

Chapter 11

In 1904 Hal and Sydney moved from Farnham to Underriver House near Sevenoaks, a large eighteenth century ragstone building set in a park like landscape in the Kentish weald and which they rented.

There were seven gardeners and their headman was a Mr Bowers who had been born and brought up at Weobley. He later inherited the family farm in Herefordshire and Martha Crowhurst, the head housemaid at Underriver, visited him at Weobley at which time she was taken over to Garnstone in a pony trap and also visited the church. The staff appeared to have enjoyed themselves in those prewar days; there was always a large barrel of beer in the cellars kept specifically for their use and the postman was given a pint on his afternoon round. The footman had a gramophone player and excellent parties took place below stairs.



Underriver House near Sevenoaks in Kent where Hal and Sydney moved around 1903

Leila at this time lived in London with her daughter Winnie and it seems to have been a reasonably harmonious relationship notwithstanding their respective strong characters and somewhat short tempers. When she visited Hal and Sydney at Underriver, Leila had her own special green bedroom and in the morning would have breakfast in bed. She always insisted her silver teapot and cutlery were arranged in the correct position on the tray.

She had ceased to play the harp long ago although according to Martha Crowhurst there was a large "photo of her doing so by the door of the dining room". (more likely the oil portrait of her from Garnstone) Hal always kept her beautiful harp by Erard in the corner of his drawing room where it was later played with by his grandson.

Although Hal and Sydney were so completely different, their home life was for the most part a very happy one and typified the golden afternoon of country house life before the first World War.

Hal enjoyed his food and employed a first rate cook called Mrs Deck whom he called 'the best in the country' and she made wonderful ice creams. He had inherited the Metcalfe passion for punctuality and would ring the meal gong with minute observance to the second hand on his watch. It therefore annoyed him intensely when Sydney (whom he called Doodles) would turn up late from her walk closely followed by her two Pekinese dogs.

Meanwhile Fitz spent a year long sojourn in the Klondike at which point the famous Gold Rush came to an abrupt end after more accessible gold was discovered at Nome in Alaska and

everybody quickly relocated. He re-settled in New York where he resumed his occupation as a sculptor as reported by the New York Times:

'The sale of Garntone Castle, in Herefordshire, the seat of the Peploe family, will be of interest here. Fitzgerald Peploe, a member of the family, was well known in society here and in Newport at one time. He was a sculptor, and was a member of that set in which Miss Louise Ward Mcallister and Mrs Gen. Burnett are leaders. Mr Peploe disappeared from his usual haunts about a year ago and is said to have gone to the Klondike. He was engaged at one time to Miss Annie Duryea. Garnstone is a fine castellated mansion, built of stone, and has a fine picture gallery and some wonderful oak work. It formerly belonged to Colonel John Birch, the son of Col Birch, one of Cromwell's most successful officers. It passed by collateral inheritance to the Peploe family.'

He continued to enjoy playing pranks on his friends as an article in a New York newspaper of April 1900 reports:

- Victim of a joke sent to Europe
- Shipped away in a straight jacket by friends
- Taken from Dinner party
- drives, helpless in an ambulance about New York Streets
- carried on a stretcher aboard the Oceanis

New York, April 19th – Out on the bounding billows somewhere, a young man is trying to explain to the officers of the steam ship Oceanic, which sailed from this port yesterday morning, the reason why he should be separated from a coating of bandages and ropes which adorned him when he was carried aboard the ship. Perhaps he is loose, but the chances are against it, for the officers were warned before the ship sailed that the young man was dangerous and would do himself and others harm if allowed at large.

Jackson Gouraud is the name of the young man, and he enjoys the distinction, although he is in perfect health of having reached the White Star pier in an ambulance. As a matter of fact it was because of his oppressive health that he got around in an ambulance instead of a cab. Our Mr Gouraud is the victim of one of the best practical jokes ever played in this town.

He was giving a farewell dinner Tuesday night before sailing for Europe to a few of his most intimate friends. Representatives of the University, Racquet, Players, Strollers and other clubs were present for Mr Gouraud is a bright and shining light in the circles of "men about town". All through the dinner he boasted of his superb health and gave vent to expression to wonder at himself for taking a trip to Europe.

Dr J Douglas Brown of the Board of Health, one of the guests, was insistent in his proclamation that young Mr Gouraud was a very sick man. In this he was backed up by Fitzgerald Peploe, the Sculptor. These and others had formed a deep, dark brown conspiracy.

In the midst of an oration by Mr Gouraud about the freedom of his stomach from rust scales and other evidences of the use of impure water, the door was suddenly opened and a burly person, wearing a red cross uniform, entered the dining room. With a unanimous Whoop, Mr Gouraud's guests descended on him, and almost before he knew it he was bound had and foot on the floor and swathed in bandages from his head to his feet.

