

Letters from Lela Sheehan, nee Elizabeth O'Grady, in Earl's Court,
(widow of David Henry Middleton-Stewart), to Charlo (C.E. M-S, her son)
in response to his questions. The Col Stewart mentioned is Colonel W.
Burton Stewart, of documented Craighall lineage.
These were transcribed from her scrawl, by Janet Macswiney.

26.1.1935

26.1.35

My dear Son,

I wrote to you on Sudday a long letter most of it was replies to your questions—This Col. Stewart who says he is a cousin of yours, he may be therefore a son of the Stewart who disappeared because this man was a married man with children—you ask him about his father—mind you his mother might not have told the children about the father's "disappearance" because what he did in a temper, a rash act, still he would have been had up for murder. The mother might have told the children that he was dead—I think I was told ^{Fanny} that he was a ship's Captain, your Dad or your Grandmother told me that

Now regarding your idea of a Boarding-house for girls, you mean Indian girls who come here for passing in the Professions, yes, it would be good because they have to find their own Digs etc. (here she goes on about unemployed Ex-Servicemen)

Look at David and Frank—my sister's Winnie's sons. David through his open folly was down and out here in London, and in Rough ton House—a place for down and outs who must pay 1/6 for a bed and think a cup of tea in the morning—within five minutes of receiving their letter from there I went to them, took them to a restaurant, talked things over, I spent a lot of money over them, took them to my darling little home in Ireland, did my best for them, but David spoiled the chance of a lifetime that came to Frank (i.e. Ben). It is too long a story—but I was disgusted with David's behaviour—Frank joined the I.R.A. I never saw him again—I heard he was wounded etc. Then David went off to Australia, had a number of girls at the boat to wish him good-bye—probably he told them all separately that he wd. marry as soon as he cld. I never recd. a single P.C. from him—Ingratitude is my fate—I am paying the debt in this life for something I must have done in a previous existence before my reincarnation. In my next life, I will have "paid the debt" and hope for better treatment—Well, my dear, I am jolly hungry so must say good night—

With love, your ever loving mother,
Lela.

Letter No 2- the original of this one's really difficult to read. She perhaps died shortly after writing this. There is no further correspondence from her, and no record of her death, (yet) Ian. Take some parts with a few grains of salt- she has some facts wrong, but it's still interesting.

55A Longridge Road,
Earl's Court.
27.1.35.

My dear Son,

.....
Now to your questions regarding your dear father and my marriage—

Now tell me what girl under 20 when marrying will bother her head about what district the priest comes from, when and where did her bridegroom's father die and how many years he and his mother lived in India before he married and whereabouts was the ship that went down with his father and all their riches.

Your questions are too funny but I will reply to the best of my ability, at least what I was told by your father—what Jack told his wife, my sister, and she told you, I can't vouch for—

Now, first of all, I was not married in 1880 but on July 7th, 1881 and you were born in April, 1882 exactly 9 months and 12 days after—If you ask the Priest in Nagpore about Father Benistrend or Benistran, who married us in Shegaum they will know what district that was—I could not tell you how many years the old father was lost at sea, but your Dad told me that he was 21 or 22 when he drove down to the Bender (her writing really is awful. J.M-S) and was told that the ship had gone down and when he married me he was 33 3/4—I never bothered to find out how old he was. Now to you numbered (PTO)

questions. But before I go on I must tell you that your Dad's father had a brother, a ship's Captain I think, a married man who in a temper got hold of one of his men and threw him over board and he was drowned-fearing the Law would get him and punish him, he "disappeared"- Nobody, not even his wife or anyone could get to know where he had gone to, some say America.

Your father's father had a Plantation in the West

DH DT

India (where Uncle ^{was} sold the plantation) and went to Bombay-the whole family Fanny and Minnie too. The family were continually going backwards and forwards to Newcastle to Bombay where almost all of them and our relations are buried. Then you say that Aunt Winnie told you that "when David was disinherited he was brought back from America". They were all Davids. What David does she mean (not My David, your father because he was never in America) "by his cousin Dundas". Who is he, at all at all?

How to your questions, but I must put some more coal on the fire.

1. Was he Drowned off Bombay or Madras? I don't know but it must have been Bombay.
2. Roughly how many years before you married? I could not say when but maybe 13 or 14 years.
3. Did Dad's mother die in Bombay and if so, how many years after you were married? She died and was buried in Bombay but I could not tell you how many years.
- 4 and 5. Buried in Bombay.. she was not present when you were christened.
6. Was she present when you were married and did she sign the marriage register? She was present in Shegaum but did not sign the register- I think my mother and brother did. I did not bother. Neither do I know where your Dad's parents were married. What had it to do with me? Yes, I did hear that one child was buried at sea, Red or Blue, I don't know.

It would be interesting after all these years to know will you be able to get or claim any property, Craigiehall, Dalmeny or Newhalls?

P.S. 30.1.35.

I don't know whether you know, I think I told you long ago that your Dad was in the I.C.S at Nassick in his young days, came out to the billet from Usher College, a Catholic College. How long he was in the billet I don't know but he resigned it because his boss spoke to him for being unpunctual continually and he objected to the Indians in the same office so he just walked along and sent in his resignation then went off to Bombay, whether that was before he got news that his father had gone down in his ship, I don't know the name of it or whether it was confirmed that it ~~had~~ did go down with all hands or what really did happen-It was however after he chucked the I.C.S, long after, that he joined the G.I.R.R and was given straight away the billet as Station Master. He was offered better jobs but he said no, he was content. Many years after, he met me. He was known to be a confirmed bachelor-but he met me on 3rd Feb., on 14th. he proposed (had a hat raffle..his name came out) and we married on 7th. July same year.

ICS = Indian Civil Service.

G.I.R.R. { General Indian Provincial Railways }
Grand Imperial Provincial

