

The House
Without
a Story

Victor MacClure

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The House Without a Story

TELLING HOW AN INQUISITIVE TRAVELER IN A
LOVELY ISLAND
OF THE MEDITERRANEAN DISCOVERED THE
STRANGE
SECRET OF A DULL, GRAY BUILDING IN ENGLAND

By Victor MacClure

I failed in my attempt to explain to Raymond just why I liked the gray house. A square, dull-looking building of three stories, it is set on the brow of a hill above the river at Clearmouth, standing half left to the southerly gales from the sea, as if taking their force on its shoulder.

Except for one in either gable, all its windows are to the front. It presents to the roadway behind it a blank face, save for a doorway covered by a porch of extreme ugliness, with

unrelated panes of colored glass. It looks shut in, close, damp.

"Why? Why?" asked Raymond, puzzled by my quite inexplicable liking.

"I don't know," I said feebly. "It makes me think of—of secrets."

My friend is an American editor, and I think that for a moment his journalistic instinct faintly flickered.

"Secrets?" he repeated. "Has it a story?"

"I don't suppose so," said I; "no more than most houses have stories."

During his visit Raymond said nothing more about the house, but it must have been in his mind. At any rate, when I saw him into the train for London, almost his last words were about it.

"If you should happen to rake up anything about that house," said he, "let me know when you write."

I gave my promise, but forgot all about it until one day, in the barroom of a Clearmouth inn, a chance remark from a very old man reminded me of it. John Hogbin happened to say that the finest-looking man he had ever seen in his life was a commercial traveler who had once occupied "the gurt ugly house on the hill."

At my questioning, old John informed me that his sister Dinah had been a servant in the house, so I carried my inquiries to her. I got quite a simple story from her.

II

A tall man, whom all the village guessed to be a commercial traveler, but who "looked like a prince," appeared one day in Clearmouth and rented the house on the hill above the river. None knew whence he had come, or anything about him, and he did not vouchsafe any information. Furniture was put into the house after it had been cleaned and redecorated, and then he brought his wife and a woman servant. Dinah Hogbin was engaged to help the woman servant.

The wife, in village opinion, was a pretty little thing and good-natured, but not of the same class as her tall and handsome husband. In her dealings with the local tradesmen, or with any one whom she encountered by chance, she was friendly and smiling, but she did not mix at all with the people. The rector called on her at the beginning, but as her church attendance was irregular he quickly dropped the habit; and so did the lay members of the church, when they found that their calls were not returned.

Mrs. Frewin did not seem to mind this partial ostracism; nor, though her husband was often away for long periods, did she appear to feel lonely. His absences intrigued the

villagers, but they seemed to have no effect on his wife's contentment. According to Dinah Hogbin, the little lady of the gray house was as happy as a bird.

Nor was it indifference toward her tall husband that kept her placid and content. News of his approaching arrival never failed to set her ablaze with excitement and anticipation. For all her easy temper, she was scrupulous at such times to see that her servants should have the house speckless.

Here, then, was no house of mystery. Its inmates were a loving wife and an affectionate, if often absent, husband. If there was any mystery at all, it was about Frewin, and that, perhaps, was due more than anything else to his aristocratic bearing and handsome presence, to his cultivated manner of speech. These attributes, the village felt, were unusual in commercial travelers. The chances are that if Frewin had been ordinary looking, Clearmouth would not have bothered about him at all.

What was certain about him was that he did not lack money. The house was well run, the bills of the local tradesmen were paid as soon as rendered, and Mrs. Frewin never heard of any sickness or want in the village without being quick, and even lavish, with help.

There was no story here. The Frewins occupied the gray house for five years, during which time the prettiness of the little lady grew a trifle rounder. Frewin came and went in the same way all the time. Then, as suddenly as they had come, and with as little advertisement, they left the village. None

knew where they went. Dinah thought that they had gone abroad for the benefit of Mrs. Frewin's health.

"So you see, Raymond," I wrote to my friend, "there is no mystery about the gray house—nothing sinister. It has changed hands several times since then, but it has never been empty for long at any time. There is no story."

