

A PRINCE AMONG STONES

THAT BUSINESS WITH
THE ROLLING STONES
AND OTHER ADVENTURES



PRINCE RUPERT LOEWENSTEIN

B L O O M S B U R Y

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To my wife

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Introduction

On 2 July 1969, a Wednesday evening, my wife and I gave a ball in the garden of our house in Holland Park. We had never thrown such a large party before: 500 guests, two live bands, one very large marquee. My wife was keen to have a theme for the night, and we decided that white should be the leitmotiv.

The décor for what we had dubbed the White Ball was conceived by David Mlinaric: splendid white floral displays, swathes of pure white drapery. Guests were expected – though not obliged – to arrive dressed all in white. My own outfit was a white suit, shirt and black bow tie, and white patent leather shoes, with, for flourish, a pair of gold buckles. My wife was ‘glamorously understated’ in a lac trouser suit. Only one guest bucked the trend. Marianne Faithfull arrived with Mick Jagger wearing a black gipsy dress and headscarf, and not only got away with it but drew all eyes. Mick was wearing what I can only describe as a rustic smock – which, to give him his due, *was* white. He looked like a cross between a milkmaid and one of the Evzones, the soldiers who guard the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Athens.

The guest list was, now I look back at it, extremely varied. At the time most balls were held in great English houses in London or the country, or perhaps Claridge’s or the Hyde Park Hotel. The hosts would invite other suitable English families and maybe a handful of friends from abroad. At our White Ball, nearly a third of the friends we had invited were from overseas, a polyglot mélange of European grandees mingled with local British society, young and old. Lady Cochrane, née Sursock (a prominent family in the Lebanon), had asked us to invite her son and newly wed daughter-in-law with an inspired sales pitch. ‘They’re very small and they don’t drink,’ she told us. We took them; both facts were true.

The black-and-white photographs that we still have in a white leather-bound album are a snapshot of a time of a group of people whose lives afterwards took many unexpected turns. Arnaud de Rosnay, deep in conversation with the model and actress Marisa Berenson, was an aristocratic French playboy who later married Isabel Goldsmith; he became a pioneer of windsurfing and disappeared in 1980 attempting to cross the Straits of Formosa. The interior designer Diana Phipps, née Sternberg, was an emigrée Czech aristocrat, who helped the future President Václav Havel while he was in prison and later returned to Bohemia to restore one of the family castles which the Havel government had handed back to her. And at a table with John Betjeman’s daughter, Candida, Lord Milford Haven and Diana Halpin (who married Prince Egon von Fürstenberg a fortnight later) is Sunny von Bülow, whom we had introduced to her husband Claus two or three years earlier.

Actors and film producers mingled with the old upper class, writers and photographers with businessmen. The photographs show Cecil Beaton and the Duchess of Devonshire, Princess Margaret and Graham Mattison, an American lawyer, stockbroker and business adviser to Barbara Hutton, a man who, as I recall, was *infallibly* wrong in all his market suggestions. The film producer Sam Spiegel was there, and Peter Sellers, in a long wig and sporting a CND symbol, with Miranda Quarrier, the Australian model who became his second wife the following year and is now Lady Stockton.

I had first met Mick Jagger towards the end of 1968, through an introduction by the art dealer Christopher Gibbs. Christopher, who knew the Rolling Stones well and had had them to stay at a house

he was renting in Morocco, approached me to see if I would consider taking care of the finances of Mick and the rest of the Rolling Stones. The name of the group meant virtually nothing to me at the time, but I asked my wife to tell me about them. She gave me a briefing and my curiosity was tickled, and so Mick and I had seen each other frequently during the early part of 1969 before the White Ball that July.

We were very lucky that evening. There was no rain, nor was it too hot. Through Mick's connections we had music from the Skatalites and Yes, who were just about to release their first album. The party lasted well into the early morning, continuing after Josephine and I had gone to bed. My daughter Dora's nanny later told us that the final guests had headed out on to Holland Villas Road at six o'clock. 'Who were they?' we asked. 'They were wearing white,' she reported confidently.

This party, oddly enough, marked the beginning of a new chapter in my working life. At the time had I been asked I would have imagined that in my role as the managing director of the merchant bank Leopold Joseph my immediate future would have entailed increasing the value of the bank and providing a platform from which we could, eventually, sell it. Life is, perhaps happily, never so predictable.

The same night as the party Brian Jones was found dead at his house in Sussex. Three days later the Rolling Stones performed a most impressive memorial concert in his honour in Hyde Park, in front of nearly a quarter of a million people. Mick wore his milkmaid's dress again, and read some moving verses from Shelley's *Adonais*. The effect was almost like the Nuremberg Rallies.

The crowds, I thought, could definitely have started pulling down the Dorchester Hotel on Park Lane if they had felt moved to do so. I sat on the main stand and chatted to Mick before they played, not about his and the band's finances, which I was about to start reviewing, but of general matters. I asked him whether he thought that he could move the crowd into action by his voice in the way that Hitler had done. He thought carefully and replied, 'Yes. To get the crowd to pull something down would probably take twenty minutes, but to get them to build something could be done but would take much longer, say an hour.'

Things were changing, and not just in the fortunes of the Rolling Stones. The course of my own life was certainly never the same again.

‘ONLY CHILDREN KNOW WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR’

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*

When I was fourteen, at boarding school shortly after the end of the Second World War, one of my classmates came across a comment in the social column of a paper talking about my parents getting a divorce. This was complete news to me. I had no inkling whatsoever that they were planning to do something quite so irreversible – and when I heard I was much disturbed. I went straight down to the school office and asked if I could place a reverse-charge telephone call to my mother.

I got through, and asked her, ‘What’s happened?’ ‘Darling,’ she replied, ‘I wasn’t going to tell you because it doesn’t count.’ It was her own odd interpretation of what it meant in the eyes of the Church. In her mind she had married my father and that was that. For her this divorce was purely a civil arrangement that in no way altered the fact of her marriage.

What was strange was that I had not realised that my parents had split up long before, when I was very young, maybe four or five. They lived in separate places, and indeed separate countries, my father principally in England, my mother mainly in France, but periodically they were together, and whenever I was with them both they seemed to get on very well. They certainly never spoke critically of each other.

On one occasion, puzzled by our living arrangements, I had gone so far as to question my mother with whom I lived, on the reason all three of us did not live in the same house. ‘Well, it’s very easy to understand,’ she said, explaining, quite plausibly, that ‘Papa likes to get up early. And I like lying in bed and getting up in time for lunch. So it’s really much more convenient this way.’

And so it was. I would see my father on and off (more off than on). From time to time I would go and have lunch or dinner with him where he lived just off the King’s Road in Chelsea, or occasionally stay for a night or two. Whenever I saw him, there was always some nice young woman there, too, but I have few memories of any of them as they were usually never there again the next time I visited.

But I do remember staying with him when I was ten or twelve and he was living with the actress Googie Withers. Born in Karachi to a Dutch-German mother and a father who was a Royal Navy officer, she had been given the nickname Googie by her ayah: it meant ‘little pigeon’. I much enjoyed meeting her, because I was fascinated by her being a film star and having seen a number of her films. She had become famous during the previous few years, appearing in *The Lady Vanishes* and *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing*. She was charming, pretty and also particularly kind to me.