More or less tenderly – more less than more – he was put on a stretcher and carried out to an ambulance in front of the house. It was an exceedingly passé ambulance, that had been long since relegated to the ambulance bone yard, but there was a team of ginger laden horses hitched to it and a ginger laden crew to man it.

Sculptor Peploe climbed to the driver's seat, Dr Brown stood on the back step and the other deposited themselves on the form of the healthy Gouraud, who was bellowing like a man aroused by an alarm of fire in a strange hotel. Peploe slammed the horses with a whip, clanged the bell until the sound echoed for blocks and away started the ambulance.

Policeman let it go, believing it to be a hurry call, an impression that was strengthened by the sound of the vociferations of Gouraud. Cabs were held up, cable cars were stopped, pedestrians were scared half out of their wits and corners were turned on two wheels, Gouraud all the time

keeping up his lamentations. Up town, downtown and across town went the flying ambulance, while all the occupants but Gouraud shrieked with glee.

After a time the jokers became afflicted with a great thirst. They stopped at a hotel near Washington Square, got out the stretcher and bore Gouraud to an easy position on the floor of the bar room. Then they proceeded to drink wine, the while he howled until his face was blue and his tongue stuck out almost a foot. After a grave consultation Dr Brown decided that champagne would aggravate Gouraud's complaint, so he was carried back to the ambulance.

Numerous stops of this nature were made and the night wore on, Gouraud occasionally being allowed to sip a teaspoonful of wine.

In the grey, cold dawn, the ambulance, manned by young men in evening dress drove on to the White Star line pier and Gouraud was reverently carried to his stateroom amid the wondering exclamations of the officers and the crew.

The time elapsing before the ship sailed was spent by the conspirators in impressing on the officers the necessity of keeping Gouraud tied up all the way across. As the bell rang, ordering all on shore, they tenderly left him, tied to his bunk, weeping with impotent rage and absolutely speechless.

"We guess", said the crowd in chorus, as the ship sailed away, "that Jackson is not too healthy to take a sea trip now."

On November 10th 1901 the Brooklyn Times reported a less happy event when Fitz's cleaning lady succeeded in killing herself in his apartment:

Toppled over a Balustrade

Charwoman killed by falling down a stairway well and through a skylight

Mrs Theresa Henning, 45 years old, who lived at 102 West Fifty-sixth street, Manhattan, was killed last evening in the building at 74 West fifty fifth street, where she was employed as cleaner. She was dusting a balustrade on the second floor when she toppled over and fell to the ground floor. Her skull was fractured and a surgeon who examined the body after she was discovered, said that she had been killed instantly.

The ground floor is a stable and the two upper floors are occupied by Fitzgerald Peploe, an artist. There is a glass skylight over the stable and when the woman fell she crashed through it.

Mr Peploe found the woman. He had not seen her about for some time during the afternoon and discovered her dead after a search. There was nobody in the stable when the woman fell.

Fitz was a member of the Lambs Theatrical Club and as a result obtained various commissions from people connected with the stage. Both he and Hal loved the theatre and also enjoyed acting when given the opportunity. In 1902 Fitz sculpted a bust of the famous New York comic William deWolf Hopper (1858-1935) and it can still be seen in the Museum of The Lambs Theatrical Club of New York. The same year he travelled to England and on his return he commenced a bust of Haddon Chambers, an Australian actor who later became a playwright and friend of Nellie Melba. Not everything went according to plan as reported by the New York Herald on November 16th 1902:

- Haddon Chambers slashed by a sword
- English Playwright narrowly escapes losing one of his eyes
- His friend frightened
- Fitzgerald Peploe, a sculptor, was playfully swinging an East Indian Trophy in a Physician's office.

While displaying feats of swordsmanship with an East Indian Weapon, which he had picked out from among a lot of trophies on the wall of a Doctor's office, Fitzgerald Peploe, a sculptor, came very near putting an end to the career of C Haddon Chambers, the English Playwright.

As it is Mr Chambers is congratulating himself upon his narrow escape from a fatal injury. A plaster strip on his left cheek hides a slanting cut, four inches long, extending from his eye to the tip of his nose, which, he received from the point of the sword in the hand of his friend.

"I expect the cut to heal soon," said Mr Chambers yesterday, "and luckily, I am told it will not leave a scar. But it is a wonder that I didn't lose my eye. Mr Peploe is such a big athletic fellow and he expends a good deal of force in whatever he does"

"He was merely trifling with that sword, but his lunges were terrific, and if the flat blade of the weapon had not struck me the edge of the sword would have gone right through me."

Mr Peploe, in his studio and No 74 ½ West Fifty Fourth Street, is modelling a bust of Mr Chambers, which is to be cast in bronze and placed in the new gallery of the Academy, in London. After the sitting the sculptor and the playwright sauntered down to the home of Dr George A. Richards at No 41, West Fourth Fourth Street.

