

Contes d'une vieille maison et quelques racines familiales

Or

Tales of an old house and various family origins

By

Hélène van der Zee

Published 31 January 1965

Dedicated to

Christiaan and Barbara

Louguy and Carole

Translator's note

Hélène van der Zee was a cousin of my mother, Ivy Cleo Compton-Bishop (née Górkiewicz). These are her memoirs and collection of anecdotes about her family, which used to live in Smyrna (now Izmir).

All footnotes are my own. I have added a few photographs from the Górkiewicz family collection and updated genealogical trees as far as possible. There are French variations in the spelling of names, some unclear links and possible errors in the original family trees drawn by Hélène van der Zee, not all of which I have been able to resolve. Any corrections would be gratefully received.

Quentin Compton-Bishop

Whitstable

gcb@btinternet.com

December 2008

Tales of an old house and various family origins

It was in 1792 that the first van der Zee disembarked in Smyrna. A picture showing the ship which brought him, with the date of his arrival, was in our offices, a beautiful building clad in white marble, which burned in the Smyrna disaster of 1922. Half the town was set on fire when the Turkish troops entered after the rout of the Greek army. The office building contained many archives and family mementoes.

This first van der Zee put in to Smyrna on his boat laden with merchandise. He stayed with the Dutch Consul, won over his daughter, married her, sold his ship and cargo and settled in the country.

During a banquet given on the occasion of the launch of one of our ships in Sunderland in 1946, our London Director, Clavell Bate, paid tribute to the van der Zee family. During his speech, he recounted how our ancestor lived high in the town where he would be the first to espy the arrival of the ships for which he was the agent.

In fact, he lived in Bournabat in one of the fortified houses where Christians used to live in those days. When he was informed of a ship's arrival, he would go down on donkey-back to the coast at Mersinli and there take a small boat to the port where he performed his function of ships agent.

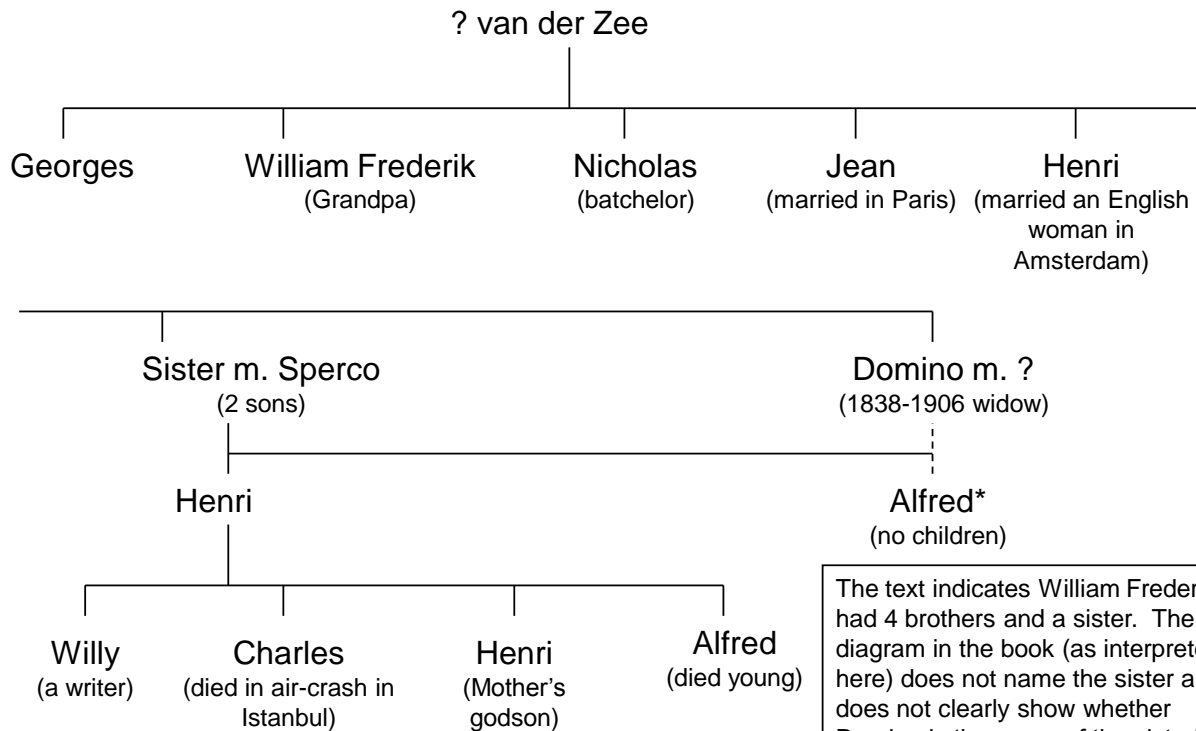
Riding donkey-back was the typical way of getting to town. He always left his donkey at Mersinli to continue his journey by small boat. The Bournabat ladies went to the ball or to parties by the same means of transport. There were always various glamorous hats imported from Europe, which these ladies lent each other for these grand occasions. I have this information from Charles Giraud, Joyce's father.

Grandfather van der Zee (William Frederic v. d. Z.), the father of my father, had four brothers and a sister.

One of his brothers was renowned for his herculean strength. One evening, in London, he was attacked by a mugger who wished to take his suitcase. He gave him a punch and continued on his way. The next day he read in the papers that a man had been found dead at the place where he had been attacked.

