

I sat in my wonderful soft chair gazing out of that bay window, the one my ancestors had knocked a hole through the wall, well two holes actually as there was another bay window with a large oak seat further down the Library wall. I was musing why my two boys had just pulled up two more chairs and were waiting for my head to turn to face them.

'I'm enjoying the autumn leaves and their various colours so why are you here disturbing me, surely you have work to do?'

"We don't really think either of our Uncles are fitting in well here Father." This from Nick.

'They are my brothers, this was their home.'

"True, but we all work on the estate and they just lounge about." This from Robin due to get married in a month, formally I might add at the local church. They had a quick civil one at a town hall three months ago, nobody knew about, except brother Nick! No, I did not reply just thought a little and looked out of the window where I spied young Fig pulling out what appeared to be some of Dulcie's flowering plants, yellow, alyssum I think, so I knocked sharply on the window. Nick saw it as well and dived out of the room to catch the little devil. In the meantime Robin stood up and watched his brother tear down the steps and grabbed Fig around the waist and haul him back into the house.

"He is becoming a bit of a pest Father," pointing to a screaming Figaro as Nick passed him over to his Uncle Eustace.

'How so Robin?'

"Someone stole Brigan's pen set then Mini's exercise book and all was eventually traced to Figaro's door. Of course that sainted Aunt Jezebel denied it even though Uncle Eustace found those same articles under his pillow."

'News to me.'

"We tried to keep it away from you Father." Nick had arrived, "What's more in a fit of rage he threw a boot and broke a window in the orangery, Robin repaired that last week but no apology from my young cousin or parents!"

"Quite frankly we are fed up with Uncle Eustace and his constant protection of his step son."

'Because?'

"Because he is afraid of upsetting the Italian goddess."

'Ah', I said, 'Do you know I don't even know her name, not been formally introduced, do you have a name for her by any chance?'

"Angelic". Both spat it out.

'A fine figure of a woman and my sister in law I'll have you know, but I thought

Eustace said she was Italian not French? Still go and fetch Uncle Eustace and Figaro for me and you two better disappear please. Best get Finlay to ask them to come here.'

Well the two boys vanished and Finlay bought Eustace and Figaro in and followed, I might add, by Figs mother. No I did not bat an eyelid, she knew something was up and advanced behind her son in a most menacing way. I asked them all to sit and shooed Finlay out.

'Eustace, I've heard a few complaints about Fig stealing and I believe he broke a large pane in the Orangery, I would have liked you or Fig to tell me these things rather than find out from third parties.' Well both the adults bridled at this and I could see Madame Eustace brimming up for a fight and then she finally broke.

"You have no reason to take my son or my husband to task, those pens and book came from other spiteful people and the glass was an accident."

'Ah, so Fig told you about the broken glass?'

"It was accident, you treat this house as your own but Eustace and Gideon are joint owners and I am Eustace wife and my son is his son."

I sat momentary at a loss then I turned to Fig,

'I want to know the truth Fig', who had retreated into his shell all hunched up, 'Every morning you see all your cousins go out to school on the cart that Uncle Nick drives and this disturbs you because you want to go as well. You know that to go to school you will need a book and pens or pencils and at a guess I would say this was your way of trying to go with your cousins to fit in with them. Am I right?'

Fig nodded his head.

'But Fig you are only just past four years old so I wonder what you could do until you reach the age of five. Why were you pulling out Aunt Dulcie's flowers?'

This time he answered. "Weeds now, annuals, got to be rid of."

'Yes I presupposed that, but in fact they are perennials and can last over several years, Aunt Dulcie would have been deeply hurt if someone had told her.'

"You tell her, no, you bully my boy he not know the difference." The Goddess!

'Eustace you either ask your dear wife to remain silent or she leaves please.' Eustace said nothing but I could see the child was innocent, well except for the glass maybe.

'Eustace have you nothing to say?' I said this as gently as I could.

"Well Heir, I have to say you've worked out Figaro's problem, that's if he ever had one, so I think we should all be satisfied, and I apologise on behalf of my wife for calling you a bully. Apparently his boot was not laced up and flew and hit the pane."

At last my brother was growing in stature and I think Madam would find him a tad more stronger in future, but then she went further having not listened to her husband.

"I do not like you calling my son Fig his name is Figaro."

'I wonder how he came by that name Angelic?'

“It was the name of my....”

'Lover?' And so she stopped, whether it was because of Eustace being here or her son, probably I will never no, not that I ever want to.