On the walls of his consulting room Dr Richards has a lot of East Indian Trophies among them two crossed swords. While Mr Chambers was speaking to the Doctor, Mr Peploe began amusing himself with one of the swords, which he took down from the wall.

Mr Chambers, unaware of this friend's actions, turned around quite suddenly, and the flat blade struck him on the cheek, with a force sufficient to knock him down.

Mr Peploe was almost overcome for a moment, as he saw the wound on Mr Chambers's face. "Don't say I've put out your eye" he cried.

When Mr Chambers was got on his feet, he saw that the flat blade of the sword had swerved slightly and inflicted a long cut. The wound was not serious, but as the sword was quite rusty, Dr Richards carefully washed it with an antiseptic solution. It is thought the playwright will experience no further discomfort than wearing a strip of plaster on his face for the next few days.

The following year Fitz was commissioned to make a bust of the New York socialite Harry Lehr (1869-1929). From The Inter Ocean of 27th April 1903:

HARRY LEHR- COURT JESTER. Accomplishments which have won him fame in Society. Every court has its fool. Newport is no exception.

'Mr. Lehr has appeared in evening gowns, and his neck and shoulders are said to be of rare symmetry and whiteness. The beautiful curves, - the four dimples in the back, the flawless throat and bust, have been much admired, and Mr. Lehr has consented to have them executed in bronze, so that future generations may gaze upon them. This is Mr. Lehr's latest. It is no Jest. It is sober, serious reality - Mr. Lehr has decided to have his head and shoulders sculptured in bronze: and he has engaged Mr. Fitzgerald Peploe, a famous sculptor to make the bust. One life-size cast will be made. No more. This cast will adorn the Lehr home at Newport. The artist has been at work on the model for some weeks, and it is said by those who have seen it to be a faithful and artistic reproduction. "There isn't the sign of a muscle in Mr. Lehr's body." Mr. Peploe is reported to have said. "The development of his neck and shoulders is utterly unlike anything I ever saw in a man. The general outline is strikingly feminine. Even the collar bones are covered. His shoulders are rounded off and his arms are plump and beautifully symmetrical, but without a sign of a muscle.' His neck is a round white column and he hasn't even an Adam's apple." "Not- long ago he was late in keeping an engagement. His explanation was characteristic. - "I took a walk this morning, and when I returned home I discovered a muscle in my leg. It was a shock. Any man can develop muscle, it takes a genius like me to send for a masseur and have it rubbed out." Mr. Lehr is highly talented. No man since the days of the first anthropoid arrived has shown such a varied assortment of tomfooleries. He stands supreme. It is quite proper that he should be sculptured in an enduring effigy, for he deserves it. It is also highly appropriate that this effigy should be of solid brass. And when future generations uncover this work of art, they will reverently ask in the language of "the doctor" "Is this the first time this gentleman was ever" on a bust?"

The bust was still be talked about 30 years later - from the Kansas City Star 21st Jan 1929:

'When Mr. Lehr decided that his girlishly lovely shoulders should be perpetuated in bronze, his wife went with him to the sculptor, Fitzgerald Peploe, and pleaded for an exact reproduction of Harry's shoulder dimples. Mr. Lehr wanted to be portrayed from the waist up, but the sculptor explained this would be a violation of artistic rules, and he had to be content with a mere bust. When finished, the likeness was declared perfect and it was cast in bronze, with many miniature bronze replicas for the sitter's friends.'

However it is not clear that Fitz ever completed this bust as after his death his attorney and friend Robertson Honey wrote to Hal from New York:



“I have had several communications with Harry Lehr relative to the bust of him that Fitz made some four or five years ago. I always thought that Fitz had sent the bust to him, in accordance with my advice, and I have some sort of an impression in my mind that Fitz told me he had done so, but the impression is very vague and dim, and is offset by Lehr’s statement that the bust was never sent. Lehr tells me that if I can find it, he will pay me a fair price for it, and I am doing what I can to locate it, although I have my doubts as to my success. “

Fitz was also a member of the New York Racquets club and received a commission from them to sculpt a statue which can still be seen in the Foyer of their New York club house. It depicts a racquets player and was illustrated in *The Book of Sport* of 1901 as a line drawing.

About this time he was commissioned by Tiffany’s to sculpt ‘Despair’ - a statue of a nude recombined figure in silver, and ‘The Volunteer’ - a standing Spanish American Civil War soldier 24” high.

‘Mr Peplow, who is perhaps better known in Paris than in London, has just finished a striking

full length statue of one of Colonel Roosevelt’s rough riders, Trooper Tiffany, who was killed in the operations in Cuba in the war of two years ago.’

