

bery. When she died she bequeathed it to her nephew, Captain Francis Foster. But he would not hear of making it his home, and hastened to sell it, whereupon it was repurchased by the Webster family, in the person of Sir Augustus Webster, the present baronet. But immediately after having established his title to the place he rented it on a long lease to Michael Grace of New York.

On Mrs. Poyntz's death, Cowdray was sold by the estate to Lord Egmont, whose earldom had been conferred upon one of his ancestors for services in connection with his colonization and governorship of Georgia. Not content with buying a place burdened with a malediction, Lord Egmont may be said to have brought to Cowdray a family curse of his own, from his estates in the South of Ireland.

The story goes that the fifth Earl of Egmont was appealed to by a widow on his Irish property to postpone her eviction, owing to the fact that her only son was dangerously ill. But the Earl was relentless, and had the widow and her son pitched out on to the roadside, where the sick man expired a couple of hours later as the result of exposure and of the rough treatment to which he had been subjected. The widow in her bitter anguish went down on her knees by the corpse of her boy, and cursed the Earl as only an Irish peasant can, praying to Heaven that neither he nor any of his successors would ever have an heir.

The Answer to the Curse

IT would seem as if the prayer had been heard; for the fifth Earl died without issue, and was succeeded by his cousin the sixth Earl. The latter likewise died childless, and was succeeded by a cousin, the late Earl, who in turn had no children, and was followed in the honors and estates by his kinsman, the present Earl. This nobleman, separated from his American wife, formerly a barmaid in London, without any divorce, has no offspring; while the marriage of his younger brother and next heir to the peerage, until recently a policeman at Johannesburg, has remained childless. After that in the line of succession is old Spencer Perceval, an octogenarian, whose only son, Henry Godfrey Perceval, was murdered, with his wife and only child, in Nebraska, on September 29, 1884, under the most shocking circumstances. The crime attracted considerable sensation at the time, not only by reason of its atrocity, but also by the fact that a grand-uncle of the victim, the Right Hon. Spencer Perceval, while Premier of Great Britain,

was assassinated in the lobby of the House of Commons. The present Lord Egmont has spent much of his life in this country, and has had a most adventurous career. For, before succeeding to the earldom, he had been in turn a sailor before the mast, a member of the London fire brigade, a janitor of the town hall of Chelsea, a market gardener, and all sorts of other things besides, and even now is far from well off, owing to the fact of his being saddled with a big place like Cowdray Park, without the necessary means to maintain it in fitting style.

Cecil Rhodes is regarded by people in Suffolshire as having been a victim of the curse which rests upon Dalham Hall. Certain it is that he died unexpectedly only a few months after having purchased it from Sir Robert Aileck. He bequeathed it to his brother, the popular Colonel Frank Rhodes, one of the leaders of the memorable Transvaal raid.

Another Owner Died

HE in turn enjoyed possession of Dalham Hall for only a short time before being gathered to his fathers, although he seemed when he took possession of the place good for many years to come. Since then it has changed hands twice. The mansion, which is of brick, and was built away back in the days of William and Mary, that is to say, shortly after the Stuarts had been driven from the throne of England, occupies the site of a famous monastery that shared the fate of so many other establishments of the same kind at the time of the Reformation, in having its ecclesiastical occupants driven out, when, after it had been looted and plundered, it was given to one of the minions of King Henry VIII. Subsequently it became the residence of the Anglican Bishops of Ely.

But even they found the place too heavily burdened on account of the blighting malediction of its former monastic owners. They got rid of it, and it passed through several hands before it was acquired by the Aileck family. The latter are a branch of the old House of Auehinleck. The second baronet, a nephew of the Admirer, married an American girl, a daughter of Thomas Clark of New York. The next successor was a cousin. In fact, the Dalham Hall property has never passed from father to son, and the present baronet, who recently figured in the bankruptcy court, has no issue, while his only two surviving brothers, three having already died, are likewise childless.

To what extent the Church has the power to lift curses of this kind imposed upon former ecclesias-

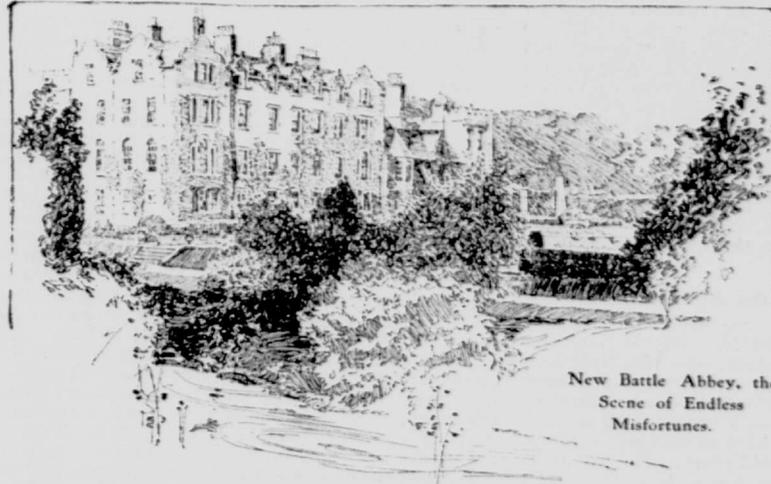
tical property is a moot question. The wife of the seventh Marquis of Lothian felt so uneasy at living at New Battle Abbey, that she proceeded to Rome, and confided her scruples and fears about the matter to Pius IX. She informed him that the Lords of Lothian are descended in a direct line from the last Roman Catholic abbot of New Battle Abbey, a prelate who forsook the Church of Rome at the time of the Reformation, and joined the Protestant Church. Wedding Lady Helen Leslie, he retained possession of both the abbey and lands of the monastic order of which he had until then been the head, and which had been given by David I. of Scotland to the White Monks of the Cistercian order several hundred years previously. Not content with absolving himself from his vows of celibacy, the abbot coolly pulled down the monastery and the stately abbey which formed part thereof, and made use of the materials to build himself a country seat on the very same site.