III

Some time after writing so to Raymond, my work took me to Majorca.

I had been living for some months in Palma before I found time to revisit the northwestern and more beautiful coast of the island. It was idly, and with no purpose beyond sight-seeing, that I climbed the conical hill on which are peppered the houses that make up the little town of Deya. I thought that from the summit of the hill I could look down the valley, with its terraces of orange and lemon and olive trees, to the *cala* where the fisher folk dwell on the edge of the turquoise water.

Well, it is a lovely view that one gets from the plaza of the church that crowns Deya hill. In headland after colored headland the coast runs northeasterly to Soller, the white road hugging it, winding with it. Behind Deya rise the sheer cliffs that keep the town and valley in shadow till the late forenoon.

To get an uninterrupted view down the valley itself, one apparently needed to get over or through the gate in a rather high wall that separates the plaza from the little burial ground on the seaward edge of the hilltop. Nobody was within call to open the gate, and in that foolish way in which people sometimes shake a gate palpably locked, I rattled the handle. The chain which I had thought was padlocked fell away, and the gate opened. I went through, took my fill of the valley, and then turned to contemplation of the little burial ground.

If it matters to the dead where they lie, and if beauty in their resting place adds peace to their slumber, the dead of Deya must sleep content. On a hilltop, under the wide arch of the sky, with the wind in the terraced trees, the hushed plash of the surf far below, and the tinkling of sheep bells in the valley for a never ceasing lullaby—surely they sleep well, the dead of Deya!

Something of this was passing through my mind when I saw that white stone:

Here lies all that was mortal of
MARY,
Dearly Loved Wife of
JOHN FREWIN
of Dorset, England
She died at Lluch-Alcari
March 30, 1878,
Aged 32 years

I looked along the Soller road to where Lluch-Alcari stood among its palms, like an oasis. Then the red headlands beyond faded into the gray of Dorset cliffs. The half tropical outlines of palm and pine sank into the flatter curves of an English hillside. The saffron walls of the houses dwindled into the drab shape of one—the house without a story. In truth, I had shut my eyes and seen Clearmouth.

A perpetual curiosity of mind is the ineluctable curse of all who are or have been of the Fourth Estate. Starting off downhill from the graveyard, I had the mere intention of picking up my pack at the *hospedaje* and continuing my journey southward; but by the time I reached the little hotel I knew that I could not leave Deya until I knew all there might be to learn of Mary Frewin.

It did not matter whether there was a story about her or not—though my instinct now clamored that there was one. I simply had to know all about her; so when the brown-faced old landlord, Señor Miguel, came out with my pack, I told him that I had changed my mind and wanted a bedroom for the night, or possibly longer.

That night the game of patience which Miguel unfailingly plays with his curious Majorcan cards before going to bed was sadly bungled. From the mild "*Carramba!*" with which he greeted my narrative of the gray house in Clearmouth until his answer to my final question, he never once put a card in its right place.

He remembered the little Englishwoman and her tall husband, who was beyond all doubt a great gentleman.

Miguel had been a mere boy then—a *chico*—for the Archduke Salvador had not long established himself at Miramar. It would be about five years after the duke bought the domain—fifty-three years ago it would be, when he, Miguel, had just twelve years. The tall Englishman was truly of the *hidalgúia*, more princely than Salvador the Austrian himself, though the duke's mother—did I remember?—had been Marie Antoinette de Bourbon.

Miguel's information was merely Clearmouth over again—long absences on the part of the husband, and the wife going about happily with her English servant until at last she died. Miguel remembered the funeral cortège going up Deya hill to the little cemetery. The house at Lluch-Alcari was still standing—*sí, señor*—and why not? It was built of good island stone.

I left Miguel to unravel the clutter he had made of his cards, and took myself to bed.