There was one Easter holiday a couple of years later when my mother was in New York and my father told me he couldn’t have me to stay, because, he said, it was complicated for breakfast. That really thought was carrying things too far, although I didn’t much mind. I made great friends with him in my teens, and we got on very well. Although he was distant, he was extremely witty and perceptive.

On the rare occasions I found myself alone with my father, he would talk to me about our background and our family tree, which interested me very much. I think it was the only thing my father ever talked about. From an early age he made me aware that I came from a certain sort of distinguished background.

He was Prince Leopold zu Loewenstein-Wertheim-Freudenberg, from a family that can trace its back to Luitpold Markgrave of Carinthia and later Duke of Bavaria (who died repelling the Huns 907).

My family is a branch of the Bavarian royal house, which started its own independent history at the end of the fifteenth century as a result of the morganatic marriage of Frederick I the Victorious Elector Palatine, and Klara Tott, a pretty lady-in-waiting at the Palatine court. Their son, Ludwig of Bavaria, was created Sovereign Count of Loewenstein-Scharffeneck by the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I in 1494. His descendants made some good marriages and were then created counts of further territories.

The elder line became Protestant, thinking that their fortunes would prosper by backing Luther, whereas the younger line stayed Catholic, the family dividing in 1611 shortly before the start of the Thirty Years War. The younger line had backed the right horse and were made princes of the Holy Roman Empire in 1711, whereas my line had to wait to be made princes by the Bavarian King in 1811 after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire as a result of the Napoleonic Wars in 1806 (for fuller history and genealogy, see the Appendix, page 239).

As far as history was concerned, my father considered himself, as he later wrote, 'a mere amateur with a certain insight into our motives. What had always fascinated me about my own family was not its role in history – important up to the end of the fifteenth century, but negligible since – but the occasional flashes of eccentricity and genius which down the centuries light up and mellow those steady unvarying features of the family face.' His first conscious memory of his younger brother, for example, had been seeing him sitting on his pot aged three or four, wearing a long red dressing gown and shouting, 'One day I'll be Emperor and kill you all!'

There had been many family twists and turns, and all of those stories were fascinating to me, but my father also talked about what he called *tenue*, a single French word that has no English equivalent able to convey so successfully that blend of emotional control, impeccable manners, elegant dress and correct posture. *Tenue* was my father's touchstone.

In his late sixties, he was interviewed by the *Guardian's* Terry Coleman, a conversation in which he talked about *tenue*, a concept in which he had been drilled by my grandfather. 'One must remain undismayed, and never show weakness.' Terry Coleman asked him whether it was anything like the English stiff upper lip. 'More than that,' my father answered, 'a stoic attitude. The attitude of the samurai in the face of death.'

Our conversations took place in his sitting room, which contained a large number of books, many naturally, about family history. He was a writer, or, more precisely, he had had a modestly successful book first published by Faber and Faber shortly after I was born – it was reissued in 1942 as a Penguin paperback – which he had written with William Gerhardi, a novelist, playwright and critic, born in Petersburg to English parents, who was a renowned and pioneering supporter of Chekhov's writing in the West. (Gerhardi was also a keen supporter of the Tsarina, whom he had met as a young man, and he believed that the best influence in Russia was, contrary to all normal belief, that of Rasputin who had been violently against the war with Germany, seeing – apocalyptically – the downfall of the dynasty and of the country as a result.)

Meet Yourself As You Really Are was a very early example of home psychoanalysis, one of those psychological quizzes that offers instant insights into your personality and psyche. The foreword described the book as a 'guide to self-knowledge. It takes the reader on an extensive tour of exploration into some of the less well-charted regions of his own psyche and helps him to discover new and unsuspected aspects of his personality . . . If we want to know ourselves we must not only

look into ourselves, we must look outside and around us in order to get ourselves and our problems into the right perspective.’

You were asked a long list of questions about all aspects of your life, covering everything from childhood to phobias, social behaviour to daily routine. I remember one that asked, ‘Do you like your bath water tepid/hot/very hot?’ Others wanted to know whether you easily blushed, blanched or trembled, if you had ever had the feeling that you might suddenly go mad, or suddenly die, and whether you were sometimes amazed at the muddles other people could get into. From those answers and a scoring system, you could discover your personality type among multiple permutations (three million possibilities, the book’s strapline proclaimed) leading to a number of basic key types.

William Gerhardi and my father had decided to name these different types after rivers, so you might at the end of the process discover you were the Rhine, the Nile, the Tiber or the River Thames, the latter with its conclusion, ‘You’re the sort of poor mutt who always pays.’

The authors did not claim any scientific accuracy – this was not a textbook of clinical psychiatry. As they pointed out, theirs was not an exact science. ‘Human personality cannot be dissected, weighed, measured, preserved in surgical spirit, or dried, pinned down with needles, put under glass, stuffed and studied under the microscope. It is forever moving and changing, elusive and unpredictable.’

The book is great fun, and amused my father. I think he must have studied psychoanalysis when he had lived in Vienna and Berlin. He had certainly known Sigmund Freud there and that may have sparked his interest. He told me that as a teenager he had mentioned to his own father that he wanted to become a doctor, to which his father had simply said, ‘You don’t become a doctor, you *call* a doctor.’ The medical profession was clearly not an acceptable choice in our family. So he saw himself as a doctor manqué, a would-be psychoanalyst.

The book was one way for him to get this out of his system, as was one of the jobs he took after he came to England in 1926 planning to make his fortune. He became a psychological adviser to the managing directors of a management consultancy, acting as a consultant to the consultants – his first job in London had been for the American literary agency Curtis Brown. He always enjoyed chatting to doctors and psychologists, and when I got married at least half of the guests he invited were from one or the other profession.

My mother, Countess Bianca Treuberg, was Bavarian, She met my father at a party in Rome in 1932 when she was eighteen and he was ten years older. Her parents had split up, as indeed had my father’s parents – very unusual for the time – and she had moved with her mother to Italy, where she was looked after by a Florentine governess and eventually studied sculpture. Her schooling had been erratic, to say the least.

Many years later, I was worrying about one of the school reports my daughter had been given. I had just returned from a trip to New York, and had been staying on Long Island with that most elegant of hostesses C. Z. Guest. I told my mother I had been talking about Dora’s report with C. Z., who had said, ‘I don’t know why you are so concerned about your daughter. *I* didn’t go to school. I’m sure your mother didn’t go to school. What are you worrying about?’ When I relayed this to my mother she was furious. ‘Of course I went to school.’ ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘but I must remind you that you have always told me that you only went for one term to the Sacré-Coeur in Rome. After which I am sure that you thought that you knew more than they did.’ Wherever or however she had learnt it, she knew the whole of the *Divina Commedia* by heart. It was a source of great pride for her. She could start off at any point and carry on.

Whether or not quoting long chunks of Dante was part of her charm to my father, they married in 1932, the year after the party in Rome.

The marriage foundered rather soon, because of my father's behaviour – he was, to be frank, a serial Casanova. Like many people one knows, his entire life had been dedicated to the pursuit of pretty girls. He had married my mother because she was very attractive, and also, then, possessed some money, which was helpful, too, but neither of them knew how quickly that money would disappear.

However, they stayed together long enough to produce me. They had taken a house in Palma Majorca, for the summer of 1933, where I was born on 24 August. Years later I went back with my wife, Josephine, to visit the land of my birth. Beforehand, we had lunch with the doctor who had brought me into the world. His own house was a huge place out in the country, very gloomy, like something out of a Lorca play.

