

Desirable Property

By WILLIAM FREEMAN

It was a funny morning when I took the train to Shelsverra, or, to be more exact, to Lessover, the nearest station. In my pocket was Jean Marlow's letter, the first I had had from her since she had inherited Grey Gables and gone to live there. And its tone worried me.

Built of yellow Georgian brick, the house stood back from the road in an old-fashioned garden. Behind was an orchard, then cliffs and the sea.

"I've been expecting you," said Jean, from the step, and there was a note in her voice that moved me, "though I've no right."

"It's your fault that you haven't very right," I said. "But what's worrying you?" We had drifted into a low walled room.

"Have you ever heard of the Dellacorva Mining Company?"

"I've heard a good deal," I said.

"But why?"

"Because a thousand shares were part of Frank Paul's legacy. Unluckily, they aren't fully paid, and a month ago I'd a letter demanding another seven hundred and fifty pounds. The only way I could think of raising the money was by selling or mortgaging Grey Gables. I hated the idea, but at last I went to the local house-agent, and they told me what every one must have conspired to keep secret—that the place had a queer reputation."

She paused breathless. I asked the inevitable question.

"What happens?" she echoed. "People disappear. Not in the house itself, but while they're crossing the estate. It's happened twice within the last ten years."

Even Mrs. Brewster, believes the story. Even Mrs. Brewster, uncle's old housekeeper, won't go through the orchard after dark.

"There is a sort of sequel," Jean continued. "Last Monday a man called Peter Stott came to see me. He's the head of a syndicate that buys and develops property. He offered eight hundred pounds for mine, the house included."

"What did you tell him?"

"That the price was absurd, that he should have the opinion of buying it for a thousand pounds if nobody else had bought it by the end of the week—that is, to-morrow. He's staying in the village till then."

"Did he allude to the Dellacorva Company?"

"Yes. He's one of the biggest shareholders. . . . And now let's talk about other things."

We had tea. I was shown over the house and garden. We had reached the end of the orchard when Jean exclaimed, "There he is!"

I perceived a short, stocky figure against the sky.

Peter Stott turned at the creek of my shoes on the turf. "Evening," he said, and the ends of his mouth went up in a hard, habitual smile. "You're a friend of Miss Marlow's aren't you? A rather special friend? I noticed your photograph on her writing-table."

"Having deduced so much," I said, "perhaps you won't mind answering one or two questions?"

"Go ahead," I said. "I should like to know whether you discovered Miss Marlow's connection with the Dellacorva Company before or after you discovered that she owned this estate?"

"Before," he said, and chuckled. "We—the syndicate—have our own methods. When a company goes smash, we find out the chief sufferers. If they own estate or other property, I make it my business to come down personally and negotiate."

"Thanks for being so candid."

He chuckled again. "I can afford to be candid, with the young lady's option in my pocket. Nice site for week-end bungalows, this. Fifty, at four hundred apiece, ought to show us a decent profit."

"If you care to come round to my room at the Gull and Anchor, I'll show you a sketch plan of the developments."

"No luck, of course," she said. Mrs. Brewster, grim-faced, elderly and very deaf, cooked the evening meal. I had already promised to stay the night. I went to bed early, but took with me enough waddy to keep me awake for hours.

I was roused from sleep by a piercing cry. I sat up. The room was filled with daylight. I slipped out of bed, opened the door and peered out. Jean's white face met mine from her own doorway.

"You heard?" she said.

"Yes," I said. "I'll dress quickly and go out to make enquiries."

But apart from a couple of youths on the beach gathering seaweed, I met no one. And they had only just dawned. Jean and I breakfasted early, and then went out to meet the postman. He had no letters for her, but asked us if we had seen Mr. Stott.

"Why?" said Jean.

"Gone went out soon after sunrise, and hasn't been seen since," said the man.

That was the beginning of what the papers called "The Grey Gables Mystery," principally because Stott had not been seen on the furze and brambles-topped top of the cliff between the orchard and the sea. The rain that had fallen during the night before his disappearance might have been useful in recording clues, if the hundreds of amateur investigators who crossed and re-crossed the cliffs afterwards had not obliterated any footprints that could have been identified.