IV

When I awoke, early next morning, the story did not seem to me so promising as it had done overnight; and although I was determined to walk over to Lluch-Alcari, I had a feeling that it would be on a fool's errand. The John Frewin of Dorset whose wife Mary, or all that was mortal of her—how lovely the phrase!—lay under the white stone on the hilltop might not have been the Frewin of the gray house at

Clearmouth; and yet the absences of the man, his distinguishing height, his princely air! The smallness of the woman, the noticeable happiness of her nature! It could not help but be true, though it sounded too good to be true.

Altogether, I fancy that other curse of the Fourth Estate, detestation of coincidence, had laid hold on me that morning. Miguel sped me on my way after coffee and *ensemadas*, with the expressed belief that a woman was still alive at Lluch-Alcari who had been *criada* to the Frewins—one Maruja Suau.

An hour and a half later I had not a single doubt left. After the descent from the roadway to Lluch-Alcari there was not difficulty in finding the place for which I was looking. It was still known as the English house, and Maruja herself—"madonna" now to a large number of descendants—came with her daughter to conduct me around it.

It was the usual sort of Majorcan house—a large central apartment stretching from back to front, with rooms opening from it on either side, and these opening into one another, save for the two next the back garden in either wing. One of these was the kitchen, with its well and its charcoal range; the other was a small bedroom.

Outside, in the garden, close to the house, was a bathroom with a huge red bath of granite chips and cement, and there was a stair leading up to the flat roof. Back and front the roof, supported by columns, projected over small *patios*, and these, like the floor throughout the whole house, were laid with tiles. The interior walls had dadoes built up to a yard

above the floor in colorful *azulejos*, and above this there was plain whitewash. A few chromos were hung on the walls, and *tarjetas* advertising the wares of firms in Palma and Barcelona.

In addition to these there was in the central chamber one feeble water color, which immediately caught my attention. In spite of its amateurishness, there was no mistaking what it attempted to portray. I knew every detail of the scene. It was the valley of the Clear as it might have been seen from the front of the gray house.

Two other drawings, one in each of the bedrooms on the seaward side, stood out among the photographs of Maruja's descendants. One of the photographs showed a dead infant in his coffin with candles and wreaths about him—a grandson who had died in Buenos Aires, Maruja's daughter told me proudly.

Of the two drawings, one had obviously come from the hand of a man. It was a vigorous pencil and crayon sketch of a woman's head—a pretty woman with her hair drawn back from the brow in Victorian fashion. This was initialed "J.F.," and even before Maruja told me I guessed it was a sketch of Mary Frewin.

The other was an amateurish water color of a tall man in the robes and insignia of the Order of the Garter. I took it to be an attempt by Mary Frewin at a portrait of Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria; and yet, apart from the whiskers and the arrangement of the hair, the head was different. I was

peering into the faded line and color when Maruja muttered in my ear:

"*El señor—su marido de etta!*"

V

For an hour and more, in the *patio* overlooking the sea, I sat and let Maruja talk to me. Fortunately her daughter Pancha stood by. The older woman's speech was almost exclusively Mallorquin, for understanding which my easily scared knowledge of Castilian was no great help. Pancha translated eagerly every time my eyebrows went up.

"You are like the Señor Juan himself," the old woman chuckled at me. "He could speak Castellano well; but Mallorquin, no. It was the sainted little *señora* who could speak Mallorquin, but could not speak Castellano. But there! Don Juan was a great *caballero*, so of course he could speak and write Spanish, as he could French; but Mallorquin, no. He was not here often enough or long enough at a time to pick up our words."

For much of the story I got out of Madonna Maruja that morning, I might as well have remained at Deya, or in Clearmouth; save that the handsomeness and the *caballerosidad*, the knightliness, of John Frewin were more deeply emphasized, and that the kindness and saintliness of his wife were more strongly insisted on, I might as well have

been listening to Dinah Locke, *née* Hogbin. I heard of Frewin's absences again, of Mary's contentedness; but there was new material—details of her death.

Mary Frewin died in her husband's arms. The people about her, Maruja and the English servant, Sarah, had not realized that their mistress was seriously ill. She would sit for hours in a chair in the *patio* overlooking the sea, her needlework in her lap, but her fingers idle. They thought that she was longing for the return of her husband, who had been absent for some weeks, and who, they knew, could not be expected for some considerable time.