'Eustace we will search, or rather you both can search for a kindergarten to send Fig to. I can understand his need to mix with children his own age and yet stand tall with his cousins, he is the youngest and the smallest so we must watch over him,'

Eustace just nodded.

These two brothers of mine were over half my age, father had temporarily given up chasing fillies and horses to exert his duty once again, and get a few spares. So ultimately they came along, just as daft headed as he was!

2. A place found and a plan hatched.

I suppose it was it was a Thursday that Eustace came though the Library door and announced they had obtained a place in Kettleridge our closest town, not eight miles from here. The kindergarten was pleased to accept young Figaro.

'I hope you did not tell them he comes from here.'

"Why on earth not?" Eustace a bit shocked.

'I presume someone mentioned the Castle?'

"That's the only way we could get him in."

'Well that means little Fig will be put through all sorts of teasing, some of it spiteful no doubt, tell me why you had to say he came from here?'

"They had no more places for this term."

'So presumably another child had to be moved out so that Fig could take their place, did you not consider that Eustace. Hard luck on the parents to find the child out of kindergarten.'

"I expect they fitted him in without moving anyone else."

I shook my head, that was typical of my two younger siblings.

'I suggest you ring them and find out, it will be best for Fig so the children don't gang up on him, kids can be cruel. Imagine a popular girl or boy moved out, and how will the children react?'

"I'll ring them."

So now I began to consider what my own boys wanted, their Uncles out. Well that's all well and good but Eustace and Gideon were in their own home that their parents had bought them into so I thought I might seek our half sisters advice. Sofia alas was out so I left a message with Finlay and Tom for her to see me upon her return. She was back within the hour so I sat her down in the Library and asked Edith to excuse us for a moment.

"Well Heir what's the problem."

'I'm worried about our layabout siblings doing nothing to support themselves.'

"This came from your boys?" I nodded, she continued, "So what on earth can they do, lets face it its their old home. Am I not in the same position?"

'No you write articles for magazines and are self supporting, besides which you and Dulcie help out downstairs and with the visitors on weekends, whereas Eustace and Gideon make them selves absent on visitor weekends.'

"True, but they often help in getting the kids out the way, organising walks away from here and suchlike."

'Children minders we do not need, I'd far prefer them here in the castle keeping a close eye on the furniture, pictures and those blasted bronzes that Dulcie has me wiping every few months. No Sofia we need to have a real good think and maybe we

could offer them both a visitors guide instead of leaving it all to dear Edith, and with a child on the way!

“There you are problem solved. If I know Gideon he has some rakish memories of Father and his fancies!”

'Good God no Sofia, that will give the visitors heat bumps, best stick to the history of the place. Hang about, one could do the gardens the other the house.'

“Perfect.” From Sofia, only I had to broach the matter with our siblings, I could see it in her smile as she left for her rooms. So I went to my desk and pulled a fresh piece of paper out of the draw and asked Edith to sit with me.

'A plan of action for my two brothers to encourage their help with the castle.'

“Nick and Robin have at last been facing up to you.”

'Yes so Aunt Sonia has suggested they help with your visitors, they perhaps could give a briefing on the history of the place, the estate and the family.'

“I don't get the impression they care much about any of that, Gideon's lost without his sheep farm and as for Eustace, well the mind boggles. Lemons swapped for a goddess as my Nick likes to express constantly!”

'So which is which for the house history?'

“Better to be Eustace he's lived here the longest. Best leave the family to Aunt Sonia she's been digging a lot up and has become quite versed in the subject. As you know she does not walk around a lot but stays in the library and gives her speech. Sitting down I might add!”

'So Gideon for the garden walks?'

“Well he's an outdoor person, we could even include the Home farm in summer visits, we could ask Robin's advice and the two of them could relate quite well together. Robin does love the farm and Uncle Gideon has that experience of the past when the farm was larger in your fathers time.”

'I do believe you've got it all covered and I have not written a thing down, perhaps you could type up a precis for me Edith and I will speak to Eustace, Gideon and Sofia all together. I do believe this is an excellent chance to get all of us back together. Naturally I will have to see what my guiding hand has to say first of all!'

“Nicolas Robin?”

'Robroy the very same, I realise Edith he takes after you in so many ways, thank goodness I have you both.'

3. A question of heating!

Well you could have knocked me over with a feather, but who should sidle into my library but the two Australian nephews of mine, Gideon's children. It was a Saturday and Tom my valet had just launched the big fire in the Fire room and it was those two boys who crept into my room with their questions.

