrianople, in 1829.*

*Another letter as follows:—*

*Foreign Office, Dec 6, 1828.*

*Sir—In answer to the enquiry contained in your letter of the 29th September last, requesting to be informed if the date of the death of the late Cornet De Lacy Pierse is reckoned according to the old or new style, I am directed by Viscount Palmerston to acquaint you, that by a dispatch received by H. M. Ambassador at St. Petersburg it appears that the death of Cornet De Lacy Pierse took place on the 29th of August, old style, in the year 1829. —I am Sir, &c.*

*J. Backhouse*

*Foreign Office, March 11, 1842*

*Sir—With reference to Lord Canning's letter to you of the 9th of February, I am directed by the Earl of Aberdeen to transmit to you copies of two papers which H. M. Ambassador to St. P. has received from the Russian Government—one being the certificate delivered to the late Cornet De Lacy Pierse in 1820 by Mr. Cassmajor, then Brit. Prin. Plenipotentiary at St. Petersburg; the other relating to the pedigree of Cornet M. D. L.P., which he presented to the competent military authorities on entering the Russian service. These papers were communicated in original by the Russian Government to Lord Stuart de Rothcony, with the request that they might be returned to the Russian Govt. after his Excel. had taken copies of them, in order that they might be deposited in the archives of the Russian War Department.—I have &c.,*

*H. A. Addington*

*In five other letters from both Governments the same recognition prevails.*

6. *Cornet Pierse was not indebted to Sir M. Tierney for any introduction or promotion, but entirely to his own position in society, family and merits.*

7. *He did reach Adrianople, and died before it in 1828, deeply lamented—vide his letters in U. S. Mag., 1844.*

8. *As to Devine, Mr. Nash assisted him in 1841 with much information, labour, and helped to defeat certain claims to legitimacy, in hopes of benefitting himself; this is supposed to have excited the ire*

*which has found several vents for its calumny, the last in your paper of the 4th June. Mr. Nash afterwards advertised a "caution" against Devine and other pretenders.*

9. *Sergt. Pierse never wrote the letter (quoted by Hannigan) quoted in thirty lines of quotation—and if he had, it was not true. But his feeling against a brother-in-law was not carried to that extent, though Irishmen are very free in writing calumny in private letters.*

*The rest of the letters are equally unauthentic and the facts distorted—as answered by the two hundred nobility and gentry, who in 1820 and 1840 certified to the family position required by continental authorities.*

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*A fresh inquiry, at 12, Earl-street, London-road, Kent-road, confirms the statement of fictitious names being used by Hourigan, and by his relative Thomas McEligott, of Hendrie street, Kent-road (under the signature of "Thomas Lascy"), and perhaps, of "J. H.," "Brown O'K.," &c., as the letters "Hannigan" and "Lascy" refer to McEligott's and Hourigan's families. at one No. 12, Earl-street resides a policeman, named Chester; at another No. 12, resides a jobbing tailor, named Creed, who said there was no other person lived there but a Mr. "Lascy," and he did not know (or would not say) what he was. Earl-street is a very poor street, of small houses, one story high, for very poor people. The name "Hannigan" was not known to the next door neighbours either. No paper can be free from such impositions in a laudable endeavour to promote information, and avoid being made a vehicle to gratify personal malice.*

To this long letter is appended an apology from the editor, admitting that the previous letter should never have appeared in the *Catholic Telegraph* and regretting that the columns should have become a medium for wounding personal feelings. He then declared the columns closed to any further discussion of Brownes and Lacys.

Some interesting things emerge from the exchange. Charles Devine was a real person and was responsible for organising the advertisement in the *Limerick Chronicle* placed on behalf of Charles Nash and Mary de Lacy Pierse to track down the living descendents of Generals Browne and de Lacy as part of the *Reed v O'Brien* court case.<sup>5</sup> However, Devine may well have been viewed by some as too much Nash's sidekick, hence the scurrilous suggestion that they were one and the same. In a similar way, though the letter purportedly from William Fitzmaurice Pierse is obviously a fabrication, the address is correct and there must be a grain of truth in the animosity suggested between them as Nash doesn't attempt to pretend that he and his brother-in-law got on well. The attempt to belittle the army career and death of Maurice de Lacy Pierse is probably an attempt to prick the pomposity of the frequent florid references to him in newspaper pieces by Nash and Pierse.

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<sup>5</sup> The Patrick Devine who accompanied Charles Nash to correct Mary de Lacy's entry in the death register in 1879, was probably a relative.

Overall, reading the newspaper reports of Charles Nash's activities, he comes across as a bit of a rogue and as a pretty dislikeable character. Even when he is clearly morally in the wrong, he responds to any perceived slight in a pompous and bombastic manner: for example in threatening to sue the *Times* for truthfully reporting his embarrassing reprimand by the House of Lords, or in publishing an untruthful disclaimer over the railway pass fraud. His worst behaviour though is the way he seems to have treated Elizabeth Pierse over the pension he won for his wife which should rightly have been hers. It is perhaps not surprising that neither William Fitzmaurice Pierse nor John Patrick Pierse seem to have had very much to do with him.