Several weeks had elapsed, Maruja said, since they had first noticed that she had become so quiet and still; and, loving her as they did, they had begun to be alarmed.

"It made me uneasy, *señor*," said Maruja, "to see her sitting there so still. For hours she would sit, here where I am sitting now, and always she would be looking out to sea, northward, as if to Barcelona, whence the steamers came in those days to Soller. It was as if she were watching, *señor*—watching. It was sad to see her—her who had been always about the house, singing. I would ask her:

"'Are you happy, *señora*?'"

"'Perfectly happy, Mariquita, but a little tired, I think,' she would say, smiling.

"The Señor Juan was not expected for some months, and for weeks we knew that no message had gone from her to

him; but one morning there came to us the sound of a horse galloping furiously along the road from Soller. It galloped so furiously that we thought it had run away. Then we heard the clatter of the hoofs coming down the path from the road, and a man came leading a horse that was in a foam. It was the Señor Juan! He threw the reins to my brother Pepe, and bade him walk the horse up and down the garden. Next moment he had the dear Señora Mary in his arms, and ah, the passion of love he whispered to her! It was English he spoke, but one knew, one knew!"

Down the wrinkled old face of Maruja the tears were trickling.

"In an hour or two, *señor*, the sainted little lady was dead. We saw the tall *señor* lift her in his arms and carry her to her bed. She had fainted. Then, a little later, a doctor came galloping along from Soller. The Señor Juan had brought him all the way from Barcelona, but had ridden so furiously from Soller that the doctor—who was a little man, very polite and gentle, but fat—could not keep pace with him. It was some grave affection of the heart that our dear mistress had. They could do nothing. An hour or more after the coming of her husband, she died.

"But how did he know, the Señor Juan? How did he know to bring a doctor? What kept him traveling night and day for many days—he was worn and spent with it, the doctor said—so that he would be here to hold his wife in his arms at the last? There was then no wireless station at Seller, and I think no telegraph. Even so, no message for him left this house,

and I am sure that the dear little *señora* never complained. How did he know, *señor*? How did he know?"

I could not answer Madonna Maruja. It would have been hopeless to embark on a theory of telepathy, even if my Spanish could have compassed it. I merely shook my head.

"It was that her spirit called to him, *señor*," the old lady said gravely, and patted my knees with her gnarled brown hand. "Her spirit called out to him, and he heard, because of the great love there was between them."

For one, I am quite content with Maruja's explanation.

VI

John Frewin came back but once after Mary was buried on Deya hill, and that was to see the stone fixed above her grave. He left the house at Lluch-Alcari as it was. He took nothing away, but bade Maruja collect all the dead woman's clothes and burn them. The English servant went back to England, and the house remained closed. Then, one day, a notary came from Soller and told Maruja that the house and garden, together with a sum of money, had been gifted to her; and that was the last she heard of John Frewin.

But for that inescapable curse which I have mentioned as infesting my kind, I suppose I should have let the story of Mary Frewin rest there. It had been, one could see, the story of a great love, and for that reason there was something

sacred about it. However that may be, before I set out on my walk back to Deya, I had arranged with old Maruja to be put up for a day or two in the English house. The work I had come to do in Majorca was finished, and there was nothing to stop me from staying at Lluch-Alcari for a month, if I liked. As well there as anywhere on the island, I told myself—better, for its situation is lovely.

Of course, I was pretending to myself. The story of Mary Frewin was finished—but for one thing. Who was John Frewin? It was the sketch of him in the robes of the Order of the Garter that drew me back to Lluch-Alcari.

I was back in the English house next day, and I spent my time between wandering about the rooms and sitting in the seaward *patio*. Every now and then I would go and look at Mary's sketch of her husband—or was it a sketch of her husband?