Sometime around 1904 Fitz appears to have had a heart attack and went to a friend’s house at Purchase north of New York in the hope of regaining his health by a course of outdoor treatment. A weak heart seems to have been congenital in the family at this time and it may not have been helped by the heavy drinking which family legend suggests Fitz indulged in. Never the less he was a very active person and it must have been a terrible shock to the family when he died soon after Christmas in 1906. From the *New York Times* of February 11th 1906:

‘The death was also announced of Fitzgerald Peplow, the sculptor, who some years ago was a well-known figure in New York Society. He was a bachelor and gave several enjoyable entertainments at his studio.’

‘Fitzgerald Cornwall Peplow, an English Sculptor who had lived in this country for twenty-two years, died last Tuesday at the country house of a friend, Purchase N.Y.. His New York studio was at 74 1/2 West Fifty-Fourth Street. His best known works were “The Goddess of Golf,” busts of Lady Randolph Churchill and Lady Dudley, and a full length statue of Lady Frederick Franklin. Many of his busts of prominent women in society are to be seen in the private art galleries of New York. He was 45 years old.’

It would appear Fitz had a quite exceptionally romantic streak - from the *Morning Telegraph* March 10th 1906:

'Another claim of the retiring florist is against the estate of the late Fitzgerald Cornwall Peploe, the sculptor. He ordered his bills sent to the Lambe Club, but the former flower merchant says that \$75 is still owed. All of Mr Peploe's floral offerings were at the shrines of stage beauties.

Fitz was one of the most interesting members of the family - as black sheep often are, and hopefully one day a photograph of him will materialise. It was said that he was involved at one time with the first enterprise to transport refrigerated beef from the Argentine but he was too early and those who came after him made a fortune.

Fitz's death must have aged Leila considerably as he appears to have been her favourite child. She was by now living in a flat at 156 Sloane Street with Winnie, and Gillian Nunn, the daughter of Sydney Peploe's cousin Ursula Hume could remember her well from this period. She always wore purple and her sharp bone structure about the eyebrows was a very characteristic Metcalfe feature. Gillian could remember one of Leila's Metcalfe nephews living in great style with a room completely lined in malachite.

In fact Ursula, who was a Marshall before her marriage and a bridesmaid to Hal and Sydney, came to live with the Peploes shortly after they moved to Underriver for her husband Colonel Charles Hume was serving abroad in the army and couldn't take care of his young family. The Marshall family home was situated beside Lake Windermere at Keswick, and they knew of uncle



Winifred Peploe from a painting by Cyril Roberts

Hanmer Webb-Peploe, the 'evangelical divine', who used to hold his famous Keswick Conventions at this time every summer, but rather disapproved owing to the huge amount of litter that was left by all the young Christian enthusiasts.

Hal built the Humes their own wing onto the back of the House and it was here that Rosemary Hume, the celebrated cook was born in 1907 - she went on to found the Cordon Bleu school of cookery with Constance Spry. Rosemary and her sister Gillian used to spy on Hal as he sat in his bath reading The Times on a reading stand especially for the purpose, and when Sydney died in 1957 their brother Rex wrote to Dan Peploe saying 'that his mother Ursula and Sydney had an astonishingly close rapport even when they were having one of their delicious arguments. He had also forgotten what a tiger Sydney's sister Audley was.'

Gillian could remember Hal telling her the story of the Weeping Eye on the Peploe crest. She also thought Keith less clever than his elder brother Dan, who was in addition considerably more highly



Cyril Roberts in his studio

strung. This was exacerbated by his experience during WW1, as he never took a blighty wound and so did not benefit from a sustained break like many soldiers.

The spring of 1909 saw Leila becoming increasingly feeble in her actions and many Metcalfe relations came to see her so it was no surprise when she died in May of that year. She was buried in Underriver Churchyard next to her youngest grandchild, Gerald.

Winnie at the age of 35 was now free to lead her own life. She is said to have been a good artist, although none of her work survives, and she earned herself a reputation for nurturing young artistic, literary and musical talent. She is supposed to have helped the young Margaret Rutherford as well as Gerald Moore, the piano accompanist, and the latter witnessed her will and so he may have lodged with the Roberts family for a while at their house - 76 Belgrave Road, SW1. She herself was an admirable opera singer and had performed as an amateur in Paris although her family never allowed her to sing professionally. By 1909 she was already a very large woman, both in height and stature. She blamed the later on her opera singing although it is more likely she suffered from a tendency for obesity inherited from both sides of her family.

She had known the pastel and watercolour artist, Cyril Roberts, for some years before her mother's death - he had exhibited a painting of her in 1903, and they were married in 1911 at Holy Trinity, Sloane street. Uncle Bobs, as he was called by the family, became quite famous in his day and his subjects included H.R.H. Prince George and the children of Rupert Brook. His father had been an eminent surgeon living in Uxbridge, but the young Cyril Roberts had broken with family tradition by going to the Royal College of Art in 1889. From there he had proceeded to the Slade where he had studied under the legendary Professor Tonks. He loved acting, as well as boating and tennis, and so fitted in well at Underriver House where Hal used to organise home theatricals.