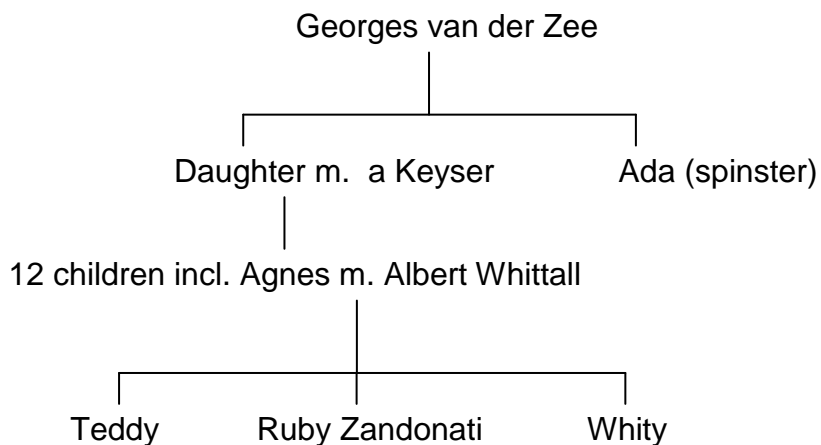
Another brother, Jean, founded a branch of the family in Paris. His son Harry, a great friend of Léon Paul Fargue¹ with whom he lead an often turbulent youth, became partially paralysed by an illness. I remember him in a little car. It was him who sent my father, who provided for him, numerous copies of ancient engravings which he drew. He had a married son in France.

¹ Léon-Paul Fargue (1876-1947). French poet and essayist.



The text indicates William Frederik had 4 brothers and a sister. The diagram in the book (as interpreted here) does not name the sister and it does not clearly show whether Domino is the name of the sister's second husband after being widowed from Sperco or is another sister not mentioned in the text. Similarly, is the Alfred* under Domino, Henri Sperco's brother or Domino's son?
QCB

Georges, his elder brother, had two daughters, Madame Keyser, Teddy Whittall's grandmother, and Ada, who died a spinster in Nice.



William Frederick van der Zee was very fat; he had sideburns and the fine head of a Dutch master mariner. He was subject to attacks of anger which terrorised those around him and during which he would lash out kicks at the person who had provoked them. Once he had calmed down, he handed out money to his terrorised victims.

I remember walking very slowly along the quay to get to his office. During the afternoon, he would sit out on the pavement in front of his house, as was the local custom. The lack of traffic enabled him to sit quietly in front of his door facing the sea, receiving his friends. There he held his meetings. He surrounded himself with poets, philosophers, writers, Greeks or simply Europeans, that Grandpa, who always had an open table, invited to dine with him. People called them Grandpa's parasites. His spirit of culture and curiosity preferred this more down-to-earth milieu than that of the buyers and exporters that he saw at the office.

His wife, Grandma van der Zee, née Marie Cousinery, was very beautiful. She seemed to me a little lacklustre beside her husband. But I have only a vague memory of her.

This is a little anecdote which used to amuse us as children. Grandfather had notified her one day without warning to prepare a big dinner party in honour of some visitors from abroad who were passing through. She had sent her cook to buy what was necessary, but he had been unable to find any fish at the market. Much bothered by this, she sat in the window in the hope of seeing a passing fisherman. She began to despair when, suddenly, a big fish jumped from the sea onto the quay in front of the house. A small boy caught it. "It's mine, it's mine", Grandmother began to shout at the child who brought it to her. "It is God who sent it to me." Nothing was missing from the dinner.

On every birthday, our grandparents gave us a gold coin. The accumulation of these coins enabled me much later to buy my first mink coat.

Grandma had an equally beautiful sister, Eléonore Cousinery, who married a Mulhausen. She had several sons. Brilliantly intelligent and very business-like, she seemed very capable.

As a young boy, my father had been entrusted to this aunt to take him to Europe to go to school with her sons. My father recalled this journey with amusement, one which had to have been picturesque. They crossed the Simplon and stopped at Loèche-les-Bains where Aunt Eléonore had to take a cure, which consisted of submerging herself fully clothed in a large barrel which was used as a bathing pool.

Aunt Eléonore Mulhausen ruled her little world with an iron hand. She pinched the candle stubs, the sole method of lighting at the time, from the hotels where they stayed. This much shocked my father as a child.

Aunt Eléonore was the grandmother of Marcel Mulhausen whom we knew well. He is now in Villars sur Ollon, where he is a director of a school (1958).

Our grandparents had 6 children; 4 boys and 2 girls.

The Górkiewicz side of the family

Grandpa Górkiewicz² came from an old Polish family. His ancestor had fought with the Austrians in 1529³ to repel the Turkish army when it was on the point of overrunning Vienna.

The Austrian emperor, wishing to reward the young Pole, showed him his treasure and invited him to choose something. Spurning the precious objects, he chose a rapier.

The emperor then gave him the title of Count and said to him, “Habdank Górkiewicz”⁴. Górkiewicz’s name thus became Count Habdank Górkiewicz.

One of his descendants was arrested by the Russians against whom he was plotting. They burned his hand by holding it above a candle in order to try to get him to denounce his co-conspirators. He did not speak.

The father of my grandfather died young, when his son was still a baby. Out of bravado, he had wagered some friends that he could carry a weight far above his strength. He damaged his kidneys.

Grandpa Górkiewicz had had an adventurous youth. A patriot, opposed to the Russian interference in his country’s affairs, he continually fought and plotted against the occupier. The Russians condemned him to death three times, but he always managed to escape, once fleeing on the way to deportation to Siberia, another time hiding after a battle under his dead horse, and finally taking refuge with a lady friend in Vienna. The Russians, always hot on his heels, carried out a search of the lady’s house. She hid her refugee in her daughter’s bed, dressing him in her clothes and the young girl’s night bonnet. When the Russians got to the door of the room she told them, “This is the room of my daughter who is sick. As you are gentlemen, I presume that you will not insist on going in.”

The Russian officer and his men clicked their heels and went away. It was a happier age, when chivalry still existed, something so seldom seen in our time.

² Marcel T. Gorkiewicz (1835-1910)

³ It is more likely that the date was 1683, the second siege of Vienna by the Ottomans. The Turks were defeated in large part by a Polish army of heavy cavalry, the “Winged Hussars”, led by King Jan III Sobieski. I have not yet found any record of Polish involvement in the relief of the first siege in 1529.

⁴ I.e. “Ich habe dank, Górkiewicz” or “Thank you”. Ivy Compton-Bishop (grand-daughter of Marcel T. Górkiewicz and mother of QCB) tells the story differently. When offered anything he wanted, it was Górkiewicz who said the phrase, meaning “I have enough (from your thanks)”.