The day was extremely hot, the dust outside was boiling. In a vast, dark room the doctor and his wife received us, tapas arrived and sangria was served. We had been asked for 1.30 for 2.00, so I thought this was the lunch. Not at all. At quarter past three another pair of huge doors opened and we went in for lunch. I asked him where on the island I could find the house I had been born in. 'I knew you'd ask me this,' he said, 'but unfortunately it has been pulled down.' According to the doctor, in the early 1930s it had been a rambling country house a couple of miles outside Palma, with sixty hectares of land, and had been offered to my father for £1,000 to buy or £100 per annum rent, which is the option he chose. By the time of my return visit, the city of Palma had spread out and over the site.

Because of their separation I was my parents' only child – and remained so, since, although they both later remarried, there were no children from either second marriage.

In my father's self-analysis book, the very first question in the questionnaire was: 1) When looking back on your childhood, up to the age of about ten, which impression predominates: that it was, on the whole, a happy childhood? If so, mark A. Or an unhappy one? If so, mark B.

I have to say that I quite enjoyed being an only child (which was the third question . . .). It meant that I became grown up at a very early age, and was treated as an adult. Blissfully unaware that my parents were separated, I never felt I had an unhappy childhood, even though I was not brought up by my father – but then in those days, of course, so many people, at least in the world I was born into, were not brought up by their parents. They were looked after by nannies and then either sent away to school or tutored at home. When my old nanny died, my mother's maid took care of me, but I still spent plenty of time in my mother's company.

Because she was a sculptor, I was raised in a world where art and literature were the most important things. She really only liked literary and artistic people. There were telephone calls at all hours of the day and night, visitors, dinner parties. It was definitely an artistic milieu, since she moved to Paris after she split up with my father and lived there with her older brother.

She was very sad that I was born on 24 August, because it meant I was, just, a Virgo, and she desperately wanted me to have been born a couple of days earlier so I could have been a Leo, like her brother, to whom she was devoted. But it didn't happen, quite luckily perhaps, as her brother was an absolutely archetypal black sheep of the family. He was Count Franz Ferdinand Fischler von Treuberg, known to everyone as Bubi.

During the war, Uncle Bubi went initially to Portugal. We heard from him periodically via Barclay's Bank in London. Since he was fond of overspending, there was always considerable worry about how Uncle Bubi was managing. Somehow he did. He left Portugal and returned to Germany where, towards the end of the war, he found himself in Buchenwald – he had always been conspicuously anti-Nazi – being marched out of his cell into an interview room where sat three highly decorated generals.

When he was alone with them they told him that they were going to use what remained of their power to save him, since they had all been friends of his father, my maternal grandfather. The only

way they could do this was to sentence him to death, have him released into their custody and move him out of the camp in one of their military transports to Berlin where they would deposit him with his friends.

Bubi and my mother's father – although his connections had saved Bubi's life – had unfortunately been very extravagant and been obliged to sell off the family's wonderful *Schloss* and 5,000-hectare estate in Bavaria, which had been given to my great-great-great grandfather, a Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, as a dowry for his daughter, in 1806.

My mother's father had both wildly overspent and been poorly advised. The factors who managed estates were renowned for siphoning off funds for their own benefit. Naturally they encouraged their employers in their financial ignorance. This was exacerbated by my grandfather's love of horses: he used to take them to race in different countries at great expense, but none were good enough to win a major race. My mother told me she remembered her father getting a coach and horses ready to be driven into Munich at a time when the motor car was already common. Such unnecessary expenditure was indicative of his *fin d'époque* mentality.

The lovely Schloss Holzen (which is between Augsburg and Munich) was sold in the late 1920s. It was acquired by Franciscan nuns, and my grandfather retained the right to live in a little house nearby for the rest of his life. He used to join in their Offices every day since he loved chanting the Office and eventually became a Dominican Tertiary.

I wanted to go and meet him after the war, once travelling to Germany started to become a little easier, but he died shortly before I was finally able to make the trip. Instead, I spent some time there with the old parish priest, who had been a great friend and companion of my grandfather. He plied me with some exceptionally good white wine. I was only seventeen or eighteen, and when I had drunk half my bottle I refused any more, thinking that I had had enough, that I was not used to drinking and that the parish priest could not afford to be too liberal with such a good wine. The priest was furious with me. 'Drink up. Your grandfather never drank less than four bottles of this wine every time he came round to see me. It's shocking that you don't drink properly. I suppose that is what England is like.'

In Paris, my mother's close friends included the Jouves. She had been introduced to Mme Jouve initially. Blanche Jouve was the first woman to gain a degree at the Sorbonne before the First War and had become a psychoanalyst. She had studied with Freud, and she was the French translator of his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* – my father would have loved to have met her. Some Parisian friends of my mother's had told her about this marvellous psychoanalyst who could help her with all her problems, not that I think she had any. It was the beginning of that fashionable use of time for people with nothing else to do than to go and talk about themselves for a couple of hours every week.

The Jouves were both great intellectuals, and played a significant part in my life. Her husband Pierre Jean Jouve, was a poet and a novelist, a very cerebral man. He introduced me to the paintings in the Louvre and how to view them, which consisted of looking carefully at the few that he wanted to see and not looking at anything else; he said that looking at other paintings was tiring and would perhaps diminish our capacity to understand what we had come to see.

Blanche told me stories about her life. All of her male friends from the Sorbonne had been called up to fight in the Great War, and they all wrote her letters back from the front, since she was probably the only girl they knew well. One particular young man wrote a series of astonishing letters and she had developed a strong attachment to him because of their content. She said that all these boys had matured very quickly because of the oncoming threat of death. None survived apart from the one to whom she was particularly attached. She was so happy that she was going to see him again after the Armistice in 1918, thinking that she would see the mature man who had written these astonishing

letters. Her disappointment was great: she met neither the boy she remembered nor the man she had imagined from his writing. The trauma of his experience at the front had completely changed him out of all recognition; they now had nothing in common.

Mme Jouve was a redoubtable character, made of stern stuff, and lived well into her nineties. In the late eighties, she was living in Paris during *les événements* of May 1968. My friend Jonathan Guinness (now Lord Moyne) still remembers that when I rang her up, worried that her flat was right in the heart of the streets where the riot police and the students were fighting, she was completely unfazed and in fact rather cheered up by all the protests. 'Cela m'a beaucoup égayée,' she reassured me. 'What a game old bird she must have been,' he observed.

Through the Jouvés we met the composer Darius Milhaud, who was one of the group known as Les Six (Francis Poulenc and Georges Auric were also members), and Consuelo de Saint-Exupéry, the Salvadoran wife of the aviator and writer Antoine, and the mistress of my half-uncle Werner. The social set also included Marie-Laure de Noailles, the doyenne of literary Paris, and Count Etienne de Beaumont, a great party-giver who took enormous pleasure in drawing up the list of people he was now going to invite. They would visit my mother in her flat in the rue Guynemer in the 6th arrondissement alongside the Jardin du Luxembourg, where as a child my nanny would wheel me out for some fresh air.

Isabel Ryan, a South African, who was being treated by Mme Jouve for nervous problems, saw the Jouvés as surrogate parents. She remembered travelling with the Jouvés and my mother to Sils-Marie in the Engadine valley, near St Moritz in south-east Switzerland. There Isabel and my mother were walking in the countryside in full Tyrolean costume: white blouses, black velvet waistcoats and full skirts. She conjured up a picture of my mother on this promenade. 'The local country people they met went down on their knees and kissed Bianca's hand. The Treubergs came from Southern Bavaria, not so far away, and the peasants recognised a princess when they saw one. She was very tall and stately with ice-blue eyes and long blonde hair in plaits round her head.'