It was rumoured that Uncle Bobs had some Jewish blood in him as he had a long rather hooked nose and he was extremely proud of his profile. His blue eyes and big forehead combined to give him a somewhat distinctive appearance. Unfortunately he was terribly short and it is said Winnie completely dominated him. Everybody loved Uncle Bobs, he was such a kindly and jovial man. In later years he had works in many prominent exhibitions including the Royal Academy and he became secretary of the society for British Artists.

In 1901 Sydney's mother Elinor had had a stroke whilst bending down to do up her shoe lace at 84 Eccleston Square, the Chapman family home, and she had died shortly after. She had been rather small but pretty and feminine looking according to her granddaughter Elinor Bullen Smith, the daughter of Sydney's younger sister Helene who had married Captain Archie Glen Kidston, the son of a very wealthy industrialist.

The Kidstons lived in a house at Hay on Wye called Gwernyfed Park, and it was here that Hal's son Dan acquired his first gun licence. In 1911 Spencer was visiting his daughter Helene at Gwernyfed when he fell in love with his grandchildren's governess who was called Odette. She was from a very humble family from Marseilles where her father ran a hotel, and was paid 25 shillings a week to teach Helene's children French. He decided to marry her and they had a son Spencer born the following year. Audrey, Fitzroy and Sydney were not at all pleased with the arrangement but Helene felt she was responsible and later did her best for the young Spencer. When Spencer died he left the lions share of his fortune to Odette and young Spencer.

Audrey was Sydney's youngest sister and she married late in life a kindly gentleman called Beresford Melville, known as Uncle Berry to the family, but he died shortly afterwards. In fact the cello was really her first love and she continued to live happily after his death at Nottingham Gate. According to her great nephew she rushed around London till a great age in an old banger and was supposed always to have had a dewdrop at the end of her nose.

Underriver House attracted an interesting crowd of people from the artistic and musical world at this time and Sydney, who could not play herself, enjoyed holding musical soirees. She was very good friends with the Harrison sisters who frequently sang on the radio between the wars as The Nightingales. Leila's harp was eventually given to May Harrison who found a young student to appreciate it.

Hal's Campbell cousins (related through the Metcalfe family) were always visiting Underriver House and Nina Campbell, the wife of Sir Guy Campbell, was Sydney's greatest friend, she is supposed to have had an infectious and crackly laugh. The Chapmans often came too; Sydney's brother, Fitzroy, married in 1911 Audley Thursby-Pelham, but it was not a happy marriage and she used to take advantage of him.

In later years Hal became very overweight, suffered badly from short breath and he developed a huge blue and red nose. This was worsened by a somewhat short temper inherited from both sides of the family and it is said he did not suffer fools gladly. However he showed considerable self control despite his habit of tapping the arm of his chair when irritated.

Hal enjoyed intellectual activities; reading, the Times Crossword and particularly playing bridge, a favourite expression of his being 'Pane tostato' - hot toast or a risky card, probably picked up from his days in Florence. One of the Campbell cousins remembered him getting so exasperated with her slow play that his false teeth shot out. He would spend his holidays taking the cure at Llandrindod Wells playing bridge, whilst Sydney travelled around the country visiting relations.

Both Hal and Sydney took their responsibilities towards their neighbourhood very seriously. He was on the executive committee of the Sevenoaks and Holmesdale Hospital and acted as treasurer for the Underriver Village Hall, he showed the greatest enthusiasm over its building and provision and Uncle Bobs painted a fine watercolour to grace the interior. He enjoyed cricket and was president of the Underriver Cricket Club, in fact the cricket ground was one of his gifts to the parish. The church also claimed his attention and in his younger days he sang in the choir, read the lessons and he was also churchwarden for some years. He took an active interest in the founding of Knole Park Golf Course being its second Captain after Lord Sackville, and his grandson could remember Hal toppling, on account of his rather large corporation, head over heels down the steep pathway leading to hole number 4. Sydney involved herself in many women's organisations in the Sevenoaks area and was an enthusiastic suffragette. Hal jokingly referred to her as his 'wild one', quite prepared at any moment to head a crusade, and she was certainly very brave.

At Christmas time they held large parties for the local schoolchildren and Hal would go around wearing a party hat extinguishing any dangerous candles on the Christmas tree with a wet sponge - it was always considered a miracle the whole tree did not catch light.



Their two surviving boys, Dan and Keith, were both sent to St Peter's Court Prep School in Thanet, where Princes Henry and George, the two younger sons of George V were also educated. Keith went to Marlborough followed by Mr Moen's Down House at Rottingdean in preparation for University. He entered into residence at Trinity College, Cambridge in September 1913, but offered his service immediately war broke out, and went to Sandhurst in September 1914. Keith was his mother's favourite and took after her more in character. He had a quieter, more gentle nature than his brother, in fact the head housemaid at Underriver thought he was dull as he went everywhere with his mother and both enjoyed having picnics. He had a sensitive face and was both musical and artistic, the opposite to Dan who preferred ferreting, hunting and shooting. He was gazetted as a 2nd lieutenant on the 17th February 1915 and joined the 2nd battalion Oxford and Bucks in June of that year.



