

A SECRET OF THE ALPS

Was It Better Kept or Divulged?

By MILLARD MALTBE

Touring in Switzerland, I went to Chamounix with a view to climbing Mont Blanc, but the weather was not favorable, and I was obliged to spend all the time I had to spare for that purpose watching and waiting for a change. I strolled about a good deal, sometimes going up the side of the mountain. On one of these walks came upon the chalet of an old mountaineer in whose chalet I was interested. He lived with his son-in-law, who was a guide, and his daughter. The couple had several children, the oldest of whom was a boy of fourteen. Here I left Chamounix, I had so far won the old man's confidence that he told me a story involving a bit of family history.

I give it in his own words. I noticed while he was telling it that his face wore an expression of one who had something on his conscience of which he was not satisfied. At least such was my impression.

"My daughter Lena when she was a little girl was a veritable snow bird. There was no height to which she would not climb, no precipice over the edge of which she would not look without drawing back. Once I saw her standing on a cliff poised as if ready to fall down on to the snow some forty feet below. Then, to my horror, she stepped off. Her fall was somewhat broken by the air being caught beneath her skirts, and she seemed to sail down like a swallow.

"I ran toward the spot where she had fallen and found her in the soft snow some three or four feet below the surface. Had I not been up hand to assist her it is questionable if she would have been able to dig herself out. When I released her she laughed in great glee.

"I took her home and spanked her, but it didn't do any good. That child did not know the meaning of the word fear, and it seemed as if she believed she could fly from one cliff to another. At any rate, after what had happened I was always in dread lest in attempting to imitate a bird she would be killed. Such children are always loved more than those made in the ordinary way, and Lena was worshipped by me and her mother, and there was no one about here who did not know her for something odd. She passed among them all as the little snow bird."

"My old friend, Pfeiffer had a son five years older than Lena, and Pfeiffer had made a lot of money down on the line between Switzerland and Italy smuggling goods across the Italian lakes. For the reason of this money, which would one day belong to young Gustav Pfeiffer, I was quite willing to betroth Lena to Gustav to be married when she should be old enough. But Lena had a playmate, Fritz Henkel, who was as fearless among the mountains as she, and the two became lovers. Young Henkel, as soon as he became old enough began to guide tourists up the mountains, for he knew every foot of the way, and every one said he was more at home there than I in the valley.

"But I had no idea of my daughter marrying a guide, who was liable at any time to go down with the avalanche and leave her a widow, with nothing to live on, when she could have a young man with money in the bank at Geneva. So I kept my contract with Pfeiffer. Lena was much broken in spirit at not being allowed to marry the young man she loved, but I thought that after she had been married awhile and had children she would settle down to the humdrum of life like the rest of us and forget about Fritz Henkel. She could have run away with him and been married, but she would not. Her mother had died, and she knew I needed her and if she made a break between herself and me I would have no one to take care of me in my old age.

"When Henkel knew that he must lose her, like a good fellow he went away from her to interlark and guide tourists on the Jungfrau and the other mountains thereabout. He would not come back here even to see his father and mother though he sent them a part of his earnings. As for Lena, she did what she could to be content as the wife of a man she did not love. She did not complain, but I saw that to please me she had made a sacrifice that she might never recover from. Besides, Gustav did not turn out very well. His father, unfortunately for my plan, continued to live instead of dying at a proper age and leaving his money to his son. Nor did he give Gustav anything either on which to live. So Gustav, instead of taking up any steady employment, thought he could make money as his father had made it and became a smuggler.

"But every year the revenue men became more watchful and expert in detecting smugglers and, what is worse for the smugglers, more honest, though perhaps this was because they themselves were more closely watched. At any rate, Gustav did not succeed as his father had succeeded and at last was caught smuggling and was sent to prison.

"I was much depressed by what I

had done, but Lena did not reproach me. She took good care of me as far as possible. And I have learned since that she permitted Fritz to send small sums of money to her to be spent for comforts for me, for Pfeiffer as he grew older grew more and more stingy and would do nothing at all for his daughter-in-law. But Fritz never came here. He was too honorable for that.

