

Transcripts of 3 chapters which relate only to the Seilern lineage, not Hennessy.

The Amazing Marriage

By

JOSSLEYN HENNESSY

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Family members mentioned are the following:

Father	Hugo Seilern	1840 - 1886	
Mother	Ida Zaluska	1841 - 1916	
Children	Ida (Idetchka) Seilern	1864 - 1944	married Philip Hennessy (1873-1954)
	Carlo Seilern	1866 - 1940	married Antoinette Woerishoffer (1875-1901)
	Jossleyn Hennessy	1902 - 1976	son of Ida (Seilern) & Philip Hennessy

Jossleyn Hennessy wrote two books -

"The Amazing Marriage" a biography of his parents Philip Hennessy and Ida Seilern

And

"Some Seilern Memoirs" in 1974

Chapter II The Heritage of the Aristocratic Zaluskas and Seilerns

My maternal grandmother, Ida Zaluska (1841-1916), was born in Austrian Poland, the tenth child of Count Charles Zaluski (1794-1846) and his wife Amélie (1803-1858). Ida was a neurotic, who created the tragedies in her life. In illustration of her character, my mother quotes William McDougall: "The man of unformed character is not integrated; he is moved by the crude impulses of his native tendencies and by the motives that spring from his various sentiments, but there is no governing centre, no dominant power that can control them, set them in due subordination to one another, or resolve incipient conflicts between them". Ida Zaluska wrecked her marriage, laid the foundations of the tragedy of my mother's marriage, and of the life-long adolescence of her son's character, my uncle Carlo.

My mother attributed her mother's persecution mania and perpetual self-pity to Mina, the old retainer who for years was nursemaid to Amélie's succession of children. Fanny, the baby of the family, two years younger than Ida, was Mina's favorite. Fanny could do no wrong, Ida no right. Mina was forever scolding and punishing Ida.

Yet Ida could have had a wonderful life.

The break-up of the Austro-Hungarian empire into penny packets in 1918, and the national animosities bred of two World Wars, ended an era when aristocratic society was international. Amidst today's democratic nationalisms, the kind of family to which I belong, with first cousins in the United States, France, Germany, Austria, and Poland, and family connections with Ireland, Holland, Italy, and various Austro-Hungarian successor states, is losing its links and its identity. To many people today, a Frenchman, a Pole or an Austrian is a foreigner, a person whose attitudes and customs are strange, often faintly ridiculous, probably "wrong". In the educated cosmopolitan pre-1914 world, such an attitude would have been unnatural when one travelled around visiting cousins of different nationalities.

Ida Zaluska (1841-1916) was born fortunate. She inherited a dowry of 50,000 gulden, say £50,000 in 1913 sterling. As a Zaluska she had the world of the nineteenth century cosmopolitan aristocracy at her feet. She was a pretty brunette. She had a natural elegance and taste in dress. Her gaiety and charm gave her great initial success in society everywhere. Young men crowded to dance with her. Mothers and fathers welcomed her for her beauty, her birth, and her dowry. But she rarely kept friends; sooner or later her sensitivity to fancied slights and imagined wrongs created a desert round her. "Poor little mother!" wrote her daughter, "happiness could have been hers, but the threads which she chose to weave her life's tapestry were rotten." She enveloped her husband, her daughter and her son in her neurotic self-pity.

In 1863, Ida Zaluska, aged twenty-two, married Count Hugo Seilern, aged twenty-three, a member of an Austrian family which had made its contribution to public life in the Holy Roman Empire. The family owed its fortunes to Johann Friedrich Seilern (1645-1715) who, by his abilities, rose from bourgeois origins to be the outstanding Imperial diplomat of his time and to be First Austrian Court Chancellor to the emperors Leopold I (1657-1705), Joseph I (1705-1711) and Charles VI (1711-1740). Charles VI, having no male heir, wished his daughter Maria Theresa to succeed him. To ensure this, Seilern drafted the famous **Pragmatic Sanction**, which remained the fundamental law of the Empire until its dissolution in 1918. He was "the architect of the Austrian monarchy".

My great-great-great grandfather, Christian August Seilern (1712-1801) was the Imperial ambassador in London from 1763 to 1769. He aroused the ridicule and contempt of Horace Walpole, but his friendliness to Great Britain and his diplomatic talents were appreciated by a series of Secretaries of State. He was the friend and patron of Joseph Sonnenfels (1733-1817), the theorist of "enlightened despotism" and was an active participant in the reforms of the Emperor Joseph II.

Hugo Seilern's marriage to Ida Zaluska was a love match. Ida poisoned it. After two or three years of scenes and reproaches they lived apart and Ida began a restless life wandering around Poland, Austria, Italy and France in a succession of impermanent flats, hotels, pensions and villas.

Hugo and Ida continued to meet at intervals. Their periodical re-unions would begin well but sooner or later Ida made scenes. "Poor father!" my mother wrote in retrospect, "he wanted to win his wife's love, share her life, live with his family... She could have had him at her feet. He loved her passionately madly... I realized this when I grew older and saw him with Maman. Papa had a warm heart and great nobility of character. In a letter to my mother that I read, he expressed his love for her delicately, charmingly... Papa was an atheist and a Free Mason, but he behaved more often like a Christian than Maman *. She passed happiness by. One cannot help feeling sorry for her. "

However many scenes Ida made, Hugo did not, according to my mother (Idetchka), answer back: he bore his cross in silence. When in 1879, Ida brought an action against him for a legal separation; the judge asked him what he had to reproach his wife. Quietly, without bitterness, he said "Nothing".

Over the years Idetchka* began gradually to see her father in a new light.

