

Discovery of George the Fourth's Marriage Certificate may give American Family \$125,000,000.00.

In an Unused Vault of a London Bank, Evidence to Prove Conclusively the Legal Marriage Between the Last of the Georges and Mrs. Fitzherbert Has Existed More Than a Hundred Years

WITHIN the last few days another chapter has been added to the only romantic story that ever enlivened the sordid commonplace monotony of the history of the five Georges—the story of George IV and the lovely Mrs. Fitzherbert. A package of papers held for nearly a century in Coutts bank, has by the order of King Edward VII been finally opened, and among the brittle yellow old documents, has been found a certificate of the marriage of George, then Prince of Wales, and Maria Smyth Fitzherbert, admittedly one of the loveliest women of her day.

In the hundred years that those papers have been yellowing in their vault three generations of the Ord family have lived, done their work in the world, done it well for the most part, and died full of years and honors. Through that hundred years the tradition has persisted that the founder of the family in America, hardly more than a child when he came over in the end of the eighteenth century, was a son of George IV and Mrs. Fitzherbert. And through all that century there has been a great English estate in litigation—an estate which now amounts to \$125,000,000—which undoubtedly belonged to the children of such a marriage, if such a marriage ever had taken place, and if, in case it had taken place, there had been any issue.

Never Relinquished Claim

So long as the marriage remained in doubt—or, rather, so long as it lacked legal proof—the American Ords have held their peace and nursed their family tradition—never for a moment relinquishing their claim that they were descendants of the last of the Georges and Mrs. Fitzherbert—but deciding, apparently, that there was nothing to be gained by troubling deaf heaven with their bootless cries, until they could prove the marriage. What the world has for a century been morally sure of, it has within the past ten days become legally sure of—and the present generation of Ords, notably James L. Ord, assistant superintendent of construction for the Western Union Telegraph Company, in Chicago, proposes to push its claim to a share of the great fortune involved.

History has long ago decided that the fact of such a marriage was established beyond reasonable doubt—but, reasonable or unreasonable, lacking proof, the doubt remained. Also it has long been known that all the papers relating to George IV and Mrs. Fitzherbert were in the sealed packet, which the committee of three noblemen to whom it had been entrusted had deposited for safe keeping in the Coutts Bank. The trust had been handed down from father to son. The papers were not to be opened until the three agreed that the time had come when they should be opened. And the three never have agreed, until ten days ago by the King's order the package was opened and the doubt set at rest.

As to the Ord family—it has been well and favorably known in America for a century, and is undoubtedly descended from a youth known as James Ord, brought over to this country by an older James Ord whose nephew he was supposed to be. This real James Ord left a will and a confession setting forth that the lad, James Ord, supposed to be his nephew, was in reality a son of George IV of England and Mrs. Maria Smyth Fitzherbert.

Fought Against England

The Ords in America have been almost equally prominent in military and legal circles. The lad who is supposed to have been George's son was prominent on the American side in the war of 1812, although it was alleged that he was urged to enlist in the American army by British spies in order to invalidate any claims he might later make to the crown on the ground of treason. His eldest son, Major Gen. E. O. C. Ord, served in the Union army during the civil war, dying in San Francisco in 1864. Capt. E. O. C. Ord, son of the major general, was appointed to West Point from Texas, was for a number of years an officer of the Twenty-fifth infantry and was retired from the service in October, 1903. He is now living in San Antonio.

Another military scion of the family is James C. Ord, great-grandson of King George, who entered the service from West Point in 1873, retiring as a major of the Fourth Cavalry in 1899. The major was born in Michigan, but received his appointment from Wyoming, where his father was serving at the time.

Finally, there was James G. Ord, lieutenant in the United States army, who fell in Duffield's attack on the eastern heights at the battle of Santiago. Had the law of primogeniture been followed this young man would undoubtedly have been wearing the crown of England instead of yielding his life in the thick of battle.

The second son of the original James Ord became Judge Pacificus Ord, a prominent California jurist, and turned the family's attention to the law as a profession, and the successive generations have contributed some brilliant lawyers to the bench and bar of several States.

John S. Ord, of Santa Cruz, Cal., father of James L. Ord, of Chicago, was another son of Mrs. Fitzherbert's son. The Holiday family of California is directly connected with the Ords through the marriage of John S. Ord's daughter Alice to S. W. Holiday.

Yet another of the family is Dr. James Ord, of Frederick, Md., whose likeness to the present King of England is so striking as to have gained for him the jocular title of "Your Majesty of Maryland." Dr. Ord has always believed that Mrs. Fitzherbert's character would be cleared and has at all times been instrumental in stirring up the claims. During his investigations Dr. Ord discovered an old history of Georgetown college which showed that in the year 1800 the college was attended by James Ord, son of George IV and Mrs. Fitz-

herbert, "his lawful wife," to quote the words of the old record.

According to tradition the original James Ord was not brought to this country until 1810, but the archives of Georgetown college, and of Loyola college in Baltimore, and the records of the office of Register of Wills of the District of Columbia, which threw considerable light on the claim of royal birth, place the date of his arrival considerably earlier.