"After Gustav had served about a year of his term in prison he escaped with some other prisoners. They were chased into the mountains, and those chasing them saw them while crossing a glacier suddenly go down into a crevasse which was covered over with a thin coating of snow and ice. Since the crevasse was very deep and they must all have been killed by the fall no effort was made to secure their bodies. In forty or fifty years, when the point in the glacier where they were killed reaches the valley and melts, they will appear again.

"As soon as I heard of the death of these men I sent word to Fritz that if he chose to marry Lena he would have my consent. He came to see me, but Lena was not sure that her husband had been among the men who went down into the crevasse. She would wait a year anyway, and within that time if Gustav were alive she would surely hear from him. Fritz agreed to this, and, though we did not speak of it, we all hoped that Gustav would not be heard from.

"But the prison authorities assured me that Gustav was one of the escaped prisoners who had been killed, and I, anxious to undo the harm I had done, persuaded Lena not to wait till the year was out, but to be married, and we would all three be now comfortable. Fritz resuming his work as guide at Chamounix. The truth is we needed what Fritz could earn, for we had little or nothing with which to procure food.

"So they were married a few months after Lena became a widow, and was supposed to have become a widow, for Gustav's father, notwithstanding the assurance of his son's death, refused to believe him dead. Lena very soon changed from her depressed condition and once more became light hearted. She made several trips with Fritz to the top of the mountains and seemed to her to be in her natural element while climbing.

"And now I am going to tell you a secret that is not known to any one about here. One day I was out on a path leading toward this house, a path which did not come from Chamounix, but from another direction. While following the trail, suddenly, under a cliff some fifty feet high, I came upon the body of a man.

"He was my daughter's husband. He had evidently been on the path when, after winding around an incline, it had led along the edge of the cliff above and had fallen. He had died within not more than a few days before, and Lena had not been really married to Fritz. Their first child, which was expected, would not be born in wedlock, according to the law or that of the church.

"What did I do? I carried the body to a chasm, the bottom of which no man has ever seen, and dropped it in. There it lies buried and will lie till this world is broken by some great convulsion, such as that from which the mountains were formed.

"But I kept my secret. That happened fifteen years ago, and neither my daughter nor my son-in-law knows that for some time after they began to live together they were not married. Nor was it necessary that they should be. Why was Gustav where I found him? About that we can only guess. There are many theories. The one I most count on is that he had contracted when pursued to separate himself from the others and hide till the pursuers had passed. His only safety would be in going as far as possible from his former home. Perhaps he learned the way to America or Australia. But at dawn of three of the parties to the last, tired of remaining away, he had concluded to pay a visit to his home in Switzerland and grandchildren. As to the fourth man, taken a path familiar to him that William Brown, who had been unmarried, would lead him down to this house, the trustee could learn nothing about greater mystery. I can only account for it in this way. He was not a ten cent man, and when sent to prison spent the habit of drink had already fastened itself upon him. Probably, after the deed of trust Ellison called a meeting of all the descendants of the four men who had owned the property he had been able to reach. Twelve persons attended and nine responded by letter. Having got all the information he could from those who were present including their ages, Ellison She had always been a favorite with the others and although he had opposed her second marriage on the ground that his age would turn up, as the years went on he had heard of her now had by without any word from him the old man, addresses and ages of twenty-man admitted that it was as well that she had married Fritz.

The narrator paused at this point, but presently continued:

"You are the first person to whom I have imparted this secret, and I have imparted it to you with an object. I have at times been disturbed with an uneasy conscience as to whether I should have acted as I did upon the discovery of Gustav's body. I have told you the story that I might ask you whether I did right or whether I did wrong."

"That," I replied, "is a matter of opinion. I can only assure you that had I been in your place I would have done exactly as you did."

"Should I not have told Pfeiffer my secret?"

"You would have settled his mind as to his son being dead. But through him you might have revealed the truth to those who would better not know it."

The speaker grasped my hand and drew a long sigh of relief.