Further research suggests an entirely different origin. In 1109, King Boleslaw Krzywousty (“Wrymouth”) delegated Count Jan z Gory (John of the Mountain) to negotiate a peace treaty with the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V. The Emperor insisted that peace would only come if the Poles paid tribute. In order to display his might, Henry V showed Jan z Gory his considerable treasury, commenting that the wealth could be used to conquer Poland. Unimpressed by all the gold, the Count removed his own signet ring and threw it on to the treasure, with the words “Aurum auro addimus” (Gold to gold we add), implying that the Poles could not be intimidated. Taken aback and to save face, the Emperor is said to have muttered “Hab dank”. Since that time, the Count and his descendants were known as “Skarbek” and their coat of arms as “Abdank”.

Researching the “Habdank” or “Abdank” heraldic coat of arms on the web, it appears that it was used by at least 200 families, although “Górkiewicz” is not listed among them. Abdank is more the crest of a clan, rather than anything passed down a blood line, each family having a variation on the central “W” on the shield.

As a young man, Grandpa had to flee his country. He sought refuge with some friends in Constantinople. Without resources, these young people tried to earn a living by every means. These were the ones who would paint the first names of the streets of the city.

One restaurant owner fed them for free. Later, he went to Poland to be reimbursed by the families of these young people. The lavishness of the reception amazed him. He was received in castles surrounded by immense estates. Each family, in paying the debts of their son, paid him for all the costs of his trip. It was a rich man who returned to Constantinople.

Many of these young people settled in Turkey. One still finds Polish names there now. When I was a child, one of the Sultan's ministers was called Tchaikowski Pasha. Ostorog, Baranowski, amongst others, are the remnants of this era.

All these young Polish men formed a battalion⁵ which fought in the Crimean War against the Russians.

The hatred of the Russians was intense in the Górkiewicz family. I remember holidays, during my studies in England, spent with Aunt Wanda in Torquay. In the guest house where we were staying, we got to know a charming young man, who was very assiduous towards Aunt Wanda, who was very touched with his over-attentiveness. Learning, however, that he was Russian, she cut short their relations and forbade me from speaking about him.

After all these peregrinations and a return to Poland during the revolution of 1863 to fight against the Russians, my grandfather, whose training as an engineer allowed him to pursue various careers, travelled through numerous countries before settling finally in Turkey.

In the Dardanelles, he became the buyer for the farms of the Calverts, who were his wife's uncles, and busied himself with agricultural projects. It was at Thimbra where he got to know Schliemann⁶ during his search for the site of Troy and took part in his excavations.

He married Hélène van Lennep, a Dutch woman, whose family had long been established in Turkey⁷.

We have in Lausanne, in my apartment on l'avenue de Grammont, the genealogy of the van Lennep family.

Grandpa finally moved with his family to Aziziye, where he became manager [or purchasing manager] of the Abbott family's mines.

⁵ This Cossack regiment was formed and led by Michal Czajkowski, known as Sadyk Pasha, who is very probably the Tchaikowski Pasha HvdZ refers to in the paragraph above. Czajkowski (1804-86) was a Polish political activist and novelist. Decorated for his bravery in the Polish Uprising of 1830-32, when he commanded a detachment of Cossacks in the cavalry regiment of his home town (Halczyńiec or Volhynia), he emigrated to Paris when the Uprising collapsed. There, in 1834, he joined Prince Adam Czartowski's political group, Hotel Lambert, and went on to found the Constantinople branch in 1841 to spread anti-Russian propaganda in the Balkans, Ukraine and the Caucasus. In 1950, he converted to Islam, changed his name to Sadyk Pasha and joined the Turkish government. In 1855 he led his Cossack units in the Wallachian offensive. Marcel T Górkiewicz fought in the Cossack regiment under Sadyk Pasha in the Thessaly campaign.

⁶ Frank Calvert was the British Consul and archaeologist who, with Heinrich Schliemann, discovered Troy. The Calverts owned the eastern half of the site, the Turkish government the western side. There are ongoing legal disputes about the finds made, which are held in Moscow's Pushkin Museum, claimed by the German government and by Calvert's heirs, the latter because it appears that some of the important finds were made on Calvert land, but smuggled out of Turkey by Schliemann.

⁷ The van Lenneps were traders who were dominant in the opium trade during the 19th century.

**Copy of the epitaph on the Górkiewicz vault at the
deconsecrated Catholic cemetery in Izmir**

Here lies

MARCEL T. GORKIEWICZ

Born 26 April 1835

In

Wylcziska, Warsaw, Poland

Died in Smyrna 14 August 1910

1850 – 1854

University of St. Petersburg

1854 – 1856 – 1863

Crimean War

Cossack regiment of Sadyk Pacha

Thessaly Campaign

1863

Polish Revolution

1864 – 1866

Moldavia – Wallachia [now Romania]

1866 – 1910

Widin, Roustchouk [Bulgaria]

Constantinople

Smyrna

“Aziziye, property of Ernest Abbott (the first station after Selcuk-Ephesus). The Sultan Aziz visited this region when it did not yet have a name: he found it beautiful and named it Aziziye.”