Mary Frewin had not been a trained artist, and the chances were that my first idea of the thing—that it was an attempt to portray the late Prince Consort—was the right one. What more natural than that Maruja should imagine that the tall man in the drawing was the Señor Juan? The likelihood was that John Frewin followed the fashion of his time in the dressing of his hair and whiskers, and that Maruja would find these sufficient to establish a likeness; and yet, if John Frewin had the right to wear the insignia of the Garter, who was he?

That night I lay in the bed that had been Mary Frewin's. The very sheets that wrapped me had probably once covered

her, for they were of finer linen than is usually found in the houses of Majorcan working people, and they had the initials "M.F." worked in a corner. Perhaps I had a thought that some psychic influence would give me a clue to her story, since I found no distaste for the contact. Heaven knows that a hundred hopes and theories raced through my head.

Days passed, and I was no nearer finding what I wanted. Maruja and I became good friends, and I grew to understand her speech. I won her heart, I think, by doing a not very satisfactory crayon drawing of her youngest granddaughter.

Most often our talk was of her sainted little mistress. Mary Frewin had been the one great thing in this old woman's life. I wondered how Maruja, a Roman Catholic, contrived to make a saint out of a woman who must have been a heretic according to Roman faith; but the abiding loving-kindness and charity of Mary Frewin had indeed been saintly. There had been, it seemed, no plumbing the depths of her compassion. I found myself loving the dead woman as if she had been alive.

I think Madonna Maruja must have seen the growth of this feeling in me, for as the days went on I found her more and more confiding. One day, when we were both sitting in the corner of the *patio* which had been Mary's, the old *madonna* came out of a long silence to put her worn brown hand on my knee.

"I am going to trust you with a secret, *señor*," she said quietly. "Come with me!"

She led me into the bedroom that had been Mary's, which I now occupied. From the pocket of her apron she produced a key, and she knelt creakily beside a long wooden coffer. This she unlocked, and pushed back the lid.

"Look!" she whispered.

The coffer was brimful of old garments, from which there rose the faded perfume of lavender and verbena.

"They are the dresses of the little *señora*," she whispered. "I could not find the heart to burn them. I tried, but I couldn't. There they have lain ever since. Nobody has worn them. It would have been a sacrilege!"

Those quaint old garments, with their flounces and their braidings! The little embroidered aprons—coy stomachers! One by one the old woman brought them out, to smooth them reverently with her rough old hands. There were laces of value there, and it speaks eloquently of the love Maruja had for her dead mistress's memory that she had never draped them on herself.

The last thing to come out of the coffer was a thick book with gilt clasps. Maruja put it into my hands.

"For you, *señor*," she said. "I have seen it often. The *señora* used to write in it. It is in English."

In Mary Frewin's diary I have her whole story—and, in part, I have John Frewin's.

It was not until she had lived for some years in Majorca that Mary began to suspect the man she loved of carrying a secret. At Clearmouth she wrote:

I have to be patient with my darling's absences, for I know how exacting and, oh, how *dangerious* sometimes is the work he is called upon to do in the service of Her Blessed Madjesty the Queen. Why should I repine? I am blessed above all women to be loved by such a man. He is my king. It is enough for me to walk with him, and *one minute* in the year is joy enough, when I know that he *never ceases* to love me. I have his true word for that.

Through the pages, written in her tiny copperplate and with occasional lapses in spelling, she is schooling herself to be contented and happy. She believes implicitly that John Frewin's secret work for the Foreign Office takes him away for weeks or months, and that his identity must be concealed for his work's sake. There is the record of most of her days in Clearmouth, interspersed with rhapsodies to think that her husband will soon be with her.

In the last year she suddenly reveals that she has not felt well for some time, and that she will be glad, as her husband has promised her, to be taken to a sunny climate. She is tremendously proud when she writes of John Frewin's unremitting care of her on the journey to Majorca:

He towered above every one on the keys and platforms. He is a king among men! To hear how fluently he can talk French, to see the imperious way he makes men serve him, without being arrogant! The Frenchmen called him "my lord." I have not seen a man in all the journey who looks a half as distinguished. It made me tremendously proud to have him tuck my hand under his arm, and to look up at my king among men. I am never at an end with my surprise at his learning. He talks Spanish, too, like a native!