"We've just helped Tom bring in the fire wood from the back shed Uncle Heir." This from one of them, think it was Jarvis.

'Well done you two that was thoughtful, after all the cool nights are upon us so we need to keep the castle warm.' Said I nodding my head in approval, well they both liked fires and I expect they offered Tom to light it for him.

"What we came in for to ask you why that bare room is called the Fire Room and why is it the only fire chimney in the place, I think they are bricked up in our rooms."

'Yes they are, before my father bricked them up you could as a child climb up inside the chimney, your father tried it once and came back streaked in black dust.'

"Why did Granddad block them all up was he afraid you boys would climb too far and topple off?" This time Brigan.

'No its because he had a brilliant idea caused by, well come with me into the Fire Room and let me explain. Actually I'll get Finlay and Tom to get some chairs into that room if you two can gather up your cousins for a true story, so off you go and we all will meet in the Fire Room.'

Well half an hour later all the children were seated expectantly, it being a Saturday evening and no school. Whilst Tom gave the log fire a vicious poke I settled in my soft chair they had dragged in from the library. Then I began.

'During the war we had an air raid, they used to light bonfires when a raid was expected that was to guide the enemy bombers away from the cities. Some of them were obviously fooled and when your fathers and I were at school, sent away I might add, one bomb was dropped dead centre into the castle and blasted its way down to the basement. Your grandfather thought up a use for the large hole the bomb had left, apparently it was a special one that blew upwards and not outwards, so here was grandfather raking his brains on how to make use of the hole, so he called the estate workers, still left here and not called up, to help him rebuild a central fireplace that would heat the whole castle. That is as long as we keep all the doors open in the house. Free circulation he called it so he bricked up all the fire places and had this huge one built to replace them all.' By now the the fire was getting hot so I told the children to move against the wall.

'Now you can see how hot it can get so that's why the room is always bare so furniture does not catch alight! And you can see the floor is paved in granite slabs both to act as fire protection and to hold the heat when the fire dies down at night.' Some of them got up and held their hands to the fire blazing away and then the questions poured out so I'll recount some of them.

“Why were you and my Uncles away. You could have got killed!” This from Robroy and his obvious concern for we children or his own birth and Dad. I saw the look on his face and choose the former.

'Sent away to a paid school in Eastbourne with our Aunt Connie. Reason they were going to take over our home for returned service people, but the bomb put an end to that!'

“Were any of the staff killed?” This from little Tom who normally concerned himself with the welfare of others.

'Two rabbits and a chicken.'

“But why were rabbits and chickens in the house Uncle Heir?”

'Cos they were dead already they were great grandpa's dinner for the night.'

“So they were not killed by that bomb!”

'No Tom but they were well and truly roasted, and they were eaten the next morning.'

“Was there a huge fire to control?” This from Jarvis with his eyes bright at the thought.

'Not much if you could see the beams below they had a lick of fame but the household doused it all as we had fire buckets in the house already.'

“Already for what?” This from Jess.

'There was a fighter squadron over on High Hill and it was presumed it could be a target thus my father prepared for bad things to happen.'

“Why is there that big black box behind the fire grate.” This was Fig, I caught him eyeing the fire place steadfastly foot by foot almost like an engineer.

'Go on Tom, can you answer Fig?' I could see there was more to come as he put his hand to his face.

“Is it a steam engine Uncle Heir?”

'Well done Tom, very close and indeed it does contain water. Its a hot water container for supplying hot water to the kitchen and your baths. It works by gravity and pump action. Well I have learnt how dirty and muddy you children get during winter so your grandfather had it installed especially, he must have known you would all be coming to live in his castle.' Young Fig looked as pleased as punch for having asked the brightest question. The others gave him a special clap which pleased him immensely, and it did my heart the world of good to see how well he had fitted in.

'Well now remember in winter to leave the doors open to let the warm air circulate.'

“One more question Grand-papa. Hot air rises so its all right for us up here and the bedrooms but what about poor Cook and Maise down in the depths!” Robroy.

'Well they are well provided for Figs hot water tank goes down through several pipes you can see under the joists below and floor though to the kitchen and scullery so in winter we are warm, and this fire is mostly due to Jarvis and Brigan for fetching the logs in. But one room downstairs remains cool.'

“The dairy room, Oh and Tom helps with the kindling.” Said the two Australian boys.

'Well he gets paid so its part of his job, but I did suspect you two might have begged him to let you start it!'