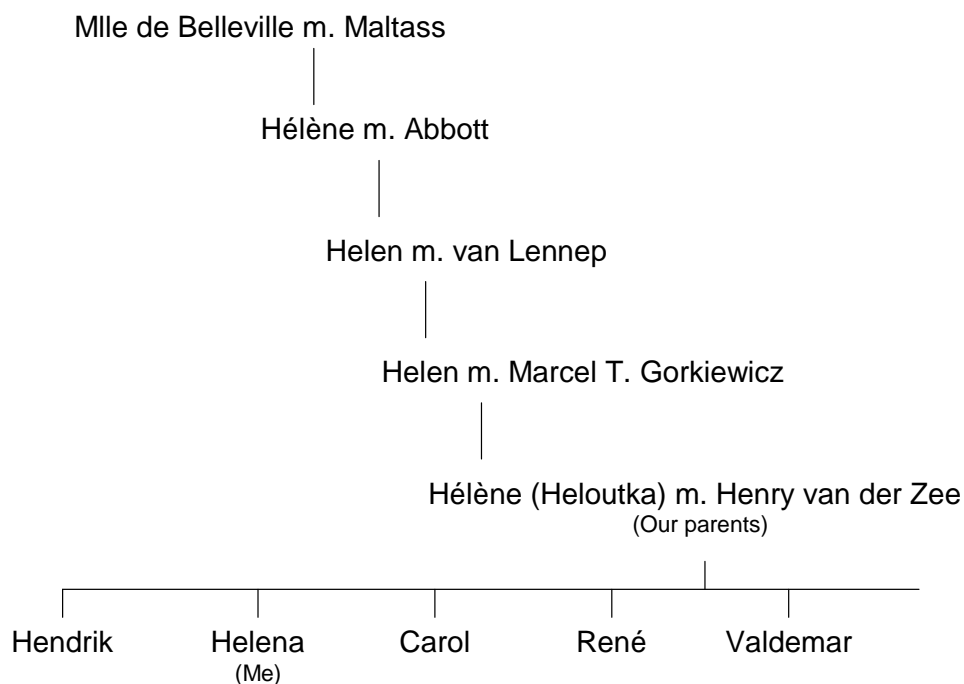
Many of my mother’s childhood memories came from this place. Ernest Abbott planted trees there, mostly pines. Around 1905, it became uninhabitable. The region was infested with brigands and there was no security any more. The family lived there less and less until there were only the guardians to look after the place.

Aziziye was finally sold to the Aydin Railway Company who turned it into a convalescent home for its employees and called it Camlik (Pinewood)⁸.

The emery mines were opposite Aziziye on the Gemus Dagħ (Silver Mountain).

It was grandmother Abbott or her parents who had bought the concession for a 90-year lease. When it expired, the authorities refused to renew it despite all the offers made by the Abbotts, who finally had to give it up. Since that time, no one has exploited these mines which were still fully productive. They are still abandoned (October 1958)⁹.

Helen van Lennep, i.e. Grandma Górkiewicz, whom grandpapa called “Helenco”, was the daughter of Helen van Lennep, née Abbott, and the granddaughter of Helen Abbott, née Maltass.



⁸ Formerly known as Aziziye, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk renamed it Çamlık when he visited in 1937. The old Çamlık station, which today is unused, now houses a steam train museum with much of the original rolling stock of the time. The station was built in 1885 and still has its original repair shop, hydraulic press, and rails.

⁹ Satellite pictures indicate that the mines are being exploited in 2008.

One of their daughters, Evelyne, lived in Constantinople with an aunt Whitaker who had adopted her and whose name she had taken for some time. During the 1914-18 war she devoted herself to British prisoners of war helping several to escape, amongst whom was Sir Robin (Robert) Paul who returned to Constantinople after the war to ask for her hand in marriage¹⁰. Her exploits are mentioned in several English books at the time.¹¹

She died in May 1963 in Ireland where she had lived since her marriage and The Times published the article below, sent in by one of her old protégés.

Letters to the Editor The Times, 25th May 1963

Lady Paul

L.S. writes:

The death announced in your newspaper on May 25, of Lady Paul, Evelyne Alice, Wanda the daughter of Count Habdank Górkiewicz of Warsaw, and widow of Sir Robert Joshua Paul, Bart., has cast on the survivors of prisoners of war of the Turks in World War 1 a sadness blended with memories of her courage, her kindness and ingenuity.

We knew her as Miss Whitaker. She had been the good Samaritan to all communities of the Constantinople of these days, on which account the Turks thought that she must be somewhat mad – a reputation she did not disclaim, and beneath that mask she helped prisoners of war to escape.

At very considerable risk to herself she visited one hot September afternoon the writer of these lines and his friend, when as escaped prisoners we lay hidden in a sordid house in the underworld quarter of Constantinople. She brought us what we most needed, money, certain vital information and some very sound advice, and it was typical of her kindness that she should arrange that we should get some clean clothes.

The late Francis Yeats-Brown in his book "Caught by the Turks" wrote of her, "It is impossible to think of my escape and escapades without thinking of the gallant lady who made them possible. Miss Whitaker, as she then was, now Lady Paul, knew something about all the escapes which took place in Turkey. Against every kind of difficulty from does and constant discouragement from friends she boldly championed the cause of prisoners through the dark days of 1916 and 1917. She was the good angel of the British at Constantinople, a second – and more fortunate – Miss Cavell.

In marrying Robin Paul, an escaped prisoner whom she helped, she found over 35 years of great happiness, and in the years between the wars it was a delightful privilege to stay from time to time at their Irish home – Ballyglan, near Waterford.

¹⁰ Her niece, Ivy Cleo Compton-Bishop, daughter of Evelyne's youngest brother Marcel de Gorkiewicz, recalls how her father fell out with his sister. She came with her husband to Beirut where Marcel and his wife, Mary Charnaud, had moved to in 1914, but failed to get in touch. Deeply upset, Marcel refused ever again to acknowledge that he had a sister called Evelyne. No reason for the slight is known.

The Pearl Necklace

It is, I believe, the mother of Helen Maltass, who was in the Indies where her husband had some official position, who assembled the string of pearls that I wear in a double strand. At this time, there were no pearl companies. The first established was Shell, which, much later due to having made some business losses or for some other reason, was transformed into a petroleum company and from there into the Anglo-Dutch Shell Company of today.

So, before the time when the pearl fishers brought all their harvest to Shell, they were free to sell as they pleased. Our ancestor asked several fishermen to stop at her house every day with their catch. This was how she assembled one by one the pearl necklace which has been handed down ever since, from mother to daughter, the eldest daughters always being called Helene. Unfortunately, it is with me that this tradition will cease¹².