Majorca delights her from the first. She had not thought there could be so beautiful a place on earth. Her husband's duties have called him to some country near at hand, and he is with her more often than he was at Clearmouth. The thought of this, she says, makes her wildly happy. She is quite humorous about her attempts to learn Mallorquin, and as the days go by she begins to have little jokes about being cleverer than her husband, who sometimes cannot understand what she and Maruja are saying. Then she hastens to apologize:

Of course I do not mean it about being cleverer than John. There is nobody, nobody in the world as clever as John, I am very sure. It is not a gentleman's language, for only the *pesants* talk it. It would not be clever to talk Cockney. It would not be dignified for John. I l. h.

Each page is a pæan of praise for her husband, and every pæan has for its Amen these initials—"I l. h."

Then she begins to be worried about her husband—not that she thinks he is ceasing to love her. To the last page her certainty of his love for her never falters. Like her love for him, that certainly runs like a bright thread through the record of her life with him; but she begins to notice that John Frewin is uneasy in his mind. She sometimes finds him looking at her in a curious way—not unloving, but as if it were on his tongue to speak to her, and as if he fearfully checked the impulse. She writes:

There is something at the back of my dear husband's mind, I think. Oh, how I wish he would confide in me! He might tell me anything, and it would be safe with me, because I l. h. If only he could lay his dear head on this breast and tell me all! But it is probably a secret of his duty to Her Blessed Madjesty, and I must not *Paul Pry*. I must be patient until the dark cloud lifts from his brow.

But the cloud does not lift. Each time he is with her he seems more loving, more thoughtful for her, but his secret worry appears to deepen.

Then comes a time when he is away from her for many months. She writes:

I do strive to bear this long separation, but I cannot be as patient as formerly. I think of the secret that is weighing so heavily on my darling's mind, and it is allmost more than I can bear, because I cannot be near him to comfort him. When he was with me he was most abstracted. Oh, if it were possible for him

to confide in me! I sometimes think dreadful thoughts that his secret is a guilty one—which is impossible with the name of John Frewin; but even if my poor darling's secret were dark, it would be my joy to share it. I often have a pain at my heart, but I must smile, lest Maruja and Sarah should think that I am losing faith in dear John. I l. h.

In the next entry she is planning a little surprise, something of a joke, for her husband:

One of the new illustrated journals arrived this morning, and my heart gave a great leap when I saw one of the engravings in it. It was a picture of the Marquis of Wyevale in the robes of the Garter, an order which has recently been conferred on him by Her Gracious Majesty. He is a noble-looking man, and very like my husband, which made my heart jump; but I fancy that my dear one would wear these robes with more dignity and a more regal air than the marquis. John is a king among men, and I l. h. I am going to copy the engraving and make the face more like John and color it. Then I shall tease John when he comes. May it soon be that he is really a Knight of the Garter! I wonder if Sarah remembers what color the Garter robes are! I think they are blue.

A page or two of scant entries, and then a full burst. The drawing is finished and framed, her husband is coming, and she is full of happy anticipation; but the next entry in the diary is hardly decipherable.

God Our Father, which art in heaven, help me to bear the burden of my darling's sorrow! The agony of remorse he must

have suffered!

When full of glee over my joke, I suddenly showed John the drawing. He went deathly white, and I thought he would have fallen; but I had my arms about him and led him to my chair, where he knelt at my feet. His dear head was in my lap, and he made a confession that wrung my heart. John *is* the Marquis of Wyevale, but alas, Mary Frewin is not the marchioness. She is not even Mary *Frewin*, for John had a wife when he married me. This is the dread secret which has been weighing on his heart and mind; and now that I look back I see that it has been upon him since the beginning.

Could I see my darling, my king among men, so broken with shame for the wrong he has done *me*? Torn between love of him and fear for him in the sin we have committed, the wrong he has done me counts for nothing. Our love is greater than all. He loves me truly. What could I do but cast out all thought except to comfort him?