After hearing what the Marchioness had to say, the venerable pontiff said, "Remain quietly where you are, without worrying yourself, my daughter." But Lady Lothian would not be comforted until she had obtained from His Holiness a document bearing his sign manual, authorizing herself and her children to occupy their Scottish home in peace. This papal permit is now preserved among the family archives of the Lords of Lothian, in the very same case which contains the original documents forming the grant of New Battle Abbey by King David to the Cistercian monks.

Family Finally Scared Out

BUT in spite of this papal permit, Fate nevertheless seems to pursue the House of Kerr, of which the Marquis is chief, to such an extent that neither he nor any of the members of his family is willing to live there. He may be said to owe his succession to the family honors to one of the many tragedies that figure in the history of his house, his elder brother having had his brains blown out accidentally while duck shooting in Australia.

Berkeley Castle—where Edward II. was put to death in so atrocious a fashion, and which, burdened with his dying curse, has brought so many tragedies to its owners that their annals may be regarded as one long series of dramas and crimes—and a number of other old manors and country houses could be cited, to show how well founded are the superstitious fears entertained by many people on the subject of so-called "unlucky houses."



New Battle Abbey, the Scene of Endless Misfortunes.



Berkeley Castle, Burdened With Edward II.'s Curse, Where "One Long Scene of Dramas and Crimes" Have Occurred.

BIRDS AS SEED CARRIERS

ACCORDING to a scientist attached to one of the Government bureaus at Washington, birds evince a surprising inclination to act as seed carriers in various quarters of the world.

Two centuries ago the Dutch destroyed every nutmeg tree in the Moluccas in order to enjoy a monopoly of the business, having planted the trees in their own possessions. In spite of their most earnest efforts, however, the islands were constantly being restocked. For a long time the thing was a mystery, but at length it was solved.

The doves of that quarter of the globe are of large size, and readily swallow the seeds of the nutmeg. They traverse wide stretches of sea and land in a few hours, and deposit the seeds not only uninjured, but better fitted for germination by the heat and moisture of the bird's system. By a similar process thousands of acres of land have been covered with trees of different kinds, the birds acting as Nature's agents in the dissemination of plants.

Darwin found in six grains of earth adhering to the feet of a plover three different kinds of seeds, and in mud sticking to the feet of ducks and geese shot in England he found the seeds of plants peculiar to the Victoria Nyanza, in Central Africa, thus proving not only the extent of migration, but also the possibility of plants appearing in strange localities through the agency of these birds.

In the mud on the feet of a Texas steer the seeds of five different kinds of weeds and grasses common

in Texas were found by a microscopist after the arrival of the animal in New York.

None of the great inventions of man can compare in rapidity of travel with that of some birds. That solitary cruiser of the deep, the frigate bird, can cross the Atlantic Ocean, a distance of two thousand miles, in a single night. The wonderful bird must travel at the average speed of at least one hundred and fifty miles an hour, a feat far surpassing any automobile or locomotive that has yet been built. Fast express trains often reach and maintain the speed of ninety miles an hour for short distances, but the velocity of these greyhounds of the rail is eclipsed by the common chimney swallow, which sometimes for hours maintains an average speed of from ninety to one hundred miles an hour.

The Fastest Living Thing

PROBABLY the swiftest of all living things is the black swift, a small bird which has been known to travel two hundred and seventy-six miles in an hour, or over twice as fast as the automobile would have gone could it have maintained for an hour the speed of its record run of about two miles a minute at Ormond Beach.

The rapidity of the flight of birds is very deceptive, and the average person usually underestimates their speed. I once asked ten persons how fast they thought crows flew, and six of them said about ten miles an hour, and the remaining four about five. In reality the crow travels from twenty-five to

thirty miles an hour, or as fast as the average local passenger train.

Ducks are among the swiftest flying birds. The mallard and pintail members of this family fly from forty to sixty miles an hour, and the teal with a favorable wind often reaches the astonishing velocity of ninety to a hundred miles an hour. Several years ago, when going from New York to Chicago, on the engine of one of the fastest trains, we were spinning along the edge of a long marshy lake at about forty miles an hour, when four ducks which had been sitting in the water near the tracks took flight just before the train came abreast of them, and started off in the same direction. "Here's a chance for a race!" the engineer shouted as he drew out the throttle. The ducks, frightened by the roar of the train, slowly gained on us. "How fast are we going?" I shouted in the engineer's ear. He held up five fingers, and I knew we were rolling along at fifty miles an hour. The train's speed had increased to sixty-five miles an hour before we began to overhaul the ducks; but they reached the end of the lake before we were even with them, and then veered off and vanished as we shot by.

Observation has shown that a passenger pigeon can travel one thousand miles in a day, and the turtle doves which people who live in the country often see in their barnyards fly at the amazing rate of fifty miles an hour. Carrier pigeons in calm weather often travel from thirty to fifty miles an hour.