A Vacant Lot

It Remained For Thirty Years Without an Owner

By MARJORIE CLOUGH

More than fifty years ago, when the city of Chicago was springing up out of the prairie—or, rather, out of the mud—there were dwellings right in the region which is now occupied solely for business purposes. And right in among some of these dwellings was a lot on which the owner proposed to erect a store building. Those who owned homes in the vicinity objected to a store building being erected near them and clubbed together to buy the lot. The owner asked the exorbitant price of \$1,200, but it was thought best to buy it and keep the neighborhood free from what would mar it for residences.

There were four persons who clipped in to buy the property, but, since one owner was deemed more advisable than four, three of them proposed to play a game of freecost poker, the winner to receive a deed for the lot. But one of the four, being a deacon in the church and averse to card playing, suggested that they make over the lot to a trustee, to be deeded to the oldest grandchild of any one of the owners fifty years from the day the trust was made. The men were all between the ages of twenty-seven and forty years, and no one of them had a grandchild. One was not even married. Nevertheless, he assented to the plan; the document was drawn up and signed and placed in the hands of the trustee.

In ten years from that time two of the men interested in the lot were dead. The dwellings in the district where the property stood were much run down, being occupied for saloons and small shops. In ten years more the other two owners had passed away and the trustee as well, and a successor had been appointed by the court. The immediate vicinity of the lot had been steadily deteriorating and was now the worst location in the city. But handsome office buildings were being erected two or three blocks distant. Since it was probable that that part of the city would eventually become valuable, the adjoining property was now held at a high figure. Inquiries were made for the lot in question, but it soon came to be known that there was a reason why it could not be sold, and in time it was dropped out as a possible purchase.

When forty-nine of the fifty years of the trust had passed Edward Ellison, the man who held the trusteeship at that time, one day, looking over some papers in his safe, came upon the deed of trust and saw that in about a year from that time it would be his duty to turn over the lot mentioned in the deed to the oldest grandchild of any one of the men who had made the deed. It therefore behooved him to take measures to discover the person entitled to the property.

The first step he took in the matter was to learn the value of the lot, and he found that in the opinions of real estate men it was valued at two or three hundred thousand dollars. He next made inquiries as to the descendants of the original owners of the property and found that while one family had remained in Chicago the others had drifted to other places. He found also that none of them knew of the lot in question, and he deemed it advisable to say nothing about it until he had learned to whom the law would command him to deed it. He succeeded in learning the whereabouts of the children of three of the parties to the trust, and he had agreement, and there were eleven in all, to pay a visit to his home in Chicago and grandchildren. As to the fourth man, taken a path familiar to him that William Brown, who had been unmarried, would lead him down to this house, the trustee could learn nothing about greater mystery. I can only account for it in this way. He was not a ten cent man, and when sent to prison spent the habit of drink had already fastened itself upon him. Probably, after the deed of trust Ellison called a meeting of all the descendants of the four men who had owned the property he had been able to reach. Twelve persons attended and nine responded by letter. Having got all the information he could from those who were present including their ages, Ellison She had always been a favorite with the others and although he had opposed her second marriage on the ground that his age would turn up, as the years went on he had heard of her now had by without any word from him the old man, addresses and ages of twenty-man admitted that it was as well that she had married Fritz.

However, a week before the fifty-year period expired Ellison had moved down the probable ownership to one person, Edith Moore, a girl of nineteen, the oldest daughter of one of the four original owners of the lot. The trustee had proof that she was the rightful owner unless the unmarried member of the quartet had married and had left a grandchild older than Miss Moore.

Edith Moore was an orphan in very poor circumstances. She lived in Chicago and was endeavoring to support herself and her younger brothers and sisters by her needle. Ellison did not like to inform her that she was probably heir to a fortune until he felt warranted in turning it over to her. But the matter by this time had become generally known, and she heard of it through others. This was unfortunate, for until it was definitely proved that she was the fourth man of the quartet had left

no grandchildren the trustee could not deliver the property.

One day Edith Moore received a note from a Mrs. Brown, a lady living on one of the dwelling avenues of Chicago, stating that she had been recommended for a seamstress and offering her an engagement that might extend over some time. Edith had heard of her probable heirship, but since there was many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip she made no change whatever in her style of living. She therefore called on Mrs. Brown and was engaged to come to the house every day to sew.