Dan and Keith Peploe at Sloane Street London in 1916

In late 1916 he was promoted temporary Captain but was killed while reconnoitring at night an advanced bomb position on the 10th November. His brother Dan was sent a letter by Keith's commanding officer:

11th November 1916

Dear Peploe

I am very sorry to say your brother was killed last night about 9.50pm in our front line trenches. Apparently he was on his way around soon after we had taken over the line, seeing his sentries. It

was a very bright moonlight night and while in a salient in the line must have been seen be a German sniper, who shot him. The bullet cut the large artery in his right thigh and he died almost immediately. His orderly who was with him at the time did his best to bandage him up and then went for help. He was buried this morning in the extension to the Commercial Cemetery at Mailly Maillet (Map ref sheet 57,D, S.W. - P6235).

He is a very great lose to the Regiment. he was given Command of B Company a short time ago and was the sort of officer the Regt can ill spare.

In the Mess he can never be replaced by another. he was always the very best of company and more than liked by every officer without exception. He was one of those who always tried to keep things going cheerfully under all circumstances and succeeded in doing so in a most splendid way. Personally I feel his death terribly. I first met him when he was in my company with the Reserve Battalion at Portsmouth early in 1915 and in consequence I considered him an old friend of whom there are very few left.

If you ever happen to be near the Regt I hope you will let us know or look us up. And if you want to have any more details I hope you will write to me and we will do our best. The commanding officer has written to his father already.

Yours sincerely

C. S. Raines

From Regimental log of the Oxford and Bucks Regiment:

'The relief began up 6th Avenue about 4 p.m. and was effected without incident. The day was very fine and sunny. The trenches were found to be, on account of the weather, in an appalling condition and in many places impassable, so that traffic was generally overland after dark. About 9.20 p.m. Captain Peploe was very badly wounded by a sniper (said to be lying out in No Mans Land) at quite short range in the leg near the thigh. This occurred while he was on his way to visit the Bombing Post on the north face of the Redan. He died a few minutes after being wounded while being brought in.'

Sydney was particularly devastated by losing her favourite son and almost immediately she and Hal gave up their lease on Underriver House, where so much of Keith's childhood had been passed, and settled permanently at their London home ,22 Sloane Gardens, S.W. for a year or so. Some years later she wrote to Dan's future mother-in-law about her grief at losing Keith:

22 Sloane Gardens S.W.

November 8th 1920

My dear Florence

Thank you from my very heart for your very kind thought of my and your tender sympathy - you have a most blessedly kind heart and I appreciate your dear thought for me more than I can tell you. Tomorrow November 9th is the actual date our beloved Keith's death and should I not rather say his entry into Life - 'a more abundant Life' - yes indeed 'with Christ it is far better', and I often think how much, how very much, he has been spared, but oh! it is the human longing or the actual bodily presence of those we love that is so hard to bear - and always I miss him so terribly and long or him to be with me - he was such a dear companion and so loving and thoughtful - that it is not possible not to feel the fearful void in ones life without him - but one would not call back if one could. Thursday will be a very poignant day for those whose dar ones lie in a nameless grave. I am so deeply thankful that we have been spared such a terrible sorrow as that and it was the greatest comfort to me to see his last resting place this summer - such a sweet peaceful spot. I think the Memorial that is being placed on all the graves in France is a most beautiful simple one and could not be bettered. This the very same as has been placed in Chelsea here in Sloane Square. I shall hope to make a yearly pilgrimage to where our dear son is laid and next time the turf growing green over his resting place for when I was there in May and on Ascension Day too, there was only the bare earth and the plain wooded crosses in long rows.

I am pleased that you enjoyed meeting the Allenbys and thought my cousin Mabel pretty and charming. She has always been rather a special cousin and we were great friends - rather the same age - when we were children. Their only child was killed at the age of 18 or 19. Her mother was a Miss Fletcher and was very handsome - even now a beautiful rather noble face. I am so glad the 2 D's (Sydney's son Dan and wife Dosithea) are with you and the change will do Dosithea much good. Poor dears, they seem to be again the the turmoils of domestic worries; it is really very hard especially when one is young and wants to be enjoying oneself and having a good time. We have been down to Sevenoaks for the weekend and I am very busy with the garden and Hal is to be away from London and gets as much golf and fresh air as he can - every weekend - so we go down each week and both thoroughly enjoy it and it has been so perfectly lovely - bright sunshine all the time. I am thankful to say that Hal is very much better for his cure - it really was a cure for had he not gone to Llandrindod when we did, and had he not carried out the doctors orders very strictly, he would have been really seriously ill, but he is feeling and indeed looking quite different - everyone says 10 years younger.