Note: My mother was christened Ida after her mother. Her parents called her Idetchka, Polish for "little Ida."

She wrote:

"I found it difficult to understand what was going on. Too young at first, for years separated from my father, subject to the influence of Maman, whom I used to see suffering, I could not form a clear idea of him. The charm of my father's personality attracted me. I sensed the quality of the man, of his way of life, of his remarkable intelligence but, especially when I was a girl, I could not be my natural self with him after years of Maman's complaints, criticisms, and false insinuations had seared my mind. He had no religion, while I, convent-educated, was still full of piety. He was not intolerant or bigoted, but his atheism created a barrier between us. He conceded the support that faith gave to those that had it, but he denied the necessity of religion and condemned the disdain of Christians towards those who had no faith."

My mother began a school essay: "Life, alas, is a road strewn with briars and thorns." She was ten years old when she wrote this.

That her father gambled away his wife's comfortable dowry was, in the judgment that Idetchka formed when she reached maturity, a compensation for his unrequited need for affection and his lack of a home life. This may have been so, but his mother must share some of the blame for his fecklessness. She (Antonie Seilern (1811-1877), née Baroness Krosigk) did not give him his inheritance but made him a modest allowance of 1,200 thalers a month, a substantial part of which he passed on for the upkeep of his wife and children. When he ran up debts, his mother paid them, but their relationship was not easy - sometimes they were on good terms, at others he refused to write or speak to her. She kept him thus like a schoolboy until she died in 1877 when he was thirty-seven. Only then did he become responsible for the management of his affairs. Hitherto he had lived for music. He was a pupil of Liszt and a friend of Brahms, with whom he played four handed; he wrote a number of charming pieces for piano and orchestra, which enjoyed some public success. But, on coming into his own, he struck out into a series of business ventures -- mostly backing new inventions, all of which were going to make his fortune. However, as Idetchka said on one occasion when she went to meet him: "Papa is arriving with the first million" adding later "He came but without the million" He earned a varying living until afflicted with cancer of the tongue. He suffered and when he could no longer speak, he played the piano to his wife and daughter. He died in poverty in Munich in 1886 when Idetchka was twenty-two. The sight of her father sinking slowly, painfully and bravely, added to her tragic memories of him.

Idetchka recorded that for the rest of her life she suffered from a recurrent nightmare in which she faced her mother in agony, filled with a sense "of helplessness, bitterness, even resentment that a child feels towards its parents... I seek to resist my mother's domination, her peremptory orders and arguments, full of evasions and excuses ••• " She concluded "but when I meditate on her character and her life, I am filled with indulgence and pity. My resentment fades."

Idetchka could have found the joys of family life in Austria, where she had Seilern uncles, aunts, and cousins innumerable in those days of large families. The Seilerns were well disposed towards her, her brother, and her mother. They were comfortably off, influential and "knew everybody". Idetchka did enjoy some happy times, going to balls and concerts with cousins. She continued her studies at the piano, which she had begun as soon as she could reach the keyboard. In Vienna, she did not work under the great Theodore Leschetizky (1830-1915), because he only took pupils when they had attained sufficient mastery to have professional ambitions (his pupils included Paderewski, Mark Hambourg, Moisewitsch, Katherine Goodson, and many others) but he used Fraulein Melanie Wienzkowska to prepare pupils for him, and Idetchka was among those whose talent Wienzkowska regarded as worth calculating period. She learned Leschetizky's technique based on a study of muscular movement and concentration on detail.

Hugo Seilern was his mother's favourite son and she adored Idetchka because she was her only granddaughter: this was enough to ensure that her daughter-in-law should quarrel with her. All the mothers-in-law's efforts at conciliation were useless. Ida's attitude made visits and invitations to parties eventually impossible.

Ida remained, however, on passably good terms with her Polish relations, so that her visits to Poland were the happiest days of the Idetchka's life.

Chapter VIII Uncle Carlo and the Great Blotting Paper Crisis of 1907

Some weeks before Patrick's death (Jossleyn's elder brother who died aged 7 months in 1901), Philip (Hennessy, Jossleyn's father) had looked at a neighbouring property for sale. Ifield Park was a three storeyed country house with thirteen bedrooms; drawing room, dining room, library, theatre (with proscenium, footlights, dressing rooms and auditorium to seat thirty), servants hall, roof observation-balcony (commanding lovely views over several miles north east and west) garage, stables, coach-house (beneath quarters for the coachman's family), conservatory with vines and figs, greenhouses (with rank upon rank of flowers) in pots, huge, middling, and small; long, narrow tanks covered with water plants; pools glimmering with gold fish; the warm, humid air, laden with exotic aromas); croquet, tennis, and archery lawns; a glorious, full grown copper beach, a supported weeping willow, traditional monkey-puzzle tree, summer house star-shaped rose beds, herbaceous border, high-pink-walled kitchen garden, orchard with loose box, the privacy of the whole ensured by a circle of thickly growing rhododendron bushes, hazelnut alleys, and fir and pine trees, pierced at a single point by a quarter of a mile drive guarded by a lodge in which lived the farmer and his family who rented the home farm.

Ifield Park entranced Philip. A late nineteenth century builder's speculation, architecturally the house was nondescriptly inoffensive, comfortable and spacious, and he rightly considered that, with its tree-encircled lawns and park lands, it was ideal for a country gentleman who wished to give leisurely Edwardian week-end parties in the summer, amateur theatricals in the winter, provide his guests with mounts for hunting or hacking, garage space for three or four cars, and for breakfast fresh eggs and milk from the farm. Always providing that one had the income to foot the bills, a point on which Ida was from the first apprehensive.