"He would not let us, said it was dangerous and we needed to put the fire screen back in its place, so we helped him with that." There was a big steel screen with mesh to stop any sparks flying and it was one addition I had made to my fathers design.

'Now if you have all warmed up I ask you not to come in here and play. This room is the Fire Room only and when you have your baths I am sure you will appreciate where the hot water comes from. Now its time for dinner so off you go and have a wash in that lovely warm water. That black tank that Fig asked about is something like three metres tall and five wide so it holds a lot of water and I do believe its has a special fire proof cladding to keep it warm for several days.'

"But Uncle Heir in summer we don't need a fire so we still need to wash where does the hot water come from?" Brigam standing up eager for an answer. My valet Tom answered.

"We have electric water heater attached to the outlet pipes which give enough heat for Cook and our rooms. Definitely not as efficient as the Old Dukes method, but necessary to keep his ancestors clean!"

'Away now children, if you can first help Tom and Finlay with the chairs please, and when the fire is on please do not play here. You will note this door is made of metal, there is no wood in the room or near the room. The walls are plain plaster and up above close to the ceiling are alcove holes and pipes that distribute the heat around the various parts. We leave the metal door open so this floor together with the hallway can be heated as well to keep Finlay warm when he opens the main door to you lot or visitors!' Then I thought of my father and his thoughtfulness to keep us all warm. He must have had an architect to help but I could find no mention in his papers he had left after his death. It would forever stay a mystery how he developed the idea from that one bomb explosion.

4. High Hill.

Eustace and Gideon came into the Library one raw morning whilst I had a steaming cup of soup warming my hands. It was not particularly cold in here, the room the Fire Room saw to that, but it was a comforting feeling for my poor hands.

'Well you two what can I do for you?'

"Heir, you know that large area that looks over the farm, the place we call High Hill."

'Yes.'

"Gideon has an idea for that area, as far as I know Nick and Robin have stopped using that field, apparently the soil is fairly low in depth and Nick told me we had a crop failure last year."

'Yes Eustace I think it was barley and I think Robin told me it was only suitable for grazing now.'

"Well Heir what I was thinking perhaps we could put sheep up there, something I know about and give me something to do on the estate." This from Gideon who farmed sheep in OZ.

'Well as you both know I leave all the farming and the estate generally to your nephews so you need to bring them into the conversation. Seems like a great idea but needs you four to discuss and decide. Being a shepherd is hard work Gideon so are you up to it still, and maybe your two growing boys could be involved.' Anything to get those two fire starter lads onto a safer level.

So that day we adults loaded up the cart and the two shires, and trundled our way over to the Home Farm to collect Robin and go on up to High Hill. It was not really a hill just a plateau of land with a fantastic view overlooking the whole estate. We boys when we were young used to track up here in the summer, erect our tent and get blown away a few days later. Shelter there was none, thus the amazing view. Nick had bought a picnic basket so we all sat down on the grass and had a cup of tea and egg sandwiches. I suppose the acreage up here was something like twenty or thirty and the plateau carried on for at least two miles encompassing our neighbours land as well. Yes it had been a perfect spot for aircraft taking off and over on the neighbours land was the tarmac apron and concrete shelters. I think Nick said he kept beef on that part. We got up and inspected the three wire fencing and Gideon shook his head.

"They would be through that in a thrice," he said and shook his head.

"What would you need then, Uncle?" This from Nick.

"At least some square wire fencing or three more wires low enough to stop lambs going though."

They decided to cost out and plan, the party then checked the land for grass cover, but there was still the remains of the barley stubble, so a reservoir of water would be needed until the grass had completely taken over. We sat down again and watched

the Shires munching their way across the paddock. I leant back and watched the sky and listened to the babel of voices around me. The sun was not hot but it did had some warmth and it felt as if spring was at last around the corner. I must have dropped off as I was abruptly woken by a scream that sounded like Grand-papa is dead!

'No I am not Robroy and what the devil are you all doing here, and for goodness sake Jess will you leave those Shires alone, they were eating and enjoying the air.'

"They were ravenous Uncle Heir!"

'They were not, they were just eating the left over barley stalks and were being quite and placid before you lot came hurtling up to High Hill. And where are the other Adults? You've frightened them away!'

"I am glad you had not died Grand-papa." This from Robroy.

"Are you stuck to the ground?" This from Fig who had just arrived on the scene his short legs not coping with the steepness of the slope.

'No but you both can help me up if you will.'