My grandmother Helenco Górkiewicz (nee van Lennep), when she was once short of money, offered her necklace as security for 500 gold livres from her uncle Ernest Abbott. Ernest Abbott's second wife, authoritarian and without kindness, wanted to seize it. The necklace stayed for many years in a chest where it lost its shine and began to tarnish. It was my father Henry van der Zee who finally redeemed it in paying off the 500 gold livres.

The pearls gradually regained their life and recovered their lustre on the neck of my mother.

Helen Maltass, grandmother of my grandmother Górkiewicz (nee van Lennep) married Richard Benjamin Abbott, who was the owner of the emery mines of Gemus Dag. She was renowned for her beauty, culture and brilliant intelligence. On the death of her husband, she managed things with great competence. Her charm and open spirit earned her an entourage of attentive men who liked to discuss all sorts of matters with her. Even the Vali (Governor) sought her counsel. Her son Ernest Abbott, the head of the family, but a gambler had difficulty managing business matters.

The son of this last Richard Abbott (out of his first German wife Josephine Nepel) was employed as accountant in this mining business, sacrificing part of his life to settle the debts of his father. A bachelor, sensitive, cultivated, very musical and a composer who would have certainly had some success if he had had the opportunity to be heard abroad. He had no heirs and this branch of the family died with him.

The van Lennep Family

It was around 1535 that the first Dutch traders appeared in the Levant. When the Venetian trade became to decline, they negotiated the Capitulations¹³ of 1612 with the Ottoman Sublime Porte and soon the first Dutch consul was appointed to Smyrna. It was in this city that the Dutch merchants centres their business in the Levant. They quickly surpassed other countries and became the most powerful.

The van Lenneps, the de Hochpieds and the van Heemstras were among the leading groups. All of this little Dutch colony was based at Sevdikoy. They found there greater security than in Smyrna where the inhabitants were subject to raids by pirates. In town, people lived in souks with narrow streets. Each quarter was locked up at night behind

¹² Helena van der Zee had no children. It is believed the necklace passed to her brother René or to one of his children.

¹³ Capitulations were bilateral agreements between the Ottoman Empire and Christian nations giving the subjects of the Christian states rights and privileges to trade with and reside in Ottoman dominions. The Capitulations were terminated in 1923 by the Treaty of Lausanne.

strong iron gates. When they had business to transact, or when a ship's arrival was signalled, these gentlemen left for the city, on horse- or donkey-back, as did our ancestors from Bournabat.

The van Lenneps had a large "ciflik" (estate) called Malkajik (near to Develikoy, after the village of Cimovassi and next to the ancient city of Colophon). You get there today on the Claros road. The current village, Degirmendere, is built on what was the Malkajik estate. Currently (October 1959), the road passes in front a large house which still has a beautiful appearance despite its dilapidated estate. It is occupied by countless peasant families. This is all that remains of Malkajik.

Malkajik belonged to Charles van Lennep, father of my grandmother. I went there during my childhood. The estate was eventually sold. My Górkiewicz uncles and aunts inherited some of the sale proceeds. The aunts used their share to do up a large apartment in Nice as a boarding house. Friends came to live there. They never sought payment from them. All their small capital was soon gobbled up. They had to sell their apartment and furniture.

The Abbotts came to the country with the other British families as part of the Levant Company.

The British were drawn by this opulent city and sent pioneers in their turn. They also obtained Capitulations. The Levant Company was established in 1581 by a royal charter. It was backed by Queen Elisabeth and rich London merchants. It was one of these merchants who was appointed ambassador to Constantinople. The Levant Company quickly became one of the powers in the Levant with branches throughout the near East¹⁴. It was it which funded the British consuls and their own clergy from England.

It was only in 1825 when it had to renounce its privileges and end its charter. From that time the British government appointed and funded its own consuls. There are still British in Izmir and Istanbul whose ancestors date from this era.

Stories of Brigands

One of my grandmother's brothers, Alfred van Lennep, when he was a young man of 20, spent some time at his parents' Ciflik. One day, stopping to look over a new tractor imported from Europe while the peasants had gone off to lunch, he suddenly found himself surrounded by brigands who seized him with the aim of ransoming him. The family was informed and a large sum of money demanded together with the terms of the blackmail.

"If you do not produce the money before such and such a day, we will send you your son's ears, then his nose, etc."

The family had to hurry to find the necessary sum to free their son, even if it ruined them.

He was treated as a distinguished guest during his captivity. The bandits had to change their location every few days to avoid their pursuers. He was given the best cuts of chickens, lamb or other food that was stolen for their subsistence.

Once he was freed, the Vali sent a force to hunt down the brigands. They were cornered on a hill near Ephesus, too occupied in arguing over the division of the ransom money to notice the soldiers' approach. Taken to the city, they were all beheaded and their heads stuck on top of the walls around the Governor's palace. Eric van Lennep, the son of Uncle Alfred, still has a picture of this grisly spectacle.

¹⁴ The Levant Company's headquarters were in Aleppo, Syria.

These abductions were common in those days and this was one of the rare occasions when the authorities were able to act ruthlessly. The rest of the occasions, the ransom was paid and the brigands disappeared, unpunished.

So, one year when they announced that they planned to abduct one of the young Patersons, Whittalls or van der Zees, Grandpapa immediately sent Uncle Boy away to school in Germany.

The Whittalls also sent their son. There only remained young Eric Paterson, who was only escorted by a kavas (bodyguard).

One evening, in returning home to the big house in Bornova, they were attacked in front of the wall of the property. They fought back. The kavas was killed, but Eric Paterson managed to save himself. His hat was pierced with a bullet.

My father had the habit of returning each evening from the office by walking along the quay. He noticed a small boat full of men which was following him close by. This game went on for several days until Grandpapa realised that they were waiting for an opportune moment to seize him. Having been alerted before he got into trouble, he had to give up his strolls and return home by car escorted by a kavas.

Richard Abbott almost had the same experience. The tennis club was located at this time on the Chabert property. Richard went there regularly and each Saturday stayed on to dine with his friends. He used to return around midnight along the quay. He barely escaped some men who wanted to grab him and throw him in a boat. He also had to give up his nocturnal walks.