Ida had no idea of costs in England but she judged from the upkeep of her Villa Cornélia (whose garden was run on the *métayer* system (cultivation of land for a proprietor by one who receives a proportion of the produce) that Ifield Park with acres of roof to maintain, lawns, gardens and orchards to tend, was altogether too lavish. She would have preferred a modest four or five-roomed house and more land than a meagre twenty-five acres to rent or farm. Philip ridiculed her fears. The rent from the farm, he said, would be £100 a year; the farmer would supply labour to tend the gardens and orchards, the ample surplus produce from which could be sold in Crawley. Why, Ifield would not only pay for itself, it would make money. It is possible that these dreams could have been made to come true if Philip had known anything of horticulture, estate management, and farming, and been prepared for the year in, year out, slog of a farmer's life. His plans for Ifield were characteristic of the various glowing schemes, always on the verge of making a fortune, that he pursued until he joined Lloyds Bank in 1914. These

ventures resembled his novels in that they left behind a train of brilliant starts, each readily abandoned in favour of an even more dazzling idea.

Philip's ample income from writing was still, and was always to remain, in the future. Meanwhile Ida's allowance from her sister-in-law, Nettie (Seilern), was £800 a year. Full of doubts, but yielding to Philip's judgement, Ida bought Ifield for £3'600 with a mortgage of £2'000 on which the interest was £120 a year. She bought a carriage-horse, a hunter, a brood mare, a landau, wagonnette, dogcart, station waggon, furniture for the house and coachman's quarters; garden mowing machine and (what was to become to me) a fascinating water cart – a zinc barrel suspended from hinges on a creaking and boum-bouming push-carrier with two large flat-rimmed iron wheels.

On September 22, 1901 – twenty-five days after Patrick's death – as they were sitting down to breakfast, Philip asked Ida to get ready to catch the next train to Farnham, the station for Frensham Place, the country mansion that Carlo had rented for the summer. Nettie had died.

The loss of a loved and gracious sister-in-law (“the closest and dearest friend I ever had” Ida once told me), coming so soon after her own bereavement, was grievous. The loss of £800 a year was, in Ida's eyes, ominous: she would willingly have got rid of Ifield Park, in which they were not yet living as it was still in the hands of decorators, and furniture was being bought and delivered piecemeal; the mortgage was signed but they could sell the house, and find a modest alternative.

To Philip, Ida's attitude was defeatist. She was, he said, invariably hypnotised by forebodings of calamity. Carlo, as heir to Nettie's fortune, would, “of course” assume Nettie's obligations to his sister, besides there would be the income from Philip's writing and from letting the farm. As usual, Ida's lack of self-confidence yielded to Philip's carefree optimism.

He was, of course, right about the farm: it was let, if not for £100 a year at least for £24, plus the obligation to mow the lawns and maintain the gardens. He was also, of course, right about Carlo, who promised an allowance, if not of £800 at least of £500. But the trouble with Carlo throughout his life was that although he was wealthy, he was never quite wealthy enough. He always mustered pocket money to rough it at the Ritz or, when engaged in one of his periodical economy drives, to id it at the Grosvenor Hotel in Victoria Station (which, he pointed out, was a terrific economy on taxis between station and hotel). But life was so expensive that he was compelled to engage in a series of enterprises intended not only to make his own fortune but his sister's too – for – and I write this sincerely, without a trace of irony, in the light of my experience of uncle Carlo over thirty years – he was unselfishness, generosity, and bonhomie personified. Bonhomie is here the right word; it is often used in English as synonymous for “hail-fellow-well-met”, but its true meaning combines the notions of simple good-heartedness and good nature with guilelessness.

In their infinite resource for unearthing stupidly neglected schemes for making money, Philip and Carlo were identical, except that Carlo was always worried by his lack of money, whereas Philip more often than not rode resiliently over his, scattering generous tips right and left. There was, however, in Philip, as I hope to show, more than the superficial flâneur. Even if lacking in depth, his superstructure was complex. On the other hand, Carlo was straightforward, uncomplicated, and loveable at first sight, although more enduring relations required stamina, because his affairs were usually in some muddle and therefore a trial, sore to himself, sorer to Ida and others who had to deal with him.

When Carlo married Nettie, he found the sums settled upon her and the allowance made to him inadequate. He therefore cast around. He observed from the newspaper that people made fortunes on the London Stock Exchange. All you needed was

1. Some capital in hand,
2. Flair and
3. Inside information.

Carlo could always borrow (1), knew that he had plenty of (2) but he could only acquire (3) by becoming a member of the Stock Exchange and for this it was necessary to be a British subject. Carlo became naturalised (**His male descendants remain British subjects to this day.**)

He then proceeded to back the inside information so acquired until his mother-in-law (**Anna Woerishoffer**) said to him:

“I am rich but I'm not rich enough to bail you out every time you try to beat the market”.

Mrs. Woerishoffer's anxiety for the future of her grandsons led her to tie her

money up in a trust, which prevented Carlo from touching capital and gave him an income that would have been comfortable but for his discovery, half a century before Northcote Parkinson, that “expenditure rises to meet income.” Carlo, hurt by Mrs. Woerishoffer’s lack of confidence in his flair, and puzzled by her frivolous “je m’en foutism” (**I don’t care a damn**) towards sound investment, decided to pay her out by giving up the Stock Exchange; if, in consequence, her grandsons starved she might see the point.