But as I said it the huge head of Rob came down close to my head and I clasped his bridle and he reared his head up so I at least was now standing and I gave him a brief stroke along his broad neck, then a pat. I could see the others in the far distance no doubt deciding where to put a water tank, they were on the higher side of the plateau and I decided that gravity would do the trick in filling any container. Then I immediately thought of the old cast iron bath we had in storage downstairs under the East Wing.

"We have an old bath under the East Wing that might do and rig up a ball and cock to fill it." Robroy standing beside and reading my mind as he often did!

'Yes the one me and your sainted great grand father poured cold water onto your Father and Uncle.'

"Why?"

'They were acting up and splashing the water all over the bathroom, I only helped in filling their bath water again.'

"With cold water!"

'At least it was clean, unlike them!'

"But cold."

'Are we going home soon, somebody get Rob and Tinkle hitched up please.'

So all the children gathered up their two pets and herded them between the cart shafts then did up all the leather traces, expertly I must admit. At last I was lifted up onto a bench seat already stacked with children whilst Robroy and Jess on either side of the Shires walked them over to the adults. I heard Robroy say to his Dad that they could use the old bath under the East Wing and Nick said what a brilliant son I have that will be a excellent idea.

And so home to more tea and a large cake that cook had just baked. Well it looked like Gideon's wish for a sheep station was once again in the offing, but the cake had

marzipan around it and it was delicious. Dulcie came down to join us all sitting around the dining table and she just managed to swipe the final piece.

5. The iron bath.

I was in bed, again, resting my weary bones and who should come galloping into my bedroom but Robroy, it was a Saturday as I remember thus the arrival of a boy who normally would have been at school, locked up and forced to learn whatever they were teaching him these days. I learnt nothing when I went to school and my parents wasted their money sending we boys away, our local primary school taught us everything we needed to learn, the higher school was sports mad, thus a condemnation of their teachers and their non-ability to teach! I diverge.

'Well that door was closed for a purpose!'

"Was it to keep others out Grand-papa?"

'Amongst some I suppose, so why the impetuosity?'

"I've been doing some checking up, on the computer."

'And I suppose you discovered some keys you had to touch and the screen lit up and wonders of wonders you discovered a means of finding out things on the net.'

"Yes and no Grand-papa can I start?" I grunted so Robroy began first by hushing me to be quite and then continued in his usual pedantic way!

"I went down to the basement and looked at the bath we were sending up to High Hill, I borrowed Mothers mobile and took some pictures, then I opened up my computer, the one in the library, and went on line to research the iron bath, I had a feeling it was old and worth money. It had lions feet on the base so I looked at my pictures and compared them to the antique baths on the web and guess what?"

'What!'

"No you have to guess."

'Its made of solid gold and painted black just to fool we older ones and it was my clever clogs grandson who scratched it and discovered a gleam of sunlight coloured metal and..'

"No that's not it at all Grand-papa do stop!"

'I have not finished Robroy, be quite. And when we discovered how heavy the bath was we sold it for a huge price to a rich oil sheik who took it away and gave us millions so we could move away from this old grey dilapidated castle and buy a proper modern house with all the mod cons and then send our precocious children to a real school where they got thrashed regularly.'

"Can I have pear drop Grand-papa please I think this story has got legs on it and might take some time."

'I've finished now.'

"A humbug then please."

'Yes under the bed, and whilst you are sucking you can tell me what you have discovered and I have a feeling Uncle Gideon will not be pleased at the outcome.'

In between sucks Robroy unravelled his tale. Apparently the bath indeed was old and

a remarkable design with roll top edges and lions feet. Big money was being spent at auctions by the arty set, whereas a cheap galvanised trough could be bought from the local hardware store. He had done well, the lad, to find all this out.

'One thing Robroy, the computer in the library is not yours yet, not until you start work as my secretary, it remains your mothers and mine and I presume you turned it off when you finished using it.'

A nod between sucks.

'So now off you go and find Uncle Gideon and tell him what you told me, that's if he is up. Yes I think a galvanised trough will do fine and he can order the tank and plumbing from the hardware store. I think your father should take care of selling the bath, don't you?'

"With me to help him of course."

'Of course, was there any doubt, now go away.'

Well Robroy closed the door very quietly and tripped on downstairs, I heard his Grandmother ask what he had been doing. Dulcie had the room under mine so as soon as she heard her beloved grandson tripping down those stone steps she must have been keen to know what plans we had been hatching.

'The bath!' I yelled.

"I don't want a bath silly man." Came her answer.