We shall never know who first circulated the rumour that Jean or myself were involved in Peter Stott's tragedy. But his partner, a man named Lewinstein, certainly had a hand in the business. Shrill-voiced and greasy, he came down on the following Wednesday, and within an hour of his arrival he had interviewed half the village, after which he retreated to his room at the Station Hotel. He stayed a week at Lessover, a week of poisonous hints and innuendoes whose most obvious effect was the

clumsy avoidance of us both by the villagers.

There was one mitigation. Ironically enough, the Dellacorva Company struck an unexpected vein of copper which gave even Jean's party-paid shares a small market value. She got rid of them, thankfully. I did not get back to London; my landlady sent an urgent business telegram which eventually reminded me that I had a business matter while in Town, and I caught a train which deposited me at Lessover a little after four.

It had been raining heavily. I was stiff with the journey, and glad of a brisk walk. As I reached the top of the cliff, I came face to face with Lewinstein.

"Fine evening," he said, and then: "Got five minutes to spare?"

"Why?" I asked.

"Nothing," he snapped over his shoulder, "if that's the attitude. Who are you, anyway?"

I didn't answer. A minute later I heard his step scuffling towards me over the drab turf. "Sorry if my temper's skidded"—his podgy hand gripped my sleeve. "It's my weak spot. I wanted a word with you about this buried treasure business."

"Merely a local legend," I told him. He stood flipping his lower lip with a cigarette-stained forefinger.

"Thanks," he said, and moved away. I went on to Grey Gables and forgot him. Until the next morning, when we heard that he had vanished as utterly as his partner had vanished.

I would have kept the news from Jean altogether if I could; that being impossible, I could only do my best to shoulder the new worry and strain. I tried to persuade Jean to go away for a time, but she had an obstinate theory that her place was at Grey Gables. And so it came about that we were both in Shelsverra on the day of the great storm.

It rose suddenly in the early hours, sweeping inland with torrential rain and a wild and roaring wind. But by noon it had blown itself out, and after lunch Jean and I put on mackintoshes and thick shoes, and left by the orchard gate.

We came to a stunted blackthorn lurching drunkenly sideways amid a bodyguard of brambles.

"There's a huge hole here," said Jean, who had advanced to the exposed roots. "More than a hole—a regular tunnel, big enough for anyone to go through."

She finished the sentence by stumbling down on to a chalky platform. I reached her only just in time to grip her by the arm.

"You're hurting me," she protested, and then, in a different voice, "Harry, something's dragging at my ankle!"

I flung myself down among the dripping brambles, caught her about the waist. "Grip the roots of the tree," I said between my teeth.

Followed a nightmare struggle. I felt a rib snap; the horrible nausea which is a prelude to fainting gripped me. Jean, swaying, plunging, slipping, went suddenly limp.

"I can't break free—the fingers are too strong." Her breath came in sobs. "You'll have to let me go."

Then, through a choking mist, I heard her speak. "My shoe is coming off. Quick, now!"

I made a last effort. She tore herself clear, stumbled forward, and fell beside me on the turf.

When we were able, we went back to the house. Old Grell, the doctor, was sent for, and Jean's wretched ankle was bandaged and my rib strapped up. Later, before darkness fell, I went with a party of men to the fallen thorn. We included the local police-sergeant and a couple of coastguards. We carried as well ropes, knives, and electric torches.

The thorn had nearly righted itself again. Nature had mysteriously pivoted it so that heavy rain or wind, or a conjunction of both, would swing it sideways, exposing the hidden tunnel. One of the coastguards volunteered to go down. He held the torch in his left hand, an open clasp-knife in his right. For a time there was no sound beyond the scuffling of his own feet on the slippery chalk. Then we heard him shout, and saw him bend and slash furiously. When we dragged him back, dark, whip-like tentacles still clung to his boots.