Carlo was as much a slave to efficiency as to economy. He kept his clocks a quarter of an hour fast so that everyone should be in time for the theatre or a train. Curtains, however, persisted in rising, and trains in departing, before the scheduled hour whenever he turned up. Philip maintained that this was because theatres and trains observed Greenwich Mean Time and not Carlo’s Mean Time. After that, when Carlo announced the hour at which he wished something done, everyone would chorus “GMT or CMT?” Carlo would smile tolerantly and say “Well, just keep your eye on the clock.” He suspected that his household loitered, safe in the belief that his clocks gave them fifteen minutes in hand, so now and again, he would surreptitiously put them back to the correct hour, which made everyone thirty minutes late for their dentists or their dinners. Carlo would ask innocently “Didn’t you see the time?”

Philip, who was fond of his brother-in-law, used to say that Carlo was like a high-spirited terrier; he had the same wistfully intelligent expression; the illusion was complete if you went for a stroll with him. He never walked; he trotted with short, quick steps. He would dart from your side to look at a shop-window. Before you could join him, he would be off to study a poster elsewhere. After motors came in, if you suddenly heard hoots and screaming brakes, you would see a bespattered Carlo beaming at the traffic from the edge of the opposite pavement, with a “What-fun-life-is” smile stretched from ear to ear. It was best to walk steadily on. Carlo always came back to the house.

Periodically after Nettie’s death, Ida kept house for Carlo, his three small sons and their nurse, Julia. In 1907, she and Philip stayed with him for some time at 131, Harley Street, which he had rented.

On morning, as Carlo was rushing out of the house – he was always pressed for time – Ida called after him:

“Carlo, buy me some blotting paper, will you?”

Carlo put a harassed face round the door.

“What?” Quickly now, or I’ll be late.”

“We’re out of blotting paper,”

“Good God!” Blotting paper! Blotting paper!!”

Carlo shrugged expressive shoulders.

“As if I hadn’t enough on my hands with all this –“
he waved round while my mother’s eyes followed the circle in hopes of discovering what it was that he had on his hands – “without having blotting paper thrown in.”

The next day, King, the butler, came in to my mother and said:

“Some blotting paper has arrived, madam.”

“Oh? I thought Count Seilern might forget, so I bought a packet myself,” Ida smiled. Never mind, a few extra sheets will be useful.”

“There’s a van outside. With a ton, madam,” King said distinctly.

“A ton?”

“Twenty hundredweight, madam.”

“What does he want a ton for?” Ida asked, laughing in spite of herself.

“Maybe his lordship is thinking of writing a letter, madam” King said, strictly in character.

“How many sheets are there in a ton? Ida wondered.

“Several millions by the looks of it,” King said gloomily.

“Say there’s been a mistake and send it away,” Ida had decided, when Carlo trotted happily in.

“I’ve saved you £4 in housekeeping money, my dear Ida,” he announced.

“You have?” It was a sigh rather than a question.

“By taking a ton, I got a 20 per cent discount,” Carlo said triumphantly.

“I’ve already got a packet for a shilling.”

“Yes, at the rate of £20 per ton instead of £16,” Carlo scorned.

“Where shall I store it, my lord?” Kind said.

“Store it?” Carlo put on his “For-heaven’s-sake-must-I-do-everything-for-you” tone. “The house is big enough.”

“We might squeeze a hundredweight into the wine cellar – King began.

Carlo bristled at him.

“I will not have the claret disturbed. What about” – he thought rapidly – “one of the maid’s bedrooms?”

My mother and King, who were firm allies in the management of the household, exchanged glances.

“Where will the maid sleep?” Ida asked, mildly enough.

As my father used to say, my mother’s reasonableness only encouraged her brother’s aptitude for solving difficulties.

“Sleep?” Carlo snorted contemptuously. “On the blotting paper, of course.”

Suddenly inspiration seized him and he began to pace round the room. “A new use for blotting paper!” he cried. “We can furnish room with it! Wallpaper, carpets, chairs, chests of drawers, tables, beds, pillows, sheets, blankets – all made of blotting paper of different colours! There’s a fortune in it! And think of the convenience if you are an author. You can’t mislay it! There it is, all round you. Are

you writing on the mantelpiece?” (Carlo thought of all possibilities) “You don’t need to move – you blot there. Do you write in bed? You use the sheets! And what a room for children! They could throw ink at the walls – wallow in it – and only have to blot themselves on the floor to be ready for a party! And no more sweeping or dusting! You simply tear off the top sheet.” That’s where you’d make the money-“ Carlo said shrewdly – “on the re-fills. You’d have a monthly re-blotting day. It’s the idea of the century!

Philip entered. From the expressions with which everyone turned to him – Carlo rapt – King respectfully washing his hands of the whole thing – Ida signalling an S.O.S. – Philip saw that he was being called upon to play his recognised role as conciliation officer in awkward social situations.

“Carlo’s got the idea of the century,” Ida said.

“This century or the last?” Philip asked, deeply interested.

Carlo ran up excitedly and seemed about to leap all over him, but instead he began walking him rapidly up and down while he explained. When he finished, Philip said impressively:

“Carlo! If people would only listen to you –

“”There!” Carlo rounded on the other two. You see! Philip understands at once.”

“ – They would be richer and happier,” Philip continued, in the tones of a Victorian moralist. “But, alas! You are, as usual, a century before your time. Remember that the Inquisition imprisoned Galileo for fooling about with the sun –“

“But I’m not “fooling about” with blotting paper,” Carlo interrupted with some heat.

“I’m only putting the stupid official viewpoint,” Philip said. “Remember that it took half a century to persuade the War Office to adopt the breech-loading gun. People will make absurd objections. They’ll say that a blotting paper room would absorb the damp in wet weather.”

“But you could devise a non-absorbent blotting paper,” Carlo cried.

“Of course, you could,” my father agreed warmly. “Blotting paper which didn’t blot! It would catch on like – he searched for a simile.