With much love and thanking you more than I can say in words for your lovely sympathy and for the beautiful prayers which I shall treasure.

Your affectionate
Sydney Peplow

p.s. I feel worried about our two and their domestic difficulties and Dosithea being alone at Blackhall during the long winter days when Dan is away. Can you suggest anything - would London for them be at all possible - a wee house of their own, I mean? Though London is far from being an ideal place nowadays - so crowded and difficult to get about but at least Dosithea would see plenty of people and not be alone at the worst time of the year, but then there is the expense. One does not know what to do for the best.

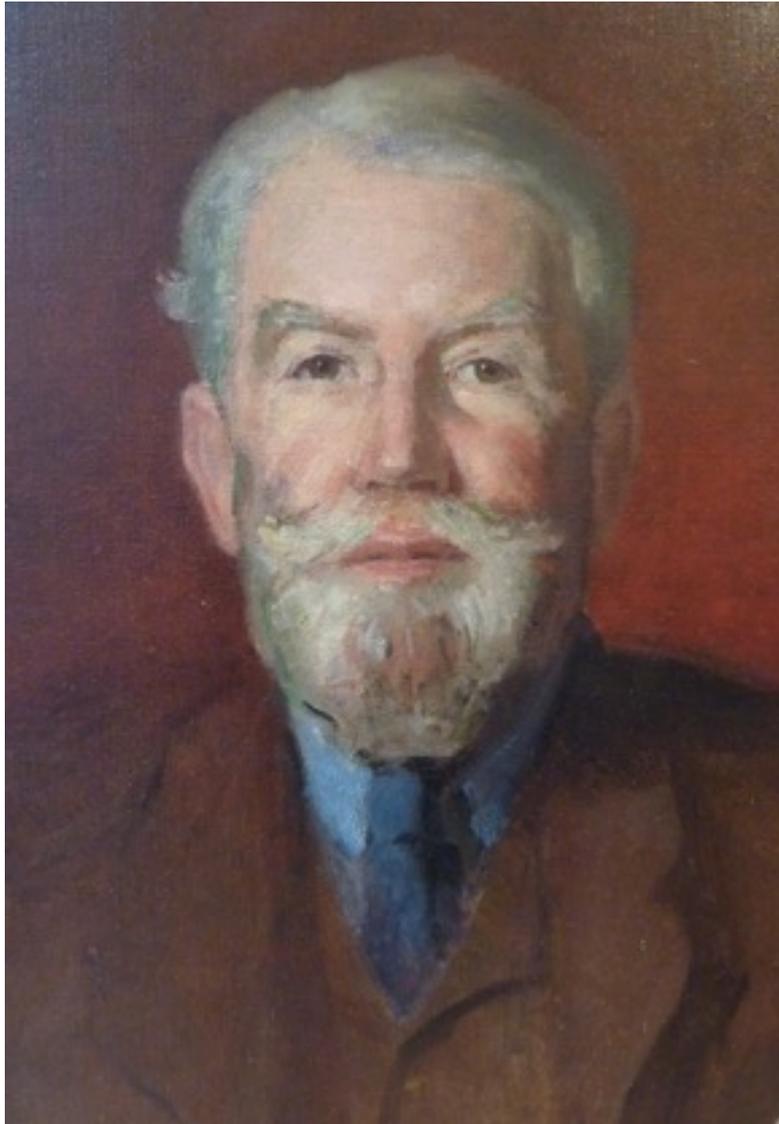
Dan went to Eton after St Peter's Court, and after leaving that school in the spring of 1910 obtained a commission in the 20th Hussars around September 1911. Actually he had been quite good at drawing at school but never really developed his facility preferring sport and more exciting pursuits. He had a much more extrovert character than Keith and enjoyed playing darts with the butler and footman at Underriver House, he also had a reputation for chatting up the local telephone receptionists.

He became an excellent golfer (he once 'reached the last eight of the English Amateur Championship) as well as a competent horseman, and entered a great many point to points on his horse Mystery whilst training with his regiment at Colchester in the prewar years. On the afternoon of Saturday the 15th August 1914 news leaked into the officer's mess of the 20th Hussars that the regiment was to leave Colchester the following day and Dan was to be the 2nd lieutenant in charge of B Squadron, 1st Troop. Two weeks later he fought at the battle of St Quentin and was responsible for guarding the left flank of his regiment. The greater part of 1915 he spent taking signal courses at Cavalry Headquarters in France.

By this time he had become engaged to Lady Dorothy Bligh, the only daughter of Ivo, 8th Earl of Darnley, who lived at Cobham Hall in Kent, one of the greatest of the Elizabethan mansions. Dorothy disliked the name given to her by her parents and at different times called herself Dosithea or Dolly.