Mrs. Brown was a widow, with one son, a young man of twenty-three, the two having recently come from Colorado Springs, where they had been living. They seemed to have the means to live handsomely, and the son had been educated for a physician. He had located in Chicago to take up the practice of his profession. Mrs. Brown was a motherly person and treated Edith as a companion as well as a hireling. It was not long before Edith told the lady of the position she occupied as a probable heiress and of her suspense lest another should be found who was entitled to the property.

Mrs. Brown listened to the story with evident interest and said what she could to give the girl hope that she would receive the inheritance. Meanwhile she often invited Edith to remain for dinner and for the evening. In this way David Brown, the son, came to know Edith and offered her the same sympathy as his mother concerning the fortune she hoped for. As time went on the girl became more and more necessary to Mrs. Brown's comfort, and by and by Edith noticed that occasionally when she had been invited to spend an evening in the house the hostess, pleading indisposition, would leave her son and the seamstress together.

David Brown was sufficiently attractive to win most any girl not otherwise interested, and he had very little trouble in attracting Edith to himself. The girl was puzzled, for the Browns seemed to have plenty of money and would hardly want to get her into the family for her fortune, even if she possessed it, which she did not and quite possibly would not. But matters concerning the lot finally came to a crisis by a note Edith received from Mr. Ellison stating that he had learned that the unmarried member of the owners of the lot had married and had one or more children. But he did not know if either of the children was living.

This was a bitter disappointment to Edith, but she went to her work at Mrs. Brown's as usual, and so great was her self control that she had been in the house an hour before Mrs. Brown asked her if anything unfortunate had happened to her. Then she told the lady of the information she had received.

Mrs. Brown embraced her, saying at the same time that she was a wonder to be able to keep up under such a setback and that evening kept her for dinner. David Brown on learning of the information she had received was also sympathetic and when left alone with her by his mother was more lenient than usual. This was a great comfort to Edith, since it indicated that she was not courted for her expectations.

Then came another note from the trustee informing Edith that he had received more definite information that Parkinson had been married soon after the trust deed had been executed and had had two children born to him and that the oldest of these children was living.

Edith found it impossible to bear this blow with the same fortitude as before, and arriving at the house where she worked, finding the widow and her son together, on communicating the news to them she burst into tears. The mother put her arms about her and soothed her, then left her with David. Taking her hand, he said to her:

"I have a story to tell you. My mother and I while living in Colorado heard of this vacant lot and, having known of it from my father, concluded to come east and look into the matter. I being the grandson of one of the unkers of the trust deed. Besides, I desired to settle here to practice my profession. My mother, having investigated the matter of the lot and heard that you were expecting to be the owner of it, in order to learn something of you brought you here to see me. But before doing so she had proved my claim to the lot. She did not tell me who you were till you had been here some time, having taken a fancy for you and being desirous to give you an interest in the property through me. In this she was swayed by your love. My father was interested in land, being in Colorado and left us a fortune. On receiving this lot I shall at once deed it to you. And if you will at the same time deed yourself to me you will make me a happy man."

Edith sat looking at the man who had revealed this little plot to her with such astonishment to reply at once. Had he not come to love her possibly he might have estimated somewhat correctly the emotions under which she was moved. With lover-like impatience he expected her to see at once what he had been planning for months and interpreted what he saw in her expression for an inability to surrender her heart with herself.

"I am disappointed," he said. "My mother and I, having already all the income we need, simply brought you into our home to learn if you were worthy, and if you were we intended to offer to resign this additional fortune to you. Then I discovered that I wanted you, I needed you, and I was in hopes that—"

She interrupted him, but not with words. There were no words to express what she felt. He caught her in his arms.

MRS. PRINGLE'S INCUBATOR

It Was a Questionable Success

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Mrs. Pringle found the advertisement in the pages of her favorite magazine, and after she had read it carefully for the third time her great idea came. Times were rather hard with the Pringles. Mr. Pringle, the wage earner of the family, had been sick for three weeks, and he had suffered a consequent loss of salary, while his expenses had gone relentlessly on, with the addition of doctor's fees and bills for medicine. Now he was back at his desk in the insurance office, and his little wife raked her brains to think of some way to earn money and thus help George out of his financial difficulties.