“Wild fire that didn’t burn,” Ida said.

“That suggests an advertising campaign,” Philip said. “you know the sort of thing: “Keep that escutcheon blotted! Or – “

“Mothers! It’s baby’s blotting time! “Carlo nodded enthusiastically. Ida rose.

“Whether it’s GMT or CMT, it’s certainly MLT” she said.

“What’s that?” Carlo said, suspiciously.

“My lunch time,” Ida answered, moving towards the dining room.

Carlo looked at the clock, which said 1.35. He turned slightly away from Philip and stole a glance at his watch.

“It’s all right, it’s only – “ he began, checked himself, and finished carelessly: “Twenty-five minutes to two.”

“I’ll just wash. Don’t wait for me,” Philip said waving Carlo and Ida to the dining room.

Quietly, he told King to put a hundredweight of blotting paper in the cellar and to send the rest back. Carlo’s interest was always absorbed in the things and people in front of him. Philip judged that if the blotting paper were out of sight, he would forget it.

Carlo received the bill a few days later, and my mother feared that this would re-open the question of the maid’s sleeping arrangements, but by that time Carlo was working on a plan for reducing his transport costs by keeping an elephant, so although he regretted the opportunity missed in blotting paper, he was only half-hearted about it.

Unfortunately, when he came to write the cheque, he unerringly spotted that since he had taken only one hundredweight, Frank Smythson had reduced the discount from 20 to 10 percent. Instantly blotting paper obliterated elephants from his mind.

“I’m not going to throw money away like this,” he said angrily. But after a moment, a “big business” expression came over his face, and he retired to his study at a purposeful trot.

Later Carlo said:

“I’ve solved the storage problem. Frank Smythson agreed to take 15 hundredweight back.”

“We’ve got one hundredweight here” Ida said. “What have you done with the remaining four?”

“I’ll give you two guesses,” Carlo said, dancing from one foot to the other in excitement.

“You’ve taken a suite at the Savoy for it?” Ida suggested.

“Wrong!” Carlo replied seriously. “Give up?”

“You’ve deposited it for safe custody in the strong room at your bank,” Philip said after careful thought.

“How did you guess?” Carlo was crestfallen.

“It’s the one place where he could keep it for nothing,” Philip explained to Ida, and he managed to inject such admiration into his voice that Carlo’s

spirits were restored and what was remembered in the family (until the Agadir crisis of 1911 blotted it out) as the Great Blotting Paper crisis of 1907 was over.

Note: Nothing, incidentally, came of Uncle Carlo's idea of keeping an elephant to economise on horses and station waggons to fetch the luggage of his weekend guests from the station to his house in the country, because (so he claimed) Philip persuaded Carlo that the economies that he would make on the horse transport would be outweighed by the fines that he would incur for frightening the trains with his elephant.

The aftermath was that the one thing with which, despite several financial crises, Ida was always bountifully supplied was the finest quality of Ford's pink blotting paper. I myself used the last sheets in 1928, some twenty-one years later, which suggests that Carlo had, in sheer size, brought off the biggest bargain of the century. I confess to have invented the price and discount that Smythsons' offered, the real figures of which have long been forgotten. It is, of course, possible that the story may have lost nothing in countless re-tellings, but its spirit is in keeping with the characters of the protagonists – and that in a way which emerges only after reflection.

In the first place, Carlo was the son of his parents' broken marriage and of his mother's self-pity: he retained an eleven-year old's enthusiasm for new experiences and a teenager's maturity of judgment. But, whatever his weaknesses, he was a sentient human being. Here, in illustration, are extracts from the letter that he wrote in French to his mother (**Ida Seilern, born Zaluska**) on September 22, 1901, a few hours after the death of his beautiful 26-year-old wife, Nettie, after three and a half years of marriage:

Darling Maman,

When you receive these lines you will already have learned of the terrible blow dealt me by the loss of my beloved Nettie, the staunchest, most loving of wives, the best of mothers. My family happiness which, thanks to her unique qualities, was perfect, is shattered for ever. I am still completely unable to realise the extent, and the tragic consequences, of my misfortune: when I think of my three motherless darling children, I become crazed with grief.

I know that, despite the sad misunderstandings that came between you and her (**see Note below**), you loved her sincerely and appreciated her exquisite qualities of heart. I know that my tears, which keep brimming over, will mingle with yours and that together in our grief we shall forget our differences in the past...

Towards the evening yesterday the poor child lost consciousness.... She died at four this morning without regaining it and probably without any idea that her end was near...

I cannot write more today, dear Maman, because I am prostrate....

Poor darling Ida and poor Philip, they also have had a terrible shock and are still overcome by their own sufferings....

I kiss you hands and commend myself to your motherly compassion.

Your unhappy Carlo.

Note: Ida Seilern, Carlo Seilern's mother (born Zaluska) apparently did not get along with Nettie. Chapter II (above) partly explains this state of affairs.

Nettie lies in the far corner of the cemetery at Farnham, Surrey, in a tomb which, beneath the arms in coloured relief of the Seilern and Aspang family, bears an epitaph taken from Archbishop Fénelon (1651-1715): "Gathered by the angels, her death was asleep and her soul knew not the agonies of its passing. While in our midst she was a gentle zephyr, good, sweet, tender, affectionate – fleeting."

The epitaph is among that minority which is both beautiful and true. I wish I knew who took the time and pains to seek it out for Nettie. Since Francois de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon was an aristocrat and a prince of the Church, a combination for which Philip had a special cult, and since he had a copy of Fénelon's Telemachus in his library at Ifield, Philip may well have been responsible. It would have been characteristic of his urge to give pleasure to others which found expression in graceful flattery or, as in this possibility, a gracious need.