From these it would appear that the youth, who, according to traditions in the Ord family, which has been prominent in American military circles for three-quarters of a century, was the son of King George IV through his marriage with Lady Fitzherbert, was a student at Georgetown College, in this city, from 1800 until 1811 during his boyhood. The tradition that this young man was the son of George IV and Lady Fitzherbert is an old one at Georgetown, and some of the most famous of the old priests there were familiar with the surroundings of the case in their



KING GEORGE IV



ORD AND HIS WIFE

time, handing their knowledge down in the form of records of one kind or another.

James Ord, the young man who was supposed to have been the son of George IV, was brought to America during the latter part of the eighteenth century and taken to Norfolk by Capt. James Ord, a master mechanic, who was first employed in the Norfolk navy yard, and afterward came to the Washington navy yard, bringing the boy to this city with him. This youth, who bore the same name as Capt. James Ord, his so-called uncle, was entered at Georgetown College on April 24, 1800, by the Rev. Notley Young, a famous Maryland priest, who, according to some of the records at Georgetown University, is supposed to have acted as agent to have the youth educated. Before the boy left Georgetown College James Ord, his so-called uncle, died, leaving a will, dated October 11, 1801, now on file at the City Hall in Washington, leaving \$300 to the Rev. Francis Neale, of Georgetown College, and the balance of his estate "to my beloved nephew, James

Ord, of Georgetown College, to whom also I give all debts due me."

The archives of Georgetown University show the date of the boy's admission into the school, and the archives of Loyola College contain a statement in writing which he made after he became an old man, giving all he knew concerning the mystery of his lineage. This statement was sent to Loyola College because that was then the residence of the provincial of the Society of Jesuits in the eastern part of the United States, all important archives of the province being preserved in that residence. It is understood that this statement of the supposed original heir himself is regarded as a confidential document.

Georgetown College Records

The tradition respecting the parentage of young Ord is mentioned in the history of Georgetown College, written by Dr. John G. Shea, a painstaking historian, who declares in that volume: "The college was not without pupils from the best of the old Catholic families from Maryland in 1789 and had some on its rolls of whom she might feel proud. James Ord, son of George IV and his lawful wife, Mrs. Fitzherbert, was enrolled among the students the next year."

According to the records preserved among the archives of Georgetown College, James Ord while a mere youth read a book treating the life of Lady Fitzherbert and mentioning the supposed child, and asked, "Am I this child?" Later, while looking over some papers and letters left him by his so-called uncle, Captain Ord, who brought him to

he told the late Father Matthews he was going to write to Lady Fitzherbert, his mother, and also declares that Father Matthews, who was acquainted with the facts, helped him to write this letter, which was directed to Lady Fitzherbert and inclosed in a letter to Aaron Vall, charge d'affaires of the American legation at the Court of St. James in 1836. Father Matthews was for years pastor at St. Patrick's Church and was a nephew of Leonard Neale, a Marylander, who was president of Georgetown College while the boy was a pupil there in 1800.

The record says that Lady Fitzherbert no doubt received this letter from the youth supposed to be her son, and then goes on to say that Father Matthews, in 1852, then in his eighty-second year, made a statement under oath in writing to the late Gen. Edward O. C. Ord, of Maryland, who was the son of James Ord, of what he (Father Matthews) had learned confidentially from the late Captain Ord, the so-called uncle. This statement was to the effect that "the child called James Ord and his nephew was not his nephew, but of royal parentage, the son of one of the royal family of England." This statement of Father Matthews is now in the possession of surviving relatives of the late General Ord.

The archives of the college show that in November, 1884, Father Healy, who was formerly a president of Georgetown College, furnished a member of the Ord family with information to the effect that James Ord was a son of George IV and Lady Fitzherbert, and referred that member of the family to the Rev. James Curley, who was for many years at

was known as the beautiful widow of Brighton, and had been twice widowed when she met the young Prince of Wales at one of the royal operas. At that time she was thirty years old and one of the most beautiful women in the realm. Her maiden name was Maria Anne Smyth. Her first husband was Edward Weld, a squire of moderate means.

Thomas Fitzherbert, her second husband, was a courtier of some pretensions to gentle birth, who died before his wife was twenty-five years old.

Love at First Sight

It was almost a case of love at first sight. The prince fell head over heels in love with her, though it is hard to conceive of George as really in love with anyone, but so far as he was capable of caring for anyone he certainly cared for Maria Fitzherbert. It was an inauspicious time for him to fall in love. He was very much at odds with his father, King George III. He had rebelled against the strict formality of the old king's domestic circle. He found home life exceedingly uninteresting. One can hardly blame him. He assiduously cultivated all his father's pet aversions, sought out Sheridan and Fox, his father's Whig opponents, and by them was initiated into the brilliancy and vice of the fashionable life of the day. There probably never was a day when society in England was more brilliant, there certainly never was when it was more licentious.

It suited Prince George of Wales down to the ground. He had not the wit that would have made him wel-

the end of a year, after formal notice had been given, parliament approved, or rather failed to disapprove. It was not even to gratify any social ambition. Marriage with the Prince of Wales would give her no position in the fashionable world which was not already hers through his continued attentions.