Tchakirdji (Cakirji) was the Robin Hood of the Anatolian forests. I heard innumerable stories about this bandit, loved by the poor, during my childhood.

His father had been a brigand. The authorities had offered him a pardon and freedom if he gave himself up and renounced banditry. He gave himself up in good faith and was killed in front of his son. The small boy therefore swore to avenge him. So, he took up his father's profession. He stole, abducted, ransomed and assassinated Turks, officials or soldiers, all those who had been behind the death of his father. His head-quarters was on the Buldagh, in the Salihli region. The villagers loved him and protected and looked after him as their benefactor.

With the money from his victims, he helped the poor, provided dowries for girls and carried out numerous good deeds. No one was ever able to lay a hand on him. He was never found.

I recall that an American woman, interested in the stories about him that were going about, wished to meet him. By mysterious means, she managed to arrange a meeting and he invited her to a meal at his hideout. During the meal, he took out a small revolver and showed it to her. She did not flinch. "You are not afraid?", he said. "And why should I be afraid?", she replied. He threw the revolver to her across the table. The handle was inlaid with turquoise. "Keep it as a souvenir."

Extract from the Istanbul newspaper 27 September 1909

"The banditry in Smyrna is taking a grave turn. Tchakirdji and his lieutenant Telloglou are no longer waiting for stray travellers on the roads, but are laying siege to villages and railways, suborning the employees, gathering together the local people and dictating orders.

The latest exploit of Tchakirdji took place in the village of Erbeyli. With 10 men, he entered the café of the station where he seized Sari Husseyin and three other notables. The station master, who also had to follow the prisoners, by order, was instructed to transmit the brigands' demands to the family of Sari Husseyin – 2,000 livres in ransom."

At one time, two of our aunts were living alone at the van Lennep ciftlik, believing themselves in perfect safety due to the isolation and protection of their kavas.

This was a time when waves of fanaticism often provoked massacres. Each person wanted to kill his “giaour” (Christian) when the order came by some mysterious means, probably emanating from some religious sect. It was a firm conviction that the number of Christians each Muslim killed would count when he got to paradise. The more he had to his name, the more delights were awaiting for him there.

In this context massacres began in the vicinity of the ciftlik. The kavas went to reassure the two aunts. “You can count on me. I will protect you to the end. But if I receive the order to kill Christians, I will kill you with my own hands without making you suffer.” The aunts decided that it would be best to get back to the city.

Lamartine¹⁵, pursued by his creditors, had petitioned the Sultan for an estate. The Sultan made him the gift of a property in the Smyrna region, the Baltadji farm at Burgos Ova. He decided to visit it in 1850 and take possession of it. It was on this occasion that he was received at the van Lennep ciftlik. Later, in his correspondence, he spoke of this visit and of his own estate, in considering how he could exploit it.

Canak Kale (Çanakkale, the Hellespont or Dardanelles), another of our family’s properties, belonged to the Calverts. The two Calvert brothers, Frank and James, had married two of the daughters of grandmother Abbott, Evelyne and Lavinia, and aunts of grandma Górkiewicz. They lived at Canak Kale in a huge house which seemed more like a castle, surrounded by a magnificent estate bordering the sea and which one could see from afar when crossing the straits. This property was called Park Villa. The Calverts’ business was the extraction and export of valonia¹⁶. The ships moored at a jetty at the end of the estate to be loaded up.

The Calverts also owned a large farm or ciftlik in the interior of the country called Thimbra and which was near the site of Troy (Hisarlik). My mother and aunt Dida used often to tell of their vibrant and picturesque childhood memories relating to Park Villa and Thimbra and their trekking on horseback from one place to the other.

Frank Calvert, living in such evocative surroundings, was passionate about archaeology and possessed a beautiful collection of artefacts found in the area. When Schliemann first started his excavations he searched in vain for the ruins of Troy. Frank Calvert, who knew the region well, showed him the exact spot. C.W. Ceram confirms this in his book *Götter, Gräber und Gelehrte* (1949, *Gods, Graves and Scholars*).

Frank Calvert was the US Consul and his brother James Calvert the British Consul at Çanakkale. The daughter of James Calvert married Frank [sic] Bacon¹⁷, the architect of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC.

My father Henry van der Zee, born in Smyrna in 1869, started off at a European school in the city and was sent later to study in Germany. His father had ongoing business matters in Germany, but he did not like to employ Germans in his office. He wanted his son to learn the language fluently.

¹⁵ Alfonse Marie Louis de Prat de Lamartine (1790- 1869). French writer, poet and politician. Briefly Minister of Foreign Affairs during political turbulence in 1848.

¹⁶ Vallonée or valonia is a tannin extract from the cups of acorns of the Valonia oak (*Quercus macrolepsis*). Valonia is used for tanning, dyeing and water treatment.

¹⁷ Actually it was Henry Bacon (1866 – 1924), who married Laura Florence Calvert and designed the Lincoln Memorial.

My father, his three brothers and two sisters were brought up by a black slave. My grandfather William van der Zee happened to be in Constantinople one day when a slave ship arrived.

He was sickened by the treatment these unfortunates were subjected to and bought a young girl whose family had died during the voyage and had simply been thrown overboard. My grandfather gave her a monthly salary and treated her like the rest of his free staff. She became a strong woman and her devotion to my grandfather and his family was extraordinary. The stories told by my father about his black nanny were really fascinating.

My father and his brothers were wild like many of the boys of their age. Nobody could make a criticism of them. Any supplier, domestic or other who made a complaint about the devilry of the boys got a pair of sound slaps from the nanny. One day she even attacked a merchant, carrying his "tava" (tray on which were displayed his wares) of cakes balanced on his head. He had to take a beating without being able to defend himself, to the cruel amusement of the children.