Ida and Philip scrambled through 1903 to 1906, partly by paying some lengthy visits to generous friends, such as Dr. Ludwig Mond, father of Robert and Alfred (**Later the first Baron Melchett**), or to Count Alexander Perpocher, and his wife, Rosette, daughter of Ida's aunt Fanny Zelenska (née Zaluska). My parents and I, aged 3, spent Christmas of 1905 on the Perpocher estate at Neudorf Silesia (at that time part of Germany). Then uncle Carlo helped out by inviting Ida to keep house for him at 131, Harley Street, and again by renting Ifield for a summer.

But Philip's dependence on his wife's allowance, and on prolonged visits, irked Carlo and he periodically lectured him on his responsibilities as a husband and a father and on the need for any self-respecting man in his position to get himself a job and an income of his own. Now, an average man, and especially an average brother-in-law, clearly vulnerable, as Philip was, to such criticisms, might easily have responded by taking offence, quarrelling, or developing an attitude of hostility towards Carlo, perhaps refusing to meet him. Philip was neither an average man nor an average brother-in-law. He listened patiently, and refrained

from exploiting opportunities for “What about you?” retorts. He invariably left Carlo in a pleasant glow at having accomplished his duty and grateful towards Philip for having made it so easy. But although above the average, Philip was no superman. His way of getting his own back was to tell amusing and somewhat patronising stories about "**ce pauvre Carlo**" – such as the Great Blotting Paper crisis, of which the basic fact comes from Ida but the colour and style of the story from Philip – which held Carlo up to ridicule, gentle and affectionate, so that no one could take offence, but which at the same time revealed Philip as the kindly, sophisticated man of the world, getting Carlo out of scrapes and smoothing everyone’s path.

I can’t help pointing out that Philip’s technique not only assuaged his wounded vanity but that, in contrast with many, who do this by spreading venom and ill-will, Philip spread innocent laughter.

Chapter XXVI Carlo Squares the Circle and Makes Legal History

With the end of the war Ida's respite from her financial calvary ended. Mrs Anna Woerishoffer, who had generously paid Carlo's allowance to Ida during the war, now gave him an interim allowance of Swiss francs 5'000 a month, out of which she expected him to meet all his obligations until he had found a way, if he could, to recover his war-sequestered American funds. One result was to restore unpredictability to Ida's income, because Carlo found it impossible to live on this allowance.

However, in 1921, Ida had a stroke of good fortune; she sold Ifield Park for £2'500. Had she invested this capital conservatively it could have brought her an acceptable income of £125 a year, which would have at least given her a stable basis. But what did she do with it?

She gave £100 to her eighteen-and-a-half-year-old son (**note: presumably Patrick Hennessy**), who had never before had more than £5 in his pocket. This he went up to London to spend on two good bespoke suits, a diner jacket, an evening tailcoat, shirts and ties totalling some £50, which was a sensible investment, and partly in entertaining his friends to the carefully dished and wined luncheons which Philip's example had taught him to regard as normal. Hardly had Ida given this £100 away when she received a letter from Norah asking to be paid the £180 that she had put up for Philip in 1912 and another from Philip saying that it would help him in the bank if she entrusted her capital to his care. By return of post she sent Norah £180 and Philip £2'000.

Did she then spend nothing on herself?

I (**note: Josslyn Hennessy**) told her that she should buy a good tailor-made coat and skirt, that classical outfit for so many occasions. But neither she nor I knew anything about ladies' tailors. So, having heard that Redferns were top of the dressmaking league, I took her there. Now, Redferns did not make classic cut coats and skirts expected to last many years. They catered for a clientele which could afford to follow annual changes of fashion. They designed specialty clothes which dated quickly. What was more, their designers were old-fashioned and looked back to the Edwardian era. Consequently Redferns provided Ida with a bizarre navy blue, black-braided serge combination, whose coat reached to below her knees, which she wore for the next ten years, happily unaware that with each passing year she looked ever more quaintly like a survival of a pre-World War I fashion plate.

Ida had taken a house in Godalming to enable her to send me to Charterhouse as a day-boy (which cost £10 per term). I was due to go up to New College, Oxford, in September, 1921. Ida foreseeing that my life as what was then known as "a young man about town" would be centred on London, and wishing to make a

home for me there, surrounded by the family furniture and pictures, decided to buy the long lease of 68 Boundary Road, St. John's Wood, for £900, which sum she requested Philip to return to her out of her Ifield capital. As the days sped by and she heard nothing from Paris, she wrote again and began to worry. At the eleventh hour, when she was at her wits' end and on the brink of losing her deposit, she received Philip's cheque. Of the balance of £1'400 in his possession, she never saw a penny. Mrs Woerishoffer, having ceased to pay Carlo's allowance in January 1922, Ida scraped along for the next fourteen months, by letting rooms at 68 Boundary Road and by pawning jewellery.

What did Philip do with the money from Ifield Park? His salary in 1921 was £850 a year, sufficient to live in comfort but not to cut a dash. Philip now began to entertain more freely, but he did not blow the whole of Ida's capital. First, he paid out £1'400 at the rate of £85 per term to keep me at Oxford for four years. For this I have never ceased to be grateful to him, because Oxford gave me insights into the meaning of systematic thought and of intellectual honesty and provided lifelong aspirations and loyalties. Secondly, Philip set about extricating Carlo from one of the abracadabrant predicaments tailor-made for one of Philip's rollicking after-dinner fantasies.