We had learnt enough, and the rest might wait—did wait—till another day. Then we discovered, in the foul and tortuous passages that led ultimately to the sea, the hat of Peter Stott and a broken pocket-knife, used as a final futile weapon, which was afterward identified as belonging to his partner. Their bodies were never found; nor was the sea-brute whose lair they had entered ever seen again.

The passage was blocked with boulders from the beach; the Shelsverra mystery was solved. Grey Gables was left to drowse again in the sunshine—but with a difference. Jean shared its ownership with me—London "Tit-Bits".

850-Word Vocabulary

P. M. Greenwood, formerly inspector of schools and supervisor of elementary education in Sunderland, speaking at the City of London vacation course on the teaching of English, said that by continuous use many words had lost their true meaning, writes the London correspondent of the New York Times.

"Awful" was one of them. Another of Mr. Greenwood's illustrations was the story of an Indian student, who, wishing to show his knowledge of the use of metaphor, in informing friends of his mother's death, wrote: "The hand that rocked the cradle has kicked the bucket."

Mr. Greenwood said it was estimated that a knowledge of 50,000 words was required to enable a person to read The Times of London intelligently. Most people managed very well with half that number, he added, and there were 850 words in which one could say anything one was likely to want to say, and say it perfectly.

Prince George

On one ground in particular—by no means the only ground—the engagement of Prince George is to be viewed with peculiar satisfaction, observes The London Spectator. Since he has remained single till the age of 21, it is obvious that he has decided to marry not simply because he has fallen in love.

This country is a democracy and it likes to see in the members of its Royal Family precisely what it does see in them, human beings like the rest of their fellow-countrymen, devoting themselves to their special duties and discharging them supremely well, and marrying, when they do marry, the man or woman of their choice. The choice may fail, as it did with the Princess Royal and the Duke of York, on a commoner, or, as in the case of Prince George, on a member of another royal house.

If the old tradition that royalty can only wed royalty had not been freely disregarded by Prince George's sister and brother his engagement might be credited with the character of a marriage de convenience. As it is there can be no question of that. Congratulations to the Prince, and to the Princess of Greece who will soon be a Princess of Britain, will be wholehearted and universal. Sympathy can mean fellowship in rejoicing as well as fellowship in sorrow.

So They Say

"We must not build up false gods because we are punished later."—Mary Pickford.

"Philosophy is a shark following the ship of science, hoping that something will fall overboard that it may devour."—Henry L. Mencken.

"The right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness cannot survive in the modern world without the right to work."—Robert M. La Follette.

"In my eye, criticism is not a vital function in itself. The world can live without critics, but not without workers."—Adolf Hitler.

"Civilization and human progress must depend in the long run on the quality of men and women."—Harry Woodburn Chase.

"Power to some men is sweeter than love, riches, or leisure to enjoy the fruits of civilization."—Gertrude Atherton.

"Research in physiology will ultimately provide us with means for regulating temperament and emotion."—Aldous Huxley.

"Life is like a cup of tea; the more heavily we drink the sooner we reach the dregs."—Sir James M. Barrie.

"Censorship ends in logical completeness when nobody is allowed to read any books except the books nobody can read."—George Bernard Shaw.

"If more people understood the causes of prosperity and depression it would be much less difficult than it is to emerge from bad times."—Bertrand Russell.

"Banking as a business career is dead. Banking as a profession is in its infancy. I might almost say it is not yet born."—James P. Warburg.

"I don't know that it does much harm to tell women that if they changed soap they'd get a new beau."—Bruce Barton.

"Talking pictures will replace talking professors ten years from now."—Norman Bel Geddes.

"Since life is the greatest possession of man, the great problems of mankind will always be medical problems."—Morris Fishbein.

"In my opinion, the typical man of the future will be a Protestant, but a Protestant of a scarcely recognizable type."—Dean Inge.

Barefooted Lady in Shorts Is Put Out

Reno, Nev.—A socially prominent New York divorcee who spends her spare time peddling a bicycle, barefooted and in shorts, believes a certain waiter in a Reno restaurant doesn't know a lady when he sees one.

It all started when Mrs. Mildred Tilton Holmsen went into the wig, wam, a down-town coffee shop, and ordered "hot milk, not boiled, and freshly squeezed orange juice."