I was with the Jouvés at the outbreak of the Second World War. In August 1939, when I was six, I was staying with them in Mégève, but I don't remember my mother being with us there, although she was certainly with the Jouvés when they all went off to Lucerne to see the last great pre-war concert with Toscanini conducting. I heard a report that 'Bianca was great fun, but did insist on telling Toscanini how to conduct!' The story rang true; my mother saw herself as a literary, artistic, universal aunt and always had enormous reserves of self-confidence.

As war loomed, I was driven with the Jouvés from Mégève down to the South of France, where my half-uncle Werner v. Alvensleben – an opponent of Hitler – had taken H. G. Wells' villa, Loupidou near Grasse. Isabel Ryan was persuaded to drive south – 'Bianca could persuade people to do anything.'

'The Jouvés had a beautiful new car,' Isabel Ryan recalled, 'a Talbot with a powerful engine and an automatic gear change. Not only was I driving the car but I was also looking after Bianca's son, the young prince Rupert. The boy was in a state of shock without his mother. Kipling came to my aid. I told him *Jungle Stories*.' I remember watching the long lines of refugees walking on the roadside carrying suitcases or pushing carts laden with their belongings on, as the vast and comfortable Talbot drove past. 'Où est la guerre?' I kept asking.

While that *drôle de guerre* of the first few months after war was declared drifted by, we lived in Loupidou. Much time was spent listening to the wireless. Then in the March or April of 1940 the Jouvés departed for Geneva, and my mother also left a little later to visit some friends in England while I stayed behind in the villa in Grasse with her maid, the cook and the gardener.

It then must have dawned on her that it might be rather dangerous leaving her only child in France during what was quite clearly a difficult time. I didn't realise until many years later that there were friends of my mother's keeping an eye on me from a distance to see that I was all right. From my point of view, there I was, aged six, with the servants and no money to pay any of the household bills. We decided to head for Cannes, and so I, the gardener, the maid, the cook and the cook's little boy marched into the Hôtel Martinez, which my mother and her circle had much frequented.

I went up to the concierge, whom I had got to know on previous occasions while my mother was chatting with friends. 'My mother's left us for London,' I announced. 'I know she's trying to get hold of us; will you find us some rooms?' Proving the golden rule that a concierge truly worthy of the name can make anything happen, he said yes, and managed to contact my mother via Barclays Bank in London to make sure all the bills were paid and that I was swiftly collected by the friends of my mother and taken to Paris.

Thereafter I travelled to London by plane, alone, which still sounds extraordinary, even now as I write it, but since I was so young it seemed quite normal to me at the time. By the time I was collected it was May 1940, and I believe I was on the very last plane of civil passengers to fly out of Paris for England before the French capital fell.

When she got to London my mother had found a flat in St James's Street, just above Boodle's Club, but before I could get too comfortable the bombs of the Blitz began to fall and I was sent off again, to stay with Madge Molyneux Seel, an old friend of my mother's, in Buckinghamshire. My mother had met Madge on a visit to England when she was sixteen, and Madge later came to stay with her in a flat in Florence.

The flat was run by Riccardo, an extremely able Florentine butler. Madge said to my mother, 'Bianca, you're being robbed blind by Riccardo. You must let me run the shopping. It's absolutely absurd.' My mother said, 'I'm sure it's not true, but if you want to I will tell Riccardo that you are now running the shopping, not that you can speak Italian.' When Madge left, Riccardo said to my mother, 'Come into the pantry.' As he opened the door, there was a pile of banknotes on the table. 'This is what I managed to get away from Miss Seel.' Madge would have overspent or been shortchanged by the local suppliers so Riccardo had intervened to make sure my mother did not lose out. And he gave all the money back to her.

Madge and my mother had remained great friends. And so I was dumped with Madge and her husband, Hans-Jürgen Roeber. Hans-Jürgen was a good-looking young Berliner who had been employed as a lutenist for my uncle Hubertus. There was a story that one day my uncle came home unexpectedly early on a wintry day of filthy Berlin rain to find – equally unexpectedly – good-looking Hans-Jürgen in bed with his wife, my aunt Helga.

Aunt Helga thought quickly. 'Oh, darling,' she smiled, 'I asked Hans-Jürgen to get into bed because it is so cold outside.' My uncle, being a man of overwhelming vanity, did not query that. He thought it was quite natural. But I think he was disturbed when the lutenist was enticed into marriage with the rather nice English woman called Madge.

Madge paid for Hans-Jürgen to have advanced music lessons, and he became a conductor – I remember seeing him conduct at the Wigmore Hall. He played the violin and piano, and as a small child I delighted in living in their house in the country and listening to him practise nearly all the time. I came to love music as a result of hearing him rehearsing every day. I had discovered a cupboard just next to his practice room, and I would secrete myself in there with a book, enjoying the triple pleasure of reading the book, hearing the violin, and, perhaps the greatest thrill, being hidden.

My mother visited on and off for the odd night or so, but most of the time I was looked after by

Madge's old nanny, who seemed to me to be ancient, but was probably no more than sixty. Meanwhile, my father was working for the Ministry of Information on short public information films, including *The Five-Inch Bather* in which the actor Richard Massingham extolled the virtues of water rationing.

Shortly after I got to the country I went to the local village school for a very short time and then was sent to a boarding school, and so my war passed far more pleasantly than it might have done given that my family name was German, which during the war was a heavy burden. I forgot my German, and called myself simply Rupert or Rupert L. I never gave my surname. I had mixed emotions about being in England while England was at war with Germany, until my parents had explained the reasons to me. The strangeness of it all is exemplified by a display case in my library which contains my grandfather's Iron Cross and other medals and my wife's grandfather's DSO and decorations side by side.

My father had been naturalised as a British subject in 1936 – when Germany started its new federal existence in the 1950s both he and I were issued German passports, and I had to make a choice between British and Germany nationality. I chose to be British, since that was where I lived. But there was one difficult moment when I was eighteen or so and I was in danger of being called up by both the German army and the British army, and then by the Spanish army as well by virtue of having been born in Majorca.

However, during the war, in the countryside away from the bombs falling on London, and too young to worry about call-ups, I had a really rather agreeable time. Despite my parents' separation, escaping from France in the nick of time, my German family name and a somewhat itinerant existence – all which typified the dangers and the changes of that period – I had, oddly enough, been rather lucky. I was never disturbed by this tremendous transience. I am sure that was a help in later life, when I was part of rock'n'roll's touring circus, because I was able psychologically to cope with the incessant round of different countries, people and mores. It had been the way I was brought up.

All of my early life had a twofold effect on me. I emerged from that upbringing with the strong sense of family history and lineage and *tenué* which my father had instilled in me. As I was their only child, I was 'the lineage' that would carry on from him. At fifteen, I once asked my mother, 'What do you think the definition is of an aristocrat? I think it's pre-eminence mellowed by time.' 'Rubbish,' she said. 'It's responsibility for everyone taken for granted.'