The great distraction on days off was to steal kites. All the houses in Smyrna had terraces. It was from these that children launched their kites and the great sport was to have battles with the neighbouring kites, each trying to crash the neighbour's kite and to pull it triumphantly onto the terrace. The prize was kept and repaired for another battle.

The nanny excelled at this sport, always ready to help the boys when they had to pull in the prize with some force. Thanks to her, the team was unbeatable.

One evening my grandparents went out, leaving the house and children in charge of the nanny. In getting back late, they found her crouching by the fireplace holding an axe in her hand. She had heard a noise. Thieves had tried to get in via the chimney. Instead of calling for help, she had picked up the axe and was waiting for the burglars while murmuring, "Wait a bit so that I can cut off your head." The terrified thieves fled.

She had converted to Catholicism and had promised her savings (a small fortune patiently amassed and locked away in a tin box under her bed) to the church. When she was dying, the priest who had come to comfort her took the box without waiting for the end, which hastened her last moments.

My mother, Heloutka van der Zee, née Górkiewicz, was born in Choumla (today Kolarovgrad¹⁸) in Bulgaria, as a consequence of the adventures of her father. She was the eldest of eight children. As a little girl she lived at Park Villa and the property at Thimbra, with the Calverts, who were the uncles of her mother. It was probably here that her father, Marcel Górkiewicz, met the archaeologist Schliemann and carried out excavations with him.

One day, playing alone in the park when she was about five years old, she heard a bullet whistle past her and saw a man who threw his gun to the ground, muttering, "God cannot have wanted it. This is the first time that I have missed a shot." It was an act of vengeance by a local peasant against her father.

She was a mischievous little girl, a real tomboy. She often told us the story of a small dumb girl, daughter of a member of the staff who lived with them. One day my mother was asked to wake her up after a siesta. Having tried several times to do so without success, the terrible child thought of a more effective method. Soaking a large sponge with cold water, she threw it at the head of the sleeping girl, who was so shocked that she screamed and recovered her speech.

¹⁸ Now Choumen. It was Kolarovgrad between 1950 and 1965.

My parents met each other in Smyrna. My grandfather, Marcel Górkiewicz, had meanwhile left Aziziye and moved into the city with his family.

My father returned from his studies in Germany and was working for his father, where he was already demonstrating his business acumen, as my mother always used to say. He was already looking for other opportunities for developing his father's business.

My mother was still very young and her father was adamantly opposed to their marriage. He forbade the young people from seeing each other. But the young man, always anticipatory and inventive, was able to skirt round all the precautionary measures and obstacles put in place by Marcel Górkiewicz. In the end, the young woman was shut up at home under orders not to go out or to communicate with the one who sought her. So my father, ever resourceful, invented a communication method using a bobbin. His love letters were inserted into the hollow of the reel and thrown into the garden. The next day an empty reel which looked as though it had been left in the street brought him the response.

This perseverance was because of the reticence of my grandfather. I believe that the Górkiewicz family had nothing but satisfaction with the marriage.

As a young woman, my mother accompanied my father to Constantinople. Wishing to visit her Calvert aunts, she took the first coach which arrived instead of waiting for the hotel to procure one for her. She noticed that the coachman was not taking the usual route and told him so. He made some excuses. He drove further and further from the city and when he believed he was safe got out of his seat and sat next to the young woman, trying to entwine his free arm with hers while with the other he held the reins of the horses which were bolting.

My mother beat his face with her fists, broke her parasol over his head, jumped out of the coach, rolled on the ground, quickly got up and, very bruised, began to run in the opposite direction until some passers-by picked her up in their vehicle.

Several days before, a French woman and her daughter had disappeared without subsequent trace. Foreigners were greatly appreciated in harems and when the heavy gates of Turkish palaces closed, it was forever.

Their marriage was brilliant in a Smyrna where life was already easy, pleasant and interesting. My parents lived in a house in the centre of town while waiting for the house in Cordelio to be built. Boy and I were born in that house in Trassa Street. Carol was born in the house in Smyrna. René and Valdy in the Cordelio house.

Cordelio got its name from a visit by Richard Coeur de Lion (Lionheart) – “Cor de lio”. On his return from the Holy Land, he came to Smyrna with his army. As cases of disease had broken out amongst his soldiers, his entry into the city was forbidden. He was assigned a camp site in a marshy area on the other side of the harbour and set up camp there.

Several centuries later, the first house was built around 1820 or 1830. It is the current home of Mrs Belhomme. It was built by a Turk, Osman Zadé, who built at the same time for his harem a vast adjoining house with many rooms.

This house later belonged to the Keyzers, grandparents of Teddy Whittall, who was comfortable there with their 12 children. A modern building is now on the site.

The Belhomme house was originally bought by the grandfather of the current Mrs Belhomme at a time when Cordelio was still not very safe and subject to frequent raids by pirates. You got to the town by caik boat. As a young couple, Mrs Belhomme's ancestors spent their honeymoon there, to the great anxiety of their families who worried that they would be abducted despite the vigilance of the kavas's.

The house looked out directly onto the sea. It had, and still has, a unique location, with the best view in Cordelio, including the city, the entrance to the gulf and marvellous sunsets.

The second house was built by a Turk called Sali Pacha. This building, so beautiful in its proportions, still exists. In my childhood it was lived in by the Barth family. Helen Barth, mother of Geoffrey Maltass by her first marriage, was the second wife of uncle Richard Górkiewicz¹⁹.

It is to Sali Pacha that we owe the quays of Cordelio. During the construction of his house he left for Constantinople and obtained from the authorities the guarantee that no other building would be built in front of those which were already on the coast line. As a consequence the quays were laid out.

Birth of the old house

The Cordelio house was built around 1900. At the start it was a small country house consisting of a large dining room looking out onto a veranda and two bedrooms. The new wing with four rooms was added later, the family having grown.

It was surrounded by a vast garden, often extended over the years when neighbouring land came up for sale.

The neighbouring properties belonged to the Aliotti, Sperco, Armao, etc., families with whom we had pleasant relationships. Baroness Aliotti, daughter of the French general de Lochner, the defender of Mont Valérien in 1870, was my godmother. Our two families were very close. My mother and Baroness Aliotti, from when they were still quite young, had the first women's bicycles imported into the country. It created a huge sensation.