The waiter was pained to notice Mrs. Tilton was taking her breakfast barefooted and in shorts.

No one seems to know exactly what was said or done about it, but the proprietors of the establishment had a letter from Mrs. Holmsen, who is here to divorce Nicholas Holmsen of the social register. It reads:

"Your chief waiter this morning was unbelievably rude, virtually chasing me out of your restaurant. It just happens that I come from one of New York's very best families. Now you know the rest is up to you."

Cod-Liver Oil For Workers

The Committee on the Cost of Medical care has reported that wage earners in the United States are absent from their posts at least 250,000,000 working days in the year because of illness. Studies made by sick benefit associations, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and the United States Public Health Service show that more than 40 per cent of time is lost because of colds, influenza, grip and pneumonia.

Here we have the reason for a piece of research conducted by Dr.

Prince George Joins Fiancee's Family



This exclusive photo of Prince George and his fiancée, Princess Marina of Greece, was taken in the grounds of Prince Paul's Villa at Wochener-See, Yugoslavia. Photo shows Princess Marina, Prince George, Princess Olga of Yugoslavia, and Princess Nicolas (mother of Princess Marina) leaving Prince Paul's villa.

Proves Tin Barn Best Refuge In 'Storm and Lightning'

Startling Electrical Charge of 200,000 Volts Leaves Writer Smiling In Cage

TORONTO—A mighty electrical charge of 200,000 volts sears the outside surface of a tall wire cage which rests upon insulators. Sudden and certain death is in store for anyone foolishly enough to step within a circle of destruction five feet and more in any direction from the cage.

Yet within the structure, and literally surrounded by fiery walls of death, I stood in easy comfort, smiling at observers who peered at me from a distance of several yards by the sporadic light of blue flashes of miniature lightning, writes J. C. Edelstein in this article.

Such is the newly demonstrated experimental answer to the question, "Where is the safest place to be in case of an electrical storm?"

Two choices

The choice then lay, for the scientists and others who considered the problem, between the tin barn and the wooden shed. At first study it would seem almost apparent that the wooden structure was the safer of the two. Dry wood is a fair insulator against electricity. But, of course, if the shed were struck directly by lightning, the shed's insulating properties would be of no avail against the irresistible surge of that tremendously volt charge that is lightning. Death and destruction would be almost inevitable to anyone in a wooden barn or shed if the barn were struck fairly and squarely by the lightning.

The last choice remains, then, the tin structure. True tin is an excellent conductor of electricity. Lightning would be quick to strike it if it struck anything. Anyone leaning against the outside of the tin structure would be burnt to a crisp, as by the electric chair. Anyone standing within several yards of the tin building at the time the structure received its charge of lightning would see a tremendous blue spark reaching for him like the finger of death, and then he, too, would be electrocuted.

Gradually through the years science ground down the borders of ignorance which surrounded it. Scientists learned the nature of lightning, its causes, its effects, its beginnings and its end. They measured its power, its voltage, its length and its width. Then some practical-minded scientist happened along.

"If there were a storm and much lightning," he hypothesized, "and the only available shelters were a tall tree with many leaves, a wooden shed and a tin barn, which would be the safest refuge from the storm and lightning?" The practical-minded scientist wanted to make use of all science's theoretical knowledge of the lightning.

Most people would almost instinctively eschew the tree, which is notoriously a "sucker" for lightning. Looming far above the ground, it offers the most proximate point for the discharge of electrical energy from a highly charged cloud to the earth. The fact that it is pointed also explains why a tree as a favorite spot for an angry sky to unload its high potential charge, or more commonly, lightning. Lightning jumps easily from point to point.

And with greater difficulty to a blunt surface.

For centuries mystics, philosophers and scientists have wondered in awe at the terrific power of destruction of lightning from the skies. There was nothing like it in the world. None could really escape it. It was the consummation of all that was irresistible and unfathomable.

Big For Its Age

Although the "youngest" Government Department, the British Ministry of Labor now employs over 21,000 Civil Servants.