I was also aware of the fact that we had no money. There was clearly some money to fund my parents' life, but I was not sure whether that had been borrowed from other people, or provided by bank overdrafts; by and large it was funded by selling objects, which offered a dwindling resource. Luckily credit was much easier to secure in those days. My mother had no idea about money, and my father had precious little more.

'I was not frightened by the whole concept of money,' he later wrote. 'In the formative years of my childhood and youth, I had lived in a world separated by tradition and privilege as effectively from the world "outside" – the world of professions, commerce, ambitions and struggle – as a medieval castle by its ramparts and moats. I had lived in complete security. It turned out to be a sham security, for, as I was to learn even before I reached adulthood, this world of castles, coaches, horses, liveried servants, gamekeepers, French governesses, tutors, in which I spent my childhood, was based on very weak financial foundations. The whole elaborate, yet so deceptive, edifice crumbled into dust after the First World War.'

'Real or sham, justified or not, the material security of those early years gave me a carefree and detached outlook on life and the material concerns of life, with consequences, both beneficial and bad.' This, he said, had enabled him to face adversity of every kind 'with a high degree of

equanimity’.

In Paris, I was told, my mother used to leave money in a dish for anyone who wanted it – a practice of a communist. The person who saved my mother’s financial life on a regular basis was the manager of Barclays Bank in Piccadilly, just next to the Ritz. I recall many an occasion when my mother would park me in the Ritz’s bar downstairs while she went off to endure a difficult half-hour with the bank manager, but it usually seemed to be all right in the end. My mother always believed that something would turn up, and my father once said, ‘If only Bianca was running the finances of some small Latin American country, she would do very well, but just running her own life seems a waste of energy.’

If my mother’s sense of the value of money was virtually non-existent so, too, was that of beloved Uncle Bubi. After his rescue from Buchenwald, he became mayor of two of Berlin’s post-war sectors. He had moved into theatre and film production – in Düsseldorf he put on some Brecht plays – and he occasionally turned up in London. He was the same as ever: I later attended his wedding to an Italian girl at the Chelsea Register Office, and as the official stressed the importance of the vows of marriage, Bubi turned round and gave me an enormous wink.

One time, I was staying on the island of Patmos with a great friend of mine, the painter Tedo Millington-Drake. Teddy’s property, two seventeenth-century houses in the village of Chora, was high up on top of the island next to the monastery of St John the Theologian. As we looked down at the activity on the harbour front below, we saw a small boy astride a large donkey, its ears poking through a battered straw hat, coming up the hill. The boy and the donkey having made their ponderous way to Teddy’s house, the boy delivered a telegram, after establishing that the recipient with an odd foreign name was indeed me. I opened the telegram, written in a strange ink. It was from Bubi. The message read simply: ‘Total financial support needed forever, Treuberg’. It was the archetypal black sheep’s bleat.

Around the time I was leaving school, and drawing on her sculpting skills, my mother started a small workshop in Glebe Place in Chelsea, making very pretty costume jewellery cast in brass and silver. She first found an out-of-work German to do the accounts who couldn’t speak a word of English, and then had to employ a friend, Benvenuto Sheard, to translate the German accounts into English. Nuto Sheard might not have been a wise choice for the role. At around the same time, Nuto, an investor in Claud Cockburn’s magazine *The Week*, had been fired from his role as manager of the magazine for, according to Cockburn, ‘a particularly sharp bout of what is known as “financial irresponsibility”, in the course of which he removed the funds’. Nonetheless, somehow and improbably my mother’s jewellery business contrived to make a bit of money.

Jewellery seemed to be central to my mother and money. She had owned one-sixth of the Brazilian crown jewels, because one of her great-grandmothers was a daughter of Emperor Dom Pedro I of Brazil. Amongst them was a splendid emerald necklace, which she kept on her dressing table. One of her friends had declared, ‘I loathe emeralds’, whereupon my mother picked up the necklace and hurled it out of the bedroom window into the street below. By the time they went to look for it, most of the stones had already disappeared.

I asked my mother what had happened to all the Brazilian jewellery. ‘Oh, darling,’ she replied. ‘I left it all with Marie’, who had been my mother’s maid in France. ‘What’s her surname?’ I asked. ‘I don’t know, she’s called Marie, and *Marie, c’est une brave Bretonne*, a good honest girl from Brittany. She’ll turn up at the end of the war with my jewels.’ I was sceptical: ‘A likely story.’

Sure enough, come the end of the war, Marie, *brave Bretonne* though she might have been, was nowhere to be found, nor were the Brazilian crown jewels. I trust that Marie and her descendants appreciated either their beauty or their value.

One day, when I was fourteen, my mother sent me to an art gallery to sell a beautiful painting by Balthus, whom she had known well in Paris. She was sitting with friends in the bar downstairs at the Ritz, and said, 'Darling, you must go to the gallery and sell this nice portrait because Mummy needs the money.'

I asked her how much she had agreed with the gallery owner – it was £40. Even at fourteen I thought £40 was not very much for such a lovely painting. Off I trudged to the bottom of Duke Street where I handed over the picture and received in return the money in the form of eight of the crisp white five pound notes of the day. I returned to the Ritz and by the end of lunch the money was no more. Next door to the Ritz is Barclays Bank, the manager, had he known how swiftly the money had been consumed, would have been furious. To me it was a good example of how not to use money. I was starting to realise that while my parents had no sense of money, I had. And I developed a lasting determination never to find myself in the same straits as they navigated on a daily basis.

‘THERE IS A GOOD DEAL TO BE SAID FOR FRIVOLITY. FRIVOLOUS PEOPLE WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, DO LESS HARM IN THE WORLD THAN SOME OF OUR PHILANTHROPISTERS AND REFORMERS. MISTRUST A MAN WHO NEVER HAS AN OCCASIONAL FLASH OF SILLINESS’

Gerald, Lord Berners

My school days, like much of my childhood, had been a little unusual. When I had been staying with Madge and Hans-Jürgen in Buckinghamshire during the war, I had attended the local village school briefly. I went along for a month and then they took me away. They saw it was absolutely hopeless. I could read and write at six and a half, and none of the other pupils could. So I was dispatched to a boarding school at eight.

This was a small co-educational school, Long Dene, in Stoke Poges. Thomas Gray, it is popularly believed, set his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* in the parish church of St Giles in the village. The poem was displayed on a monument near the church.

I was very much an odd fish in Long Dene’s pond. As an only child brought up by nannies, and to a certain extent by very bright intellectuals, I had really never met – let alone made friends with – any other children of my own age (with the exception of Roger, the cook’s son at the villa near Grasse). So I was somewhat mystified and even a little frightened by my coevals, and they quite probably saw me as a bit snooty. Although I had loved all the sports at the school for my first year or so I developed asthma at the age of nine and I was unable to cope with the physical demands. There was nothing I could do about it. I did regret not being able to join in the sports, but it may have added to the impression that I was not joining in, all of which resulted in a certain tension which occasionally ended up in a fight. On those occasions I would fight back, but one part of my mind hated the actual fight, and the fact that some blows would cause pain, while the other part of me stood back and observed these two boys wasting their time over something so trivial.

My teachers, however, were very kind to me. I found it far easier to relate to adults than my fellow pupils. The music teacher there was excellent and I made firm friends with him, learning much from him and starting to learn to play the violin – strengthening a lifelong love of classical music. There was also a kindly mistress, Mary Hemingway, who taught me to read sensible books, and indeed sometimes invited me during school holidays to stay with her family on the Isle of Man, where her father was an Anglican priest. We remained in touch over the years: she later became a nun, and I joined a silent order in Lourdes.