In 1921, Carlo was threatened with drowning in a rising sea of debts while all the time he was, mixed metaphorically, sitting on a goldmine. All that he had to do was to persuade the Home Office Naturalisations Department that it was perfectly feasible for a man of Carlo's gifts to fight in an enemy army throughout four years of war without for one moment faltering in his allegiance to the British crown. That done, his American funds, accumulating handsomely the while, would shower upon him like rupees from a pagoda tree. I remember the late Sir Francis Smith, senior partner of Messrs Lee and Pemberton, solicitors to Mrs Woerishoffer, telling me at the time that if Carlo won such an appeal it would be the first case known to history – legal, scientific, political or economic – in which the appellant had squared the circle. But whatever unimaginative Soames Forsytes like Francis Smith thought, this was one of those ventures in which Philip saw the gleam of gold in the crock at the rainbow's end. He found solicitors to brief King's Counsel to argue the case – the costs of which absorbed the balance of Ida's Ifield capital and of a second windfall which came her – and Philip's – way.

The case came up before a judge in the Law Courts in the Strand. The crux went something like this :

Counsel for the Crown : "You fought in the Austrian army on the Italian front?"

Carlo : "Well, you see –"

Counsel : "Yes or no – Did you fight on the Italian front?"

Carlo (reluctantly) : "Yes."

Counsel : "Not content with mere routine, you fought with such distinction that you

won the great golden medal for valour?”

Carlo (gathering himself for a long explanation) : “Well, you –“

Counsel : “Yes or no. Were you awarded the highest Austrian distinction for valour?”

Carlo : “But –“

Counsel : “Yes or no?”

Carlo, puce with repressed emotion, shrugging shoulders of mountainous frustration :
“yes.”

Counsel to Carlo with exquisite courtesy : “Thank you very much.” To the judge
quietly and pregnantly; “That, your honour, is the Crown’s case.”

It was now the turn of Carlo’s counsel to put him through a number of hoops –
which he did so unimpressively that an increasing smugness appeared in the
expression of counsel for the Crown.

At last Carlo’s counsel came to the Austrian campaign in Italy.

Counsel : “There are three classes of the Imperial golden medal for valour. Which
were you awarded?”

Carlo (proudly) : _ “The first class.”

Whereupon counsel for the Crown beamed at Carlo’s counsel, who continued
apparently unaware of the satisfaction that he was giving his opponent : “Tell his
honour precisely for what you were awarded the golden medal of the first class.”

Carlo, showing signs of acute embarrassment and confusion, murmured
something inaudible.

The judge: “I did not catch that.”

Counsel for the Crown and for Carlo simultaneously : “Louder please!”

Carlo raising his voice to bare audibility : “For playing Vingt-et-un.”

There followed a few moments of total silence.

Counsel for the Crown :”Really your honour, I protest –“

Carlo’s counsel : “One moment, my learned friend – “ To Carlo :” Why were you
awarded a medal for playing Vingt-et-un?”

Carlo (apologetically) : “Well, you see, I was playing it in the face of the enemy.”

At this point unrestrained laughter broke out not only in the public gallery but
amongst the court officials.

The judge (with the remotest hint of a smile in his voice) :

“Unless the witness is allowed to tell his story without interruptions, I shall have
the court cleared.”

To Carlo : “Proceed.”

Carlo : “The front had been stabilised for some time. There seemed nothing to do, so a friend of mine and I descended into a deep dug-out to play Ving-et-un. He is a great gambler,” Carlo explained ingenuously.

“And you are too”” asked Counsel.

” When I play, I play seriously,” Carlo conceded. “Anyway my friend and I were so concentrated on our game and the dug-out was so deep and the schnapps so – I mean,” Carlo interrupted himself hastily, “We did not notice that the battle had resumed above ground. Our sergeant major looked in and said “We are isolated, sir. The enemy has pushed back the platoons on either side o us. What are your orders? “

“If we’re isolated, we can’t retreat” I said, dealing a fresh hand. “Carry on sergeant major.”

Counsel: “You went on playing”

Carlo, shrugging: “There was nothing else to do.”

Counsel: “For how long?”

Carlo, re-shrugging: “I can’t say. It may have been hours or days before the sergeant major returned to report that the enemy had been driven back on our right and left and that the general was inspecting the position in person. “Very good sergeant major,” I said. “Show the general everything he wants to see.”

Counsel: “And you went on with your game?”

"Naturally!" said Carlo. "I was at that point in my system when I was losing heavily. It would have been simple bankruptcy to stop then. Eventually, however, we heard the sergeant major say “This way, sir, they are down here...” We jumped to our feet. We saluted. The General seemed deeply moved. When at last he could speak, he said: “By holding on to this key position, you have saved the front, and while the storm raged above and all round you, you continued to play cards with the utmost gallantry. I am proud to decorate you on the field of battle.”

By this time the court, the police and the public gallery were frankly holding their sides and the judge made no attempt to repress their merriment. He sat concealing his lips with his hand, a slight quiver in his shoulder.

When at length Carlo’s counsel could again make himself heard he turned to the judge and said:

“You will have observed, your honour, that Count Seilern was too busy playing cards to fire a single shot a His Majesty’s allies. That is my case.”

That, at least, was the report of Carlo's case that Philip gave at a number of delighted dinner parties. I myself attended the court. I do not remember what was said but I have a clear recollection that Counsel for the Crown put a series of extremely awkward questions to Carlo and that he replied with such transparent honesty, not to say ingenuousness, that the judge obviously took him to his heart. Be that as it may, he restored Carlo's British nationality.

"He must have been crazy" Sir Francis Smith said to me in disgust.

"Who?" I asked. "Carlo or the judge?"

"Both," Sir Francis said.