In the last sixteen years 2,228,285 houses of a rateable value not exceeding \$50 (\$525 in London) have been completed.

would be the fate of the man stand charge as a plate of glass.

The electrical cage experiment was the result of the above reasoning. A wire cage was built here and placed upon insulators. Through this was sent coursing a current of electricity having a voltage approximating 200,000. Into this structure, carrying enough potential death for a regiment of soldiers, I walked.

SAFE AND SOUND

The "juice" was turned on. Sparks of purple-blue flashes of lightning lea from the cage to conducting objects in the immediate vicinity; coronas phenomena signifying the presence of tremendous voltages, played around the structure like halos. Yet I stood there feeling no discomfort. The experiment was proved, and proved well. While death played on the outside sur-charge was repelled by it—ret from penetrating even the least distance inside the shelter. Afterward I stepped out of the cage, smiling.

So the answer to the scientist's query proved to be that the inside of the tin barn, or of any similar metal structure, is by far the safest place to be during an electrical storm.

Original Jiggs Dies

While sitting in the lobby of a hotel in New York talking, Danie Simmons, the original "Jiggs" in "Bringing Up Father," when the comedy appeared in the theatre, suddenly collapsed and died.

He was buried at his old home a Peterboro, Ontario, Simmons was 64 years of age.

Starting in stock companies, Simmons was in turn a song and dance man, a dramatist and more recently a singer. His last role was in a six man troupe billed as "Famous Old Timers."

New U.S. Bridge Champion Says Men Superior Players

New York—Miss Elinor Murdoch, newly-crowned contract bridge champion of the United States, still believes in the superiority of male bridge players.

Luck, alone, she says, was the deciding factor in the tournament which brought her the individual masters championship of the American Bridge League. She paid tribute to the 25 men and women experts entered in the event, and especially to B. Jay Becker of Philadelphia, who was close behind her score.

"I won because I was lucky, and I was extraordinarily lucky to note out by even half a point a player as fine as Mr. Becker," she said.

"But women have improved their records the last few years. They are learning to control their temperaments. Men don't have to fight that battle. It took me several years to control mine. When I had a few bad hands, I wanted to get out of the game."

"To win a tournament, you've got to be able to take it. Women can learn that. The hardest thing in the world is to keep a reserve of physical strength, and not to get so tired that temperament gets the best of you."

It Isn't Home

By Anne Campbell.

The ocean meets the sky and joins its blue. The waves are tipped with shredded silver foam. I gaze upon the sea and think of you.

It may be beautiful, but it isn't home! The splendid city flings its buildings high.

The stars are all alight in heaven's dome. The lighted windows and the stary sky. . . . It's all so beautiful, but it isn't home!

Across the miles there is a patch of green. A little house upon familiar loam. A maple tree, a fence where roses lean. . . . And that is beautiful, because it's home!

With a smile upon your face—Stop shirkin'. If you have a task to do, And would like to get it through—Keep workin'.

—Grenville Kleiser.

Heads Two Sets of Five Generations

Proud head of two sets of five generations, and with 14 children, seven living between 50 and 60 grandchildren, 40 great-grandchildren, David Noakes of London, England, celebrated his 100th birthday. He was married twice.

Doctors, nurses, actors, clergymen and people with artistic temperaments make bad patients where operations are concerned.

Telephone poles are doomed in Gt. Britain. Already 9,000,000 miles of line run underground; now the remaining 1,000,000 miles are to be tackled.

Several thousand widows gave up their pensions on re-marriage last year.

"Pork Chops"

Mauchline, Scotland. — Observers here believe that "Pork Chops" Needles, of Detroit, America's champion eater, might have been a useful judge at a horticulture show.

Four judges in the cookery section had to taste 37 plates of scones, 23 sultana cakes, 25 sponge sandwiches, 19 apple cakes and 15 sausage rolls. "A mere taste wasn't sufficient. The judges had to take good samples. They had to taste several scores pots of jam, several dozen jellies and large quantities of potatoes."

THE MINUTE THAT SEEMS A YEAR



GLUYAS WILLIAMS 8-11