When I was about eleven it was thought important to send me to a more advanced and academically minded school. My mother had something of an obsession about co-educational schools: there were two or three very good ones in Germany, one of which was Schule Schloss Salem, established by Kurt Hahn, who founded Gordonstoun after he left Nazi Germany. Luckily, she didn’t send me to Gordonstoun, since it was not co-educational, so I was saved from that experience – one I am sure would not have suited me, since I had heard from other children who had brothers there that the school

operated on quasi-military principles.

Instead she selected St Christopher, in Letchworth Garden City, a progressive school, founded in the 1910s by Quakers and initially sponsored by the Theosophical Society. I think my mother was also impressed by the school's intellectual level. The Latin teacher had a great sense of humour and a fund of excellent aphorisms going back to his own schooldays in the 1890s, one of which I in turn taught religiously to my children and then my grandchildren: 'Even those of the meanest intelligence can be goaded and wearied into something approximating to thought.' My son Rudolf often found that phrase helpful in his own teaching career, although not all of his pupils appreciated it.

It was while I was at St Christopher that I heard the news of my parents' divorce courtesy of my fellow pupils' reading of the newspapers. On another occasion, one of my classmates came up to me with a copy of the *Daily Express* – we were meant to read only *The Times* – which contained a report of a plane crashing on take-off at one of the London airfields. There was a photograph of my mother emerging from the plane, which was in flames behind her, holding a bottle of champagne. The journalist had commented that it was an odd choice of item to rescue. 'But what else would you do with a bottle of champagne?' she had said, with commendable, and typical, sang-froid.

I was happy at St Christopher, and extremely pleased with myself, since by and large I often came top in lessons. But after three or four years there I decided I wanted to leave for a more conventional schooling. Such children as I had met in the holidays went mainly to Eton or Downside.

I approached my mother and asked her if, in the summer of 1949, when I had passed my High School Certificate (the qualification that would be replaced by A-levels a couple of years later), I could go to Cambridge and be tutored for a scholarship to Oxford. This idea had been instigated by my history teacher at St Christopher sending me to Cambridge once a week to be tutored in history by a marvellous, very old-fashioned Edwardian spinster, Miss Anderson-Scott, a teacher who was associated with Girton College, the time not yet having come when women could be members of the university.

My two years in Cambridge were the greatest possible fun. I was found digs by Frances Cornford, the Bloomsbury poet, who was a friend of my mother's. She knew a charming old German philosopher, Dr Strich, whose wife was looking to rent a room or two in their house. She looked after the house and cooked the most delicious Prussian fare, a great difference from St Christopher, which was not only co-educational, but also vegetarian (as indeed I am told it still is even now). The professor and his *Frau* had two very old-fashioned daughters, Lore and Sabine, who were a little older than me and seemed to have stepped straight out of a novel by the nineteenth-century writer Theodor Fontane. My mother was happy that I was lodging with a family like the Strichs, in a sensible protective environment.

At Cambridge I made many friends including two or three whom I still see today, and I got to know Monsignor Gilbey, the chaplain to the university's Catholic undergraduates, and one of the most well known and admired priests in Britain.

With additional tutoring in Latin from a Fellow of King's College I prepared myself for the Oxford entrance examination, a perverse choice, it might seem, since I was enjoying myself so much at Cambridge, but by chance I knew more people – either friends of my parents, or friends of mine – who had been at Oxford than Cambridge, and of course it amused me that I was going to have two years at Cambridge before three at Oxford.

I had decided to study medieval history. Classics appealed, but I had only started Greek in my last year at school, and so would, I thought, have made it difficult to catch up. Had I been to Eton or a similar school, I would certainly have read Mods and Greats at Oxford. But that was not possible.

although I took Latin as my second subject for my Higher Certificate and continued studying it.

I wanted to go either to Magdalen or Christ Church. When I took the entrance examination Magdalen gave me a Demyship. I was very happy with the choice, and in the autumn of 1951 I was installed in excellent rooms in the New Building.

Magdalen was famously strong in history. A. J. P. Taylor was a Fellow, as was the medievalist K. E. McFarlane. He was one of the people who marked my Finals, and was angry that I didn't get a first. He later published a book of letters in which I appeared in a passage describing a visit he had made to the tombs at Wertheim: 'I have a boy, R zu Loewenstein-Wertheim-Freudenberg, from this family who is a complete rascal.' What he meant was that I was not paying enough attention to his words of wisdom. *Tant pis.*

I did not get on with my main tutor. I did not like him – he was very nervous and chippy – and I didn't much like me either, but that was perhaps the only thing with which I was unhappy at Magdalen. It was unfortunate, but certainly not the end of the world.

My parents had taken it for granted that I would get into Oxford. In fact they would have been horrified if I had failed to do so. My mother would come down with a friend perhaps a couple of times a term; my father visited once or twice over the three years I was there. Before the war, his half-brother – my half-uncle – Werner v. Alvensleben had been at Hertford College; among the friends he made at Oxford had been Adam Trott zu Solz, a diplomat who was part of Count Claus Stauffenberg's 20 July 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler. My half-uncle also became great friends with the Chaucer specialist Nevill Coghill. And so I was invited to join Professor Coghill at high table often and on.

I was at the time reading a lot about Byzantine history and at one dinner found myself sitting next to an extremely ancient don, Professor Dawkins, a professor of Modern Greek. I asked him, 'When were you last in Turkey?' and he said, 'Oh well, um, I was last there before the Young Turks rose.' The Young Turk Revolution had taken place in 1908, so that gave me to think, sitting there in 1951, a difference of only forty-three years, how close we are to the past, and how short the time was to this completely different world, now vanished forever.

When my relations and their friends talked about 'our war', they meant the Great War of 1914–18. When I went up to Oxford there were many older students who had fought in the war which had ended only six years earlier – a war within touching distance – young men who had been away to fight and only now could come back to do their degree.

My own skirmish with military service – the moment when I was in danger of being enlisted by three different national armies – had ended in an honourable truce, as I was saved by the asthma I had first developed at Long Dene. Just before I was called up by the British Army a young man had died after an asthma attack during training. Although his doctors had recommended that he shouldn't be called up, the army had originally overridden the medical advice. Now they were being very careful. Although my asthma was not all that bad, in their cautiousness they thought it was not a risk worth taking.

The aftershock of the war rumbled on. Rationing for most foodstuffs, tea, bread, sweets and sugar remained in force, clothing coupons had only just been abolished, and for at least my first year or so at Oxford, restaurants were still limited as to what they could charge: five shillings was the highest for food. Restaurants with expensive decorations and good service were allowed to charge an additional cover charge, the maximum of which was 6/6, so at the Ritz or Claridge's you would have paid 11/ for lunch or dinner.

Nevertheless I contrived to have a jolly existence. I was not a diligent student, very much to the

contrary. I did not work very hard because I enjoyed the life in Oxford and making friends, talking and chatting, and all the other things which Cardinal Newman, in his book *The Idea of a University* thought were equally important for young men going to university, to be around intelligent people even though it might not be strictly part of the course that they were following.