It was simply that Mrs. Fitzherbert was a devout Catholic. The performance of the ceremony by a priest of her church satisfied her conscience. She wished to be married in the eyes of the church, and cared not the least little bit whether she was married in the eyes of the law. And George, believing that he could contract no legal marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert, was quite ready to go through the ceremony to please her. According to the recently discovered certificate the marriage took place December 22, 1785.

In a debate in the house in 1787, when the matter of granting George money to pay some of his debts was being discussed, allusion was made to a marriage which might bring in question the succession. Fox went to the prince and asked him point blank about it, and George assured him on his honor that no such marriage had taken place. On that assurance Fox told the house of commons that there was nothing in the story. The next day he received a note from one of his friends saying, "I see that you have denied the marriage of the Prince of Wales with Mrs. Fitzherbert. You have been misinformed. I was present at that marriage."

George was not content with lying about it to Fox. He tried to make his friends believe that he had not authorized Fox's denial. "Only conceive Maria," he said, "what Fox did yesterday. He went down to the house and denied that you and I were man and wife."

Married Caroline of Brunswick

In 1795 George married Princess Caroline of Brunswick, because his father would not pay his debts on any other terms. They had one child, Charlotte, who married one of the lesser German princes and died in childbirth in 1817. The marriage was unhappy and resulted in grave scandals and suits and counter suits for divorce. And year by year George IV grew more brutal, more sensual, less fit to rule, more intensely unpopular until his death in 1830 was a relief all around.

After the prince's divorce from Princess Caroline he returned to Mrs. Fitzherbert. But she would have none of him, being a devout Catholic, until she obtained the sanction of the Pope. On his rendering a favorable decision she finally received the prince as her husband at a reception given at her residence, at which members of the royal family were present.

For several years they lived happily and contentedly together. It was after Prince George had succeeded to the throne that his marriage of state occurred. Then Mrs. Fitzherbert separated from him. During his last illness, however, she wrote to the King tendering him her sincere sympathy and offering any attention she could give. This letter was found on his pillow after his death. After his death she was treated as one of the royal family during the period of her life. She received consideration and attention due to royal rank everywhere.

The Duke of York was her devoted friend and William IV offered to make her a duchess, at the same time authorizing her to wear mourning for her husband. It is said that it was known to all the royal family that a son had been born to Mrs. Fitzherbert and some questions about the succession to the throne arose. And at that time the question might have made serious trouble, for George IV had died without an heir, and William IV had no son to succeed him, and the crown of England seemed over heavy for the brow of a young girl of eighteen, the next in succession, the daughter of the Duke of Kent, another of George III's sons.

Took Guardian's Name

It is believed to have been at the instance of the Duke of Wellington that the boy was placed under the control of George James Ord, a naval constructor, who won renown as a naval engineer in both Spain and England. The boy took the name of his guardian, and it is his great-grandson who fell at Santiago and another great-grandson who is preparing to assert his rights to the vast English estates which are his by right of descent.

At last this is the Ord version of the story. But on the other hand Lord Stourton, Mrs. Fitzherbert's cousin and confidant, to whom she left all her papers and a commission to write her vindication, testified in a court of law that no child was ever born to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

Lord Stourton swore further that, in 1837, he and the Duke of Wellington were appealed to by an impostor, who claimed to be an issue of the marriage between Mrs. Fitzherbert and her royal husband.

"I did not trouble myself to notice this claim," Lord Stourton testified.



JAMES ORD HIS WIFE AND FATHER JOHN S. ORD.

Georgetown College and familiar with the archives. At the suggestion of Father Curley, this member of the Ord family wrote a letter to the Hon. Mr. Lansdale, of Houghton Hall, England, who was the biographer of Lady Fitzherbert, in order to prove that Lady Fitzherbert before her death, when she "smilingly objected on the score of delicacy," to acquiesce to "those who knew her reason" and "wrote on the back of the marriage certificate, 'no issue.'"

The story of Maria Anne Smyth Fitzherbert and George Augustus Frederick, eldest son of George III of England, and subsequently his successor under the title of George IV, furnishes about the only gleam of sentiment and romance that ever lightened the dull, sordid, monotony of the history of the four Georges. There never was a more uninteresting, less admirable, less kingly set of kings than the four of the House of Hanover who held down the throne of England during the eighteenth and first quarter of the nineteenth century. And of the lot George IV was the most absolutely without redeeming quality.

As a young man he is said to have been good looking, and blessed with a certain ease and graciousness of manner which won for him among his cronies the title of "the first gentleman of Europe." Before his career was over even his own subjects would have consented to the substitution of the word "blackguard" for "gentleman." And his treatment of Mrs. Fitzherbert contributed not a little to this popular estimate of his character. Apart from the fact that there's millions in it "cannot conceive of any reason why the Ords should wish to claim that they have his blood in their veins. It is certainly inconceivable that it should be to their credit if they have."

Mrs. Thomas Fitzherbert (Maria Anne Smyth) was certainly one of the loveliest women of her time. She



Mrs. FITZHERBERT.