A week followed and a big lorry came up the drive and was directed around the back to the kitchen stairs where my two brothers and my sons had erected planks down the foot-well to the kitchen. They had already, with the help of the young ones, pulled the bath out, loaded on a length of hallway carpet to help it glide along the stone flags. As it was school day, the children were not there, so the adults were going to pull the bath up on the planks using the tractor and a long piece of wire rope. I went down to view the action and it was swiftly pulled up and loaded with the lorry's on-board crane. The lorry men signed for it and away they went.

'And the money?' I said somewhat sharply to Gideon.

"Already in the bank, alas some of it spent on the new water tank and trough which we will erect tomorrow. And Heir, our first sheep are due this weekend. Nick has arranged for all the children to help channel them into the field and I presume you don't want to be left out."

'So you want them to channel me into High Hill as well, well if that's the case, you can leave me in with the shires for protection!' But Gideon just laughed.

Just a note on courtesy titles in our family which I might add we rarely use. Nick my son is a Marquess and Robin a Lord, normally in the old days they would be addressed as such and I presume young Robroy would be a Vicount. Yes all very complicated and quite frankly nobody bothers and I think its due to schooling and the estate workers and of course to the boys. As far as I know Sofia and Auntie Vi were the only ones who insisted on their rights to be called my lady or whatever. But living here Sofia has at last conformed to the family will and that was to treat everyone as

equals, and that includes me. Though of course in view of my grand position as head of the family strangers call me by my proper title, and so they should!

“Uncle Heir are you coming down to see the sheep now?” Young Tom eager to get away so I looked out of my window and saw both Shires strapped up and ready to go with the cart almost full of children. And a big double story lorry full of bleating sheep. So I grabbed my old Tweed coat and trundled off down the stairs. Well they just have to wait I was not going to race down like the children, I had my back and my legs to watch out for! And when I got there at last I had to bundle Fig out of my chair placed at the back, well I did ask nicely.

'Out Figaro find your own.'

“You never call me Figaro unless you are cross Uncle Heir!”

'Well I'm not cross, just anxious to finally sit in comfort, you can sit on the arm of the chair if you like Fig.' And so he did, a smile returning to his little face.

Nick got the Shires moving, and Robin sitting in the lorry, had the lorry driver follow behind. So we made our way up to Home farm and onto High Hill. Alas the lorry could not make it, the slope being too steep. Gideon had considered this and had erected some Hessian channel going up to the field gate. He called all the children off the Shires wagon, including me as I foisted Tommy down to his sister Jess, Fig then I stepped off myself. Meanwhile the lorry had the back down and reversed back to the Hessian channel. Gideon arranged the children at the back of the lorry and sent the older ones up the slope to encourage the sheep into the field. I imagined there was to be a great deal of shouting but the bottom layer were released and immediately sprang up the hill into the field. Robroy closed the gate once they were in. Then the ramps were adjusted up to the second level and the sheep slide and scurried down the planks and swiftly galloped up the hill to join their flock. Robroy only managed to open the gate in time as they pushed through and knocked him over.

“I am OK grand-papa, don't worry.” Came a somewhat chastened voice as he scrambled to his feet and closed the gate. “Off now to fill the trough.” I looked at Gideon and he just shrugged his shoulders. Then a howl from above. Gideon raced up the hill and jumped the gate and rescued Robroy from the deluge. I heard him say it was the inlet tap Robroy had opened the one you screw the inlet hose onto. So he pointed to the outlet cock and Robroy manfully turned that on. They had a ball cock attached to the trough so they checked that all was working. Meanwhile the lorry left and all the children chambered up the hill to join the sheep. Then various cries rang out.

“That's going to be mine I'll call him Fred!”

“Its a female sheep.” From Gideon trying to hold back the throng of children. Then he shouted down to me.

“Heir for Gods sake call them back, they will stampede the sheep!”

I pulled an old police whistle from my coat and blew. All stopped in their tracks.

'This afternoon after lunch you can all go up and see the sheep but come down now as

my Shires are in need of food and rest!' Actually Nick had let them off the cart and they were tucking into the green sward. But the whistle had made the children to think and they helped Gideon and Robin gather up the Hessian and poles to place them on the cart. I was helped up into my armchair and immediately pushed to side arm by a very wet Robroy.

'You are wetting my chair Robroy.'

"Well that's good Grand-papa its better off me and onto some absorbent cloth!"

'Your Grand-mama will have words no doubt!'

"But it wasn't your fault Grand-papa you were safely down by the cart!"

Well that was a relief, Dulcie's tongue lashings can be quite hurtful.

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