The Blighs were renowned for their talents, both artistic and otherwise, and Dorothy's father had distinguished himself by originating the legend of the ashes, whilst captaining the English cricket team of 1882/83. Flo, his wife had been one of the Melbourne ladies who had presented him with the urn containing the ashes of the burnt bails from the winning match, and she had also been responsible for binding Ivo's hand after an injury from a cricket ball. Dorothy herself played golf very well and her peculiar rather vague way of playing the piano captivated all her listeners. She also drew well, but her mother had been disappointed her only daughter had't inherited better looks as both Dorothy's brothers were particularly handsome.

Dorothy was born at Southfields Grange on the 8th Feb 1893, she was later christened Dorothy Violet at Putney and both she and her mother had worn violets on the occasion. Her father, the Hon Ivo Bligh, was the second son on the 6th Earl of Darnley and had moved to the Grange at Putney



Ivo Bligh, 8th Earl of Darnley in old age.

after his marriage in 1884, it was a large house at the top of Putney Hill and had its own orchard and gardeners cottage.

In 1895 Dorothy went to Australia with her mother to see their cousins there but she was too young to remember any details of the trip. Her two brothers remained at Cobham and in after life they both retained gloomy memories of being shut up too long in the dark nursery during this period.

In 1900 Dorothy's uncle Edward died unexpectedly leaving Ivo Bligh as heir to the earldom. Uncle Edward had been uncertain in the mind and was prone to wild rages at which times he had had to be locked up; in fact there was a great deal of madness in the family and Ivo's sister Mary had intentionally drowned herself in the pond along the Cedar Walk in Cobham Park. The same year as Uncle Edward's death Dorothy and her family moved to Cobham Hall and she and her brother's lived in the central wing up the dark wooden staircase.

The first big event in Dorothy's life was the marriage of Clara Butt, the renowned Edwardian opera singer, to Kennerly Rumford at Bristol Cathedral in the summer of 1900. The Blighs had known Clara for a considerable length of time as she too was an Australian, and Dorothy was one of her bridesmaids accompanied by Ivor Novello as a page boy.

Dorothy's second brother Noel was by then at Eton and he used to give his young sister half a crown every time she went with him to the station, she would always wear her red velvet coat with

the white fur collar. Dorothy and Noel were always very close, and when she died in 1976 there were photo's galore of Noel, but none of Clif, her eldest brother.

As children Noel and Dorothy used to run races along the upstairs corridor at Cobham, and they both loved the old family home although Dorothy thought the Gilt Hall was haunted.

The family holidays were spent in a rented house at Abbeymore in Scotland, and here the Countess would paint watercolours and the rest of the family would play golf. Other times were spent at Clifton Lodge, the Darnley family residence in County Meath, it was here that Dorothy's mother caught a 35lb salmon on her first ever cast and thus set a record for that part of the River Boyne.

The Edwardian period was the hay day of the family practical joke and the Blighs participated to the full. Ivo Bligh was a keen ornithologist and one day Dorothy filled an old bird's nest in Cobham park with different coloured sugar eggs. She then fetched her father who exclaimed in wonder at the brightly coloured eggs, and speculated as to which bird could produce them. Dorothy just picked one up and popped it in her mouth.

On another occasion Dorothy was supposed to be meeting her brother Clif to go for a drive



Florence Darnley, mother of Dorothy Peplow from a pastel by Cyril Roberts

together. She couldn't make it however, and so sent the chauffeur in her car over to Cobham with a tailor's dummy she had dressed up to look like herself!

In 1910 Dorothy came out at the Ritz and prior to this she had been sent to Dresden with her friend, Polly Furguson, to learn music. Polly's father, Sir Thomas Colyer-Furguson, had recently purchased the beautiful old manor house, Igtham Mote, near Sevenoaks, and it was there that Dan and Dorothy met. All three of them loved tennis and their friends included the Sassoons and Vita Sackville-West. '

The wedding took place at the attractive old Cobham Parish Church on February 29th, 1916, so it was not only a war but a leap year wedding too. Dorothy arrived at the church with her father and she was dressed in white mirror velvet with an overskirt of Limerick lace, which belonged to her paternal grandmother, and a train of Limerick lace lent by her mother. The wreath adorning

Dorothy's head was worn by the Countess of Darnley at her wedding, and the veil was of tulle. She carried a sheaf of white lilies tied with tulle, and a vellum prayer book, the later a gift of her mother. A diamond swallow brooch which the bride wore was originally given by Ivo to his bride in Australia many years earlier, and was now in turn given to their daughter on her wedding day.

It snowed on that wedding day of 1916 and as the couple emerged from the ceremony, a pair of grandside doubles rang out from the old church tower. The sound carried far across the silent, snow covered park with its great oaks to the doors of Cobham Hall, and announced to the servants the approach of the happy couple and their guests; a more romantic wedding would be hard to conjure.



Dan and Dolly on their wedding day photographed in the Gilt Hall at Cobham