Then she saw the advertisement, and the great idea came to her. She put on her hat and went directly to the savings bank. Then she went home and wrote a letter.

The Pringles lived in an apartment in New York, and, besides a parlor, dining room, kitchen and two bedrooms, the architect had allotted them an extra room, small and cubbyhole, with one window opening on an air-shaft. This room Mrs. Pringle had used for a wardrobe, but in the zeal of her new endeavor she now packed her pretty gowns into all sorts of impossible places and had Mary, the maid, scrub the cubbyhole and wash the one window.

"You're laying yourself liable, ma'am," warned the expressman gloomily, when the great idea had materialized in the form of a huge express crate. "Liable to what?" Mrs. Pringle had demanded, with her haughtiest air, at the same time forgetting to remind the man that he had not given her 30 cents change.

"Nothing, ma'am," said the man hastily, and he disappeared as if afraid to get away from the fourth floor of the Myona apartments.

"I suppose he thinks I forgot that 50 cents," smiled Mrs. Pringle triumphantly as she called Mary to help her carry the crate into the cubbyhole. "For the love of him, mum, whatever have you here?" gasped that handmaiden as the crate dropped from her fingers.

"It's an incubator, Mary," said her mistress impressively.

"An incubator? And whatever would you be doin' with it here?"

"Raisin' chickens," explained Mrs. Pringle.

"Chickens! Maybe you'll be keepin' a cow, too, mum, and a bit of a pig," suggested Mary with irony.

"That will do, Mary," said her mistress severely. "I am taking you into my confidence because I want your help in this matter, and I want to keep it a secret from Mr. Pringle until it proves itself a success. I've bought several books on chicken raising, and I know them by heart. I've bought eight dozen eggs of White Leghorns fowls—you know they are very small and just the thing for an apartment house incubator; I have a brooder ordered, too, and when the chicks are hatched the brooder will hover them like a mother hen."

"Seems like them chicks oughter have a night of God's blessed sunshine, mum," commented Mary as she dragged the remnants of the crate away.

"The sun shines directly down the skylight at noon, Mary, and they will have some then; but, you see, being incubator chicks, they probably do not require sunshine. I should think electric light would do very well."

"Humph!" snorted Mary from the kitchen.

"Mary," called her mistress a little later.

"Yes, mum," responded Mary.

"Do you remember that blue velvet suit I had last winter?"

"And winter before last," added Mary guardedly.

"Of course, though it's almost as good as new this minute."

"Except for the skirt being cut too wide for this season's style," corrected Mrs. Pringle, standing pudgy and fat faced in the doorway.

"I was thinking of giving it to the laundress, Mary. She's about the right rumpus' around when they raised every apartment in the house a lookin' for chickens, so?"

"H'm!" commented Mr. Pringle.

"Then they come here!" cried Mary tragically. "And they sniffed and they smelled and they poked and they discovered the mistress' poor little secret she was a kaplin' from yes so swate, so?"

"What secret?" asked Mr. Pringle, with a premonition of coming evil.

"The little brilers she was a raisin' fer to make up to yez the loss from yer sickness, so?" said Mary tearfully.

"'Twas a grand secret and swate as her to think of it all by herself. Yes, so; they took away the incubator and the brooder and all the little chick-peepin' mournful-like. They made us swape up the mess on the floor, and they sprinkled their disinfectant stuff till we're most dead with it all!"—and Mary wagged her head gloomily.

"I wonder who could have been so mean as to have told on me!" sobbed Mrs. Pringle on his bosom.

"I wonder!" repeated Mr. Pringle, winking solemnly at his recollection of the affair.

bag only added to its attractiveness in the eyes of mistress and maid. All day long the little mump at the end of the machine burned steadily and gave forth a sickening odor that at last attracted the attention of Mr. Pringle.

"What is that smell, Irene?" he asked one night at dinner.

Mrs. Pringle's innocent nose sniffed the air. "It's the vanilla sauce Mary has made for the pudding," she declared.

Mr. Pringle shook his head doubtfully. "Smells like a kerosene lamp. Didn't know we had one in the shed-bag."