It dawns on me that in her supreme unselfishness Mary Frewin found the truth—that the tragedy was the man's. She was convinced, as I am convinced from the evidences I have, that John Frewin loved her with all his soul. That being the case, conceive, as you must, the perilous burden the man must have carried in all the years of his life with Mary!

John Llewellyn David Fitzroy Frewin, sixth and last Marquis of Wyevale, stood high in the councils of the state. His honors were many and amply deserved, and it was said that after the Garter there would come a dukedom.

On my return from Majorca, I asked a very distinguished old man, who is good enough to be friendly with me, if he

could remember the last Marquis of Wyevale. The answer was a panegyric.

In that period when John Frewin lived there was no more brilliant man than he; but in the midst of a wonderful career he suddenly and inexplicably retired from all public activity. The date my old friend gave me coincides with that on the headstone on Deya hill. From guarded queries I learned that there had never been the slightest suspicion, even in the best-informed circles, of what was buried on that hilltop.

My friend is nearing his century, but he has all his faculties, and he told me much that was to the credit of John Frewin. But for the one instance—and who shall judge him there?—the man seems to have been the soul of honor. His marriage, his real marriage, had been a most miserable failure. In his old-fashioned way, my friend quoted Ovid about it.

"That marriage!" said he. "*Non pronuba Juno, non Hymenæus a-dest, non illi Gratia lecto, Eumenides stravere torum.* Heaven, my boy, had no hand in those nuptials. They were arranged by the Furies, who married one of their daughters to the poor devil. A cold, ungracious fiend of a woman she was, and barren at that. I marvel that he had the career he had, for she did her utmost to thwart it. Wyevale must have been—nay, he was—a man of infinite charm and ability. By gad, sir, that was a gentleman! We don't breed the sort nowadays."

VIII

There, then, you have the tragedy. This brilliant man, respected and honored in the morally strictest court in Europe, meets a girl of the middle classes and conceives for her so absorbing a passion that he marries her bigamously. She is a woman in a thousand, he finds, so pure in her thoughts that, with all the cause he gives her for suspicion, her love for him, her trust in him, never ceases to burn with a steady flame; nor, to do him justice, does his love for her.

He has a double burden to carry. His devotion to the service of his country is sincere and without a trace of self-seeking. If his secret is betrayed, the house of his honor falls about his ears, and an end is put to his service of his country.

Then there is the woman he loves. To a man of his quality, deceit and subterfuge must be completely abhorrent; yet if he reveals his identity to her, and the wrong he has done, it were as if he took her trust and her purity and dragged them in the gutter. I am persuaded that the great burden for John Frewin was as concerned Mary, the longing to have her forgive him being always at war with the dread of hurting her terribly. I am persuaded of this from the fact that after he had lost her, the honors he had and the honors that he might still have gained meant nothing to him. John Frewin's heart was buried on Deya hill.

I think that Mary Frewin rests peacefully there. The last page of her diary runs:

I am waiting for John. I must hold out till he comes; and he will come, because I l. h. His love for me will stand this test. I know he will come, because I am thinking of him every minute, and needing him. There is something at my heart that is not a pain, and I am very tired. My heart is not broken. I am proud to be what I am, for a king has stooped to love me. Women, great ladies, have been proud to be the secret wives of kings. I am the morganatic wife of John Frewin—oh, my darling!—Marquis of Wyevale, Knight of the Garter, Knight of the Bath, and, best of all, knight of this proud heart. I l. h. He is a king among men. I am proud to be what I am. God will forgive me if to be proud is a sin, for God is merciful. I humbly thank Him for the joy of my life.

I am waiting for John. My heart is not broken. Soon I may see the smoke of the steamboat coming to Soller with John on board. Then he will come galloping along the road on the swiftest horse he can find.

I am waiting for John. He will come swiftly to me and will lift me to his heart. Then he will lift me up to heaven, for my heart will break with joy, and I shall die in his dear arms, because I trust him and love him so!

[The end of *The House Without a Story* by Thom MacWalter (as Victor MacClure)]