I basically worked for one day a week, the day I had my tutorial. That one day I diligently walked to the Sheldonian, parked myself there, and read through part of what I had to read and wrote part of what I had to write – or sometimes even less (my tutor later recalled I had ‘read out’ one essay from an entirely blank sheet of paper). I always rather slyly managed to arrange my tutorial for the late afternoon on Thursdays so that for the rest of the week I floated about, went out and got drunk with friends, and enjoyed myself tremendously. I made many lifelong friends: Desmond and Jonathan Guinness, Michael Dormer, John Pollington (now the Earl of Mexborough) and Dickon Lumley (later the 12th Earl of Scarborough, now deceased).

There were a few girls at Somerville, LMH, St Hugh’s and St Hilda’s, or studying at the Ruskin School of Fine Art. Other girls could find themselves at a strange kind of finishing school, or a typing school called Cuffey’s. One of the Cuffey’s girls I knew was Serena Dunn, now Lady Rothschild (sister of the writer Nell Dunn).

There would be no mixed colleges at Oxford for another twenty years. Despite my mother’s ardent support for co-education, I think I rather liked the fact that Magdalen was all-male, partly because historically it had always been like that and I was aware of the fact that before 1870 all the Fellows had to be celibate and the rest of them had to be in orders of the Church of England. To me that aspect of Magdalen formed an integral part of the history of Oxford.

I spent quite a lot of my time going up to London – if we missed the train back, taking a taxi for the fifty-mile journey was a very expensive five pounds. Coming back from London one night after the college gates were locked I had to climb back in with the assistance of a suitable, though booby-trapped, lamppost: I have a mark on my arm where I cut it on one of the vicious spikes the college had placed around it to prevent precisely that means of access after hours.

I had a great deal of fun with my friends. With Desmond Guinness I visited Faringdon House in 1951, the year after the death of Lord Berners, about whom I had heard so much from Desmond whose mother, Diana Mitford, had been a great friend of his. Lord Berners, Gerald Tyrwhitt-Wilson, was an idiosyncratic avant-garde composer (he was called ‘the English Satie’ and Stravinsky much appreciated his work), painter, novelist and all-round surrealist. Regular dinner guests at Faringdon included the Sitwells, Aldous Huxley and Cecil Beaton.

Lord Berners had left the very nice house to his younger boyfriend and heir, the equally unconventional Robert Heber Percy, known as ‘the Mad Boy’. I had met Robert once or twice casually without getting to know him to any great degree, but he was a closer friend of Desmond’s, whose family he knew very well. He invited Desmond and me for a weekend. Faringdon was in the Vale of the White Horse, twenty miles or so south-west of Oxford, and we decided to go there by horse. It was not a completely insane idea. I much enjoyed riding; Desmond was a very good horseman, who had also ridden while in the army.

It was rather longer a ride than we had anticipated. It seemed to take a day or two, although in reality I can’t imagine it took more than four or five hours. But it was great fun. The main difficulty of this rather strange, though most enjoyable, trek was how to complete it because of having to navigate our way through villages, gates, fields and private property. But we managed it and arrived late at night.

Staying at Faringdon was well worth the effort. We had a hilarious weekend, Robert Heber Percy

being extremely amusing and, between games of charades, regaling us with stories about Lord Berners, the 'Last Eccentric' as one biography of him was titled: he had placed an advertisement in the personal column of *The Times*, declaring that 'Lord Berners has left Lesbos for the Isle of Man', his telegraphic address was 'Neighbourtease', and he dyed his pigeons various colours, most notably pink.

He kept a clavichord in the back of his Rolls-Royce, once had a giraffe as a pet and in the grounds of Faringdon had built Folly Tower, which he was delighted to describe as 'entirely useless'. The epitaph on his gravestone read, 'Here lies Lord Berners/One of the learners/His great love of learning/May earn him a burning/But praise to the Lord/He seldom was bored'. We certainly had not been. We decided to have our horses picked up for the return journey and came back to Oxford more pragmatically but less interestingly by train.

On another occasion I had heard from Prince Henry of Hesse that he was coming over to England and wanted to see Oxford. So Desmond Guinness and I took him on a tour and thought a good trip would be to go to Cornbury, an Inigo Jones-style seventeenth-century house near Charlbury. At that stage Cornbury belonged to Togo Watney of the brewing family, who in a rather convoluted way was married to Desmond's stepmother's sister.

The house was most impressive, and the paintings were staggering. They had not yet had to be sold off. Prince Henry was a talented artist himself; his pictures were almost the size of miniatures. He was impressed by the fact that the art collection at the house included a small Botticelli of which he had never heard. It had originally been owned by the Pucci family of Florence, and was the first painting to feature forks (which the Puccis had introduced to Europe). A year or two after we had visited, it was sold back to Emilio Pucci, of the silk pyjama fame.

A rather more unfortunate happening surrounded the bizarre attendance of Constantine Nicoloudis, who, as his name suggests, was Greek and whose father had been a diplomat and accompanied the royal family to Egypt and South Africa during the war. The father was married to an extremely tough and energetic wife née Manos, a niece of Aspasia Manos, the commoner who married King Alexander I of the Hellenes in a secret ceremony following an elopement (King Alexander died in 1920 after being bitten by two monkeys. The ensuing fateful war against Turkey conducted by King Alexander's father Constantine I, who returned to the throne, led Winston Churchill to write that 'it was a monkey bite which caused the death of those 250,000 people').

Constantine arrived at Oxford in a blaze of notoriety, not quite publicity, since that did not exist in the form that it does today, but we all knew that he was coming and that he had some link with the Greek court. His early days as a student were symbolised by what we took to be his trademark: a batch of elegant white five pound notes which we thought he had come by from his parents or perhaps from even his own money. Constantine was a regular gambler. When he lost he became very mournful and dejected, and then his mood would lighten and the five pound notes became apparent once more.

It emerged that he had forged some cheques belonging to Teddy Millington-Drake. Teddy's bank in London had spotted the forgery after noticing a rather suspicious person coming in to cash them. Desmond and I could not believe that this was true because, although we occasionally went up to London with Constantine on the same train, we thought it would have been impossible for him to go to the City to cash a cheque in the time available, since banks in those days were only open between ten and three. So we thought that it was simply a somewhat hysterical response of Teddy's.

When the police politely came on a number of occasions to question us about Constantine, we stood on our hind legs and protested violently that he was an abandoned Greek in a sea of enemies. This went on for a week or two before Desmond said, 'Well, I'm afraid it's true, because he has forged

some of my cheques as well.’ We had to change our tune, apologise to Teddy for having imagined that he had invented the whole thing and generally to understand that this delightful and entertaining companion of ours had acted criminally.

The story ended in the expected manner. Constantine was sentenced to jail but after three or four weeks was released.

The next time I saw him was many years later, by which time he had married a rich English girl, and was spending his time taking choice guests sightseeing in Athens. We were wandering around the Acropolis, and I noticed Constantine with a gaggle of tourists. One of the people we saw him with cheered me by saying, ‘Constantine, Constantine, you *must* show us the Seven Horsemen of the Acropolypse’!

I certainly learnt a lesson from that experience: that you have to look much harder than one expects to be necessary before you are able to trust people where money is involved.

During one of the summer vacations I went on a trip to Europe with Michael Dormer. In Biarritz we met an amazing couple. The male half of the couple was the most elegant man I’d ever seen: tall, white-haired, with a moustache and an eyeglass. He was a Baron Wrangell, a nephew of the General Wrangell who commanded the White Armies after the onset of the Civil War in Russia in 1918. Baron Wrangell was picked by David Ogilvy, the founder of Ogilvy & Mather, to feature in one of his early ads as ‘the man in the Hathaway shirt’ sporting an eyepatch, which made him instantly recognisable.