According to Ida's autobiography Carlo recovered £60'000 from the U.S.A. He repaid Philip generously for his expenses, time and trouble. Ida urged him to set £20'000 aside in a trust giving her the income for life and the capital thereafter to go to Manny, Carlo's son by his second marriage. But Carlo pooh-poohed this timid proposal. He was deep in schemes for making all our fortunes, one essential preliminary of which was to spend his newly acquired £60'000 as soon as possible.

About the author

Josselyn Hennessy was Charles Hugo Seilern's (only) first cousin. He was educated at Charterhouse and New College, Oxford. He obtained an Honours degree in History, and a Diploma with Distinction in Economics.

On leaving Oxford, he was successively on the staffs of Lloyds Bank and the Chartered Institute of Secretaries in London, and the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris. He has been fluent in French from his earliest years.

Between 1931 and 1937 he was Reuters correspondent in Paris and the Chief Paris correspondent of the News Chronicle, covering innumerable economic and political conferences and crises. He travelled widely in Europe and reported the Spanish Civil War. His despatches annoyed the Franco régime so much that they posted his photograph on the frontier with a reward for his capture, but he cannot remember how much he was worth.

The President of the French Republic created him a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour with the citation "For the greatest services to the cause of Franco-British friendship".

In 1937 Viceroy Lord Lintithgow appointed him Director of Public Relations to the Government of India to reorganise its press and public relations department. In 1942 he was sent to Washington DC to inaugurate The Government of India's Information Services in the U.S.A. and Canada.

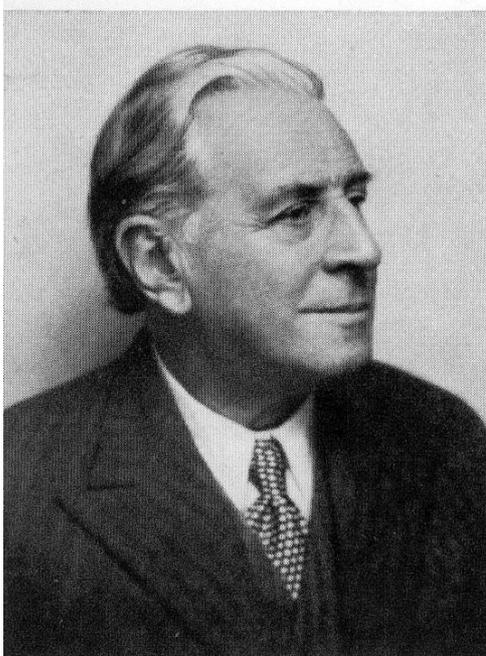
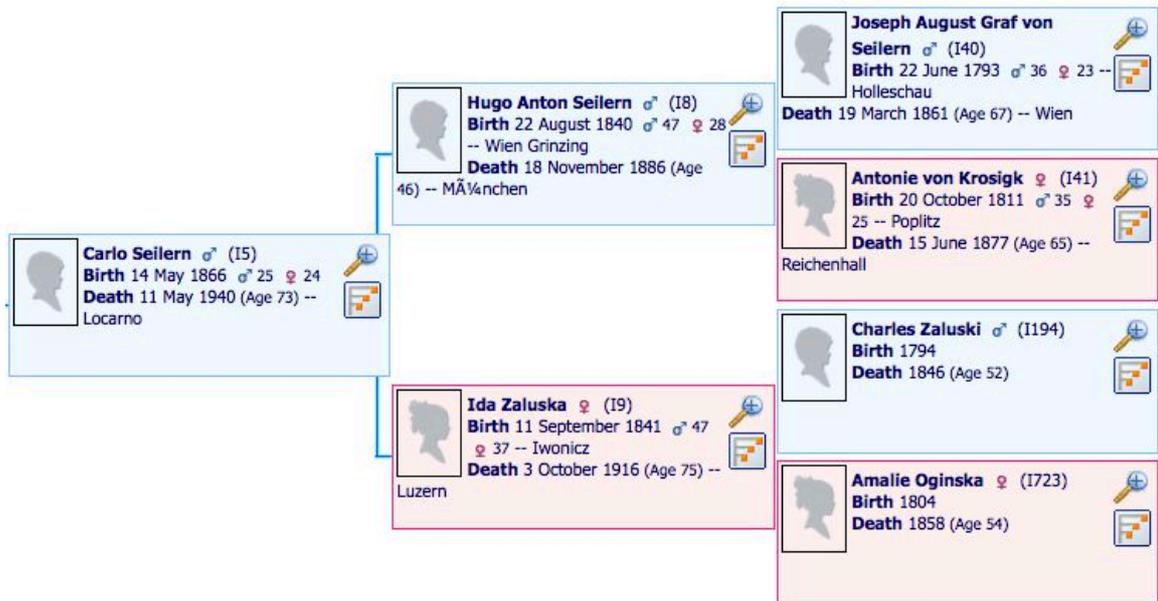
In 1946, he returned to India as special correspondent of the Sunday Times to cover the last days of the British Raj. Always to the fore amidst the scenes of flames and violence, he was ambushed twice in Pathan tribal territory in the company of Jawaharlal Nehru.

Since his return to the U.K. in 1953 he became a frequent contributor to Encounter, The Spectator, The Economist, The Listener, The Times, New Society, and many other publications.

He has participated in innumerable sound and television broadcasts in the U.K., the U.S.A., France and India.

Pedigree CARLO Seilern

Hugo Seilern died in Munich aged 46 and his son Carlo, my grandfather, died in Locarno aged 73 when I was 4 years old so I have no personal recollection. All I know is what I read.



Carlo Seilern (1866-1940) married Antoinette (Nettie) Woerishoffer (1875-1901). They had 3 sons. AW died giving birth to Antoine S. (1901-1978).

Family tree