"Why should we burn horrid kerosene when we have these lovely electric lights?" demanded Mrs. Pringle deceitfully.

"Never mind, Irene; we can't expect everything's going to be perturbed with violet in a thirty dollar hat."

"How long will it take you to get ready?" asked her husband suddenly, looking at his watch.

"Fifteen minutes," said Mrs. Pringle, for they were going to the theater. "Get my clothes out of the wardrobe, will you, dear?" he requested.

When the Pringles returned from the theater Mary admitted them. Her eyes wore a startled look, and she beckoned mysteriously to her mistress, who followed her into the kitchen.

"What is the matter, Mary?" she asked.

Mary pointed a finger at the door of the cubbyhole. "Some of them chickens is hatchin' out, mum, and what are we to do with Mr. Pringle, mum?"

Fate solved that question almost as she spoke, for there came the shrill scream of fire engines and a rumble and tearing down the street with a sudden pause.

"It's on the next block, I'm off, Irene; don't sit up for me, dear," yelled her husband as he dashed out of the room.

"Let us go in at once, Mary. I had forgotten how the days were slipping by and that it was time to expect the chickens. Won't George be surprised?"

"Indade and he will, mum," agreed Mary dryly.

They entered the cubbyhole and assisted seven anxious chicks into the world. The brooder was waiting and hovered them protectively.

"Isn't it soo lovely for anything, mum?" cried Mrs. Pringle delightedly as she examined the other eggs carefully. "I believe these others will be out in the morning. I do hope their peeping will not arouse George's wail plops."

Several days elapsed before Mr. Pringle's suspicions were aroused, and then he said nothing to his wife. He was a man of action, and he knew just what steps to take in such matters as this one. He went directly to the offices of the board of health.

"I live in the Myona apartments," he explained to the official who met him. "I'm dead sure somebody in that house is runnin' an incubator."

"An incubator? Do you mean a baby incubator or a chicken incubator?" asked the man skeptically.

"A chicken incubator. You can't fool me, sir. Why, when I was a boy I raised more chickens than you than you can remember to have seen all your life. I know the smell of the wretched kerosene lamp; I recognize the atmosphere of the brooder, and I have heard the peeping of the chicks."

"Whom do you suspect?" asked the official.

"I don't know; I leave that for you to find out," returned Mr. Pringle rather tartly. "I'm furnishing you the baby mattress, and I thought perhaps you could do the rest."

"I'll send an inspector around," promised the official, and he at once took down the name of the complainant.

Mr. Pringle proceeded on his way to business and thought no more about the matter until he reached his flat that evening.

There he found Mrs. Pringle suffering from a severe attack of "nerve," while Mary hovered sympathetically in the background. There was a strong smell of disinfectant in the air.

"What's the matter? Are you sick, Irene? What is it, Mary?" Mr. Pringle fired off these questions all at once as he tossed aside his hat and knelt beside his wife.

But Mrs. Pringle could only moan pitifully and refuse all explanation or solace.

"Tell me what has happened, Mary," he commanded.

"Shure, 'twas the board of hilt as raided the buildin', sorr. It seems some black hearted traitor ran and tattled to the board of hilt that somebody was a-keepin' of chickens in this house, and so it come noon and there was a great rumpus' around when they raided every apartment in the house a-lookin' for chickens, so?"

"H'm!" commented Mr. Pringle.

"Then they come here!" cried Mary tragically. "And they sniffed and they smelled and they poked and they discovered the mistress' poor little secret she was a kaplin' from yez so swate, so?"

"What secret?" asked Mr. Pringle, with a premonition of coming evil.

"The little brilers she was a raisin' fer to make up to yez the loss from yer sickness, so?" said Mary tearfully.

"'Twas a grand secret and swate as her to think of it all by herself. Yes, so; they took away the incubator and the brooder and all the little chick-peepin' mournful-like. They made us swape up the mess on the floor, and they sprinkled their disinfectant stuff till we're most dead with it all!"—and Mary wagged her head gloomily.

"I wonder who could have been so mean as to have told on me!" sobbed Mrs. Pringle on his bosom.

"I wonder!" repeated Mr. Pringle, winking solemnly at his recollection of the affair.