George Wrangell’s father had been the Imperial Russian ambassador to Rome during the First World War. When the Revolution started his father’s brother, the General, told him, ‘Don’t come back, stay where you are. We will get all our money out, because what’s happening now is a nightmare. This Revolution is far worse than anybody realised.’ But George’s father responded, ‘No, I am an ambassador and I work for His Imperial Majesty. There is no question of deserting Russia in a time of need.’ He went back to look after his property, but didn’t get a penny as everything that belonged to the family had been looted.

When I met George Wrangell he was married to one of those terrifying rich American ladies; the particular specimen of the breed was called Kathy. The Wrangells were often in Europe and by arrangement large lunched on dry martinis and the odd olive. George himself, I discovered later, had been an admirer of my mother’s in Rome in the late 1920s. He and Kathy had bought a house in the south of Spain where they spent part of the time and the rest of the year they stayed at Claridge’s, the Ritz in Paris or in their apartment in New York. George rather took to me because of knowing my mother and we also made friends with Kathy.

She once said to Michael and myself that she had been married previously to a whisky manufacturer – ‘panther piss’, she called it – who had made a lot of money. ‘So then, boys, I had three other husbands, two of whom I shall never mention to anybody they were so dreadful, and the first one was a darling but he died of drink.’

I spent my twenty-first birthday in Biarritz with Michael, and the Wrangells gave us dinner. Afterwards we went off to the casino, where she said, ‘Here you are, kid. Here’s a chip for your birthday.’ When I looked at the chip it was a £1 counter, which I promptly put on number twenty-one and equally promptly lost.

Kathy was hilarious. She took us to a party thrown by American friends of hers, Tiny and Chuck, at their very grand house. The party, which we rather enjoyed, was equally grand. But Kathy got fed up and went up to Chuck and Tiny and said, ‘This is a ghastly party. I’m taking my guests away before they throw up in corners. The drink was disgusting, the food was worse, and your guests were ugly. Goodnight.’ Michael and I did what I call the ‘double wink’, winking simultaneously at her and the

wretched hosts. Next day, two o'clock came round, and whom did we see coming for a luncheon party but Chuck and Tiny. 'Oh darlings,' Kathy welcomed them. 'What a great party you gave for us last night. We had such fun. We couldn't stay too late because George was getting tired . . .' It was a swif education in social diplomacy. And about a world that no longer exists.

The education I was meant to be undertaking was a three-year course. In my last term I did become somewhat more interested in studying and asked the historian Karl Leyser, who was the person in charge of me, whether I could stay on for an extra postgraduate year. He said no. I mentioned this to another historian, Raymond Carr, whom I knew and who was at New College and he said, 'Well, you can come to New College', which was very generous of him, and which I have never forgotten. I was very grateful to him, but although my parents would have been very pleased if I had become an academic – although I think my mother might have expected me to become an unsuccessful literary critic – I very much wanted to earn money, to avoid the fragile financial uncertainty of my parents, and by that time I had already had a job interview.

I went to the Oxford University Appointments Board to look for a job one May afternoon before my Finals. There I was seen by a Mr Escrit, who asked me, 'What do you want to do?' 'I don't know,' I replied, 'but I want to make money. Where can I make money?'

Mr Escrit rummaged through a selection of leaflets and picked out two or three for me to look at. One was for the Metal Box Company in the Midlands: the job paid £600–£700 pounds a year. They were based in Perry Wood, not far from Birmingham. It sounded a long way away from the life I was used to.

The second job offered some similar salary, but was up in Leeds, ever further flung as far as I was concerned. And the third was for a company called Bache & Co., New York stockbrokers, but they only paid £400 a year. 'Where's their office?' I asked. 'Well, it would be in London.' That did it! My mind was made up. And the fickleness of fate had determined my future.

In my first year with Bache my salary was indeed £400 with two weeks' holiday and work even on other Saturday morning. I learnt how to deliver securities and transfer deeds in the Square Mile. And I also learnt how to work in an office with a simple calculating machine, which in those days was nothing more than a glorified abacus. One day I was asked to work out the amounts payable to each of our registered names, computing the gross amount of dividends payable and the various deductions, and withholding taxes. I got them all wrong.

The manager took me out for a cup of coffee at the Lyons Corner House below our office. In a certain amount of pain, he asked me whether I had learnt any form of book-keeping at college. I regretfully answered, 'No', but told him that, having studied medieval history, I could give him detailed information on the regnal dates of the Byzantine emperors between 867 and 1204. Therefore he suggested it might be safer for my arithmetical work to be checked by someone else in the office.

Within three years of starting work in London with Bache, I found myself getting married. I was living at Boodle's in those days and had been invited to a dinner party. The host had been a good friend of mine when I was studying at Cambridge but was a little dull. I thought to myself, 'Well, I'll go there if nothing better turns up.'

Nothing better did turn up and so I attended this dinner for six or eight of us. My date, as it were, was a very glamorous blonde who had arrived driving a beautiful grey Bentley convertible. We got on very well, and after the dinner she gave me a lift back to Boodle's in the Bentley.

The following week I was giving a cocktail party for my cousin Johannes Thurn und Taxis and I thought to myself that this glamorous blonde, Josephine, would be a perfect person to invite. She came – and we got engaged two months later. Needless to say, it transpired she had also decided to go to the

original dinner only if nothing better was on offer.

It turned out that our paths had crossed before that dinner party. Josephine thought that she had seen me once across the room at a fancy dress party in Chelsea, and that she had been invited along to a party I threw with Desmond Guinness in my rooms at Oxford, but we had only been briefly introduced and so had not had a chance to make any significant impression on each other.

She had also noticed my father, and his second wife, Diana, when she lived near him in Earls Court. Not knowing who he was, she and her mother had often speculated on the identity of the tall, distinguished, well-dressed gentleman and his pretty wife they saw in the restaurants on the King's Road.

Josephine was two years older than I was, and had gone to the ballet school at Sadler's Wells (run by the formidable Ninette de Valois), the precursor of the Royal Ballet School. But she was too tall to continue studying ballet past her teens and so to her great sorrow had to give that up. Instead she went to Rome where she studied singing for three years and had a wonderful time in the Rome of the early 1950s. But she had grown bored with Rome and had returned to London, where she had been working for the Social Services department in the East End while she thought about what she was going to do next. Although at the age of twenty-six she was, by the mores of those days, deemed very old to be unmarried, she had not felt under any especial pressure to find a husband.

After getting engaged, we went through a difficult phase, as I was earning relatively little money. Josephine's parents were initially very set against the idea of us getting married. It was understandable. Her father had fought in the war and been badly wounded; her grandfather had been a general commanding a battalion of Grenadier Guards in the First World War. The family were less than pleased about their only daughter wanting to marry a young German who was apparently penniless but also a Catholic: Josephine's family, the Lowry-Corrys, were staunch Ulster Protestants.

When we were married, at the Brompton Oratory in July 1957, it was a mixed wedding and we could not have organ music but no singing and no nuptial mass, only a blessing. What was quite entertaining about our wedding was that – as, unusually then, we were both only children and both our sets of parents were divorced – although all four parents were there they stood at least two yards apart from each other in the receiving line, which was hilarious. They were there, they were affable, but they certainly were not going to speak to each other.

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