The four Aliotti boys were our usual playmates. We used to go to the end of the garden on the back of a small donkey and played many games, from which sometimes I was excluded, being the only girl and the youngest.

I also used to have a small cart pulled by a temperamental pony which used to give me big worries when I was taking my young brothers along the quay. One day he even tried to jump in the sea. The parapet happily stopped the carriage.

Fishing was a big entertainment for us. I often recall my first fish. The boys were fishing on the ladder and I was determined to do the same. As a spoilt, headstrong and insufferable little girl, I irritated everyone by grabbing a line. In order to get rid of me, I was given a piece of line at the end of which was attached a bent pin as a form of hook but without bait. I immediately expressed cries of joy, which chased away all the fish which the long-suffering patience of my brothers had attracted. I had just caught a fish by the tail.

When my brother Carol caught his first, tiny fish, he was so proud of it he would not be separated from it. My mother was totally astonished when, leaning over his bed to say goodnight to him, to find the fish under his pillow.

Cordelio was then really in the countryside, to such an extent that in winter the jackals used to come onto the property.

In front of the house was a jetty at the end of which was built a bathing cabin. It was a joyful place for us children. Sea-bathing, fishing parties and, later, evenings in the moonlight where we got together round the sound of a guitar and where our first adolescent flirtations used to take shape.

The ladder or "Scala", as we called it, played a great part in our life. Many years afterwards, during the war of 39-44, abandoned, it was eroded bit by bit by the sea. On

¹⁹ Richard Górkiewicz's first wife was Alphonsine de Cramer.

our return after the war, all that was left were a few posts and “La Scala” became a thing of the past, entered into legend.

The current increase in factories around the gulf has so polluted the sea that one has to go outside the bay to be able to swim.

Moored around the ladder bobbed our means of transportation, a dinghy, barques, yachts and the famous “Valk”, winner of so many regattas, and, later, motor boats. We preferred to go to the city by sea, given the poor state of the roads that one rode on in horse-drawn carriages.

Carol and René owned a tiny dinghy in which they amused themselves rowing along the quays and shallow waters. They had even carried out a rescue in this little craft. One day, seeing a sailing boat which had just capsized in the middle of the harbour, they launched out, despite a high sea and the fragility of their barque, to help the shipwrecked. They were the first on the scene. They were able to help some young friends who were hanging onto the hull of the yacht while waiting the arrival of bigger boats.

The rescued were boys of a rival group against whom Carol and René had fought the evening before.

The press exaggerated this rescue. Our astonishment was great when we witnessed the arrival a few days later of the Dutch consul, pompous and solemn. He had come to congratulate officially his young and courageous compatriots.

During our summers at Cordelio, my father commuted to the city by rowing barque, leaving very early to take advantage of the morning calm. I remember the barque loaded with apricots or other fruits, the surplus from the garden, that we sent to friends or to the Little Sisters of the Poor (Petites Soeurs des Pauvres). At midday, when the “imbate”, the refreshing summer on-shore wind, blew strongly, my father used to return from the office by sailing boat. I would watch the arrival of the Valk, light and gracious, with all the sails deployed, my father at the helm, sailing at high speed towards the ladder. A little anxious, I always feared seeing the caique crash against the jetty. By means of a last-second manoeuvre, my father turned and came alongside with impeccable mastery. He used to join us for lunch, tanned with sea-spray.

I also remember his musical gifts. Never having studied the piano, but nevertheless very musical, possessing an exceptional ear, he improvised or played by heart anything he wanted or which he had just heard.

Later, as adolescents, it was tennis which became for us a means of getting together and enjoyment. The play started about 5 o'clock in the afternoon after the siesta and went on until sunset. Our friends used to gather on our court and play some lively games. Large pitchers of lemonade used to quench our thirsts.

Often, officers from the naval squadrons in Smyrna harbour gathered with our friends. Officers from the Dutch, Italian, British, and French navies. The court was always gay and lively.

On Sundays, we used to play from 6 to 8 o'clock in the morning and we then gathered round a large table set out in the shade for breakfast. A famous Greek baker in Cordelio called Adami was famous for his “katimeria”, large pastries dusted with sugar and cinnamon, and his “loucoumades”, honeyed fritters, which he made only on Sunday mornings. Washed down with café au lait they comprised the menu for our regular Sunday breakfast. After the meal, the group dispersed to rest in hammocks or deck chairs. We snoozed, chatted, flirted, before going to the bathing cabin on the jetty for a swim in the sea.

Our parents also welcomed their friends in the garden for Sunday breakfast. Long tables were set up for the numerous guests and their children. This explains the number of tea sets that still exist in the Cordelio house.

At the end of the day, while we played tennis, our parents welcomed their friends for cocktails (“mastika”) usually held under what became a huge palm tree in the front of the garden. The road, now elevated, and the traffic force us to live on the veranda.

The house was in a constant flurry, with all the children allowed to bring their friends to meals without notice. There was always plenty for everyone.

Several of the boys had beautiful voices and accompanied their guitars. The Spanish custom of nocturnal serenades was very much in vogue. It was a marvellous sensation to be woken at night by singing under the window.

Occasionally, admirers hired a whole orchestra to offer their nocturnal homage. Young girls who were fancied at the time could expect several serenades a night. A dedication of admiration and success. It is one of my most beautiful memories of this period to have been suddenly woken by soft music or singing. However, this poetic and delightful custom has completely disappeared today.

We often used to go on boat excursions on nights with a full moon, bringing an orchestra or “politakia”, local singers which still exist in Greece, or some of the boys amongst our friends would sing in chorus accompanying their guitars. The beauty of the countryside lit by the moon gave something ethereal and surreal to these expeditions.

Our youth in the “old house” was truly all one could wish for.

The house in Smyrna was built around the turn of the century. We spent winter there. In spring, or at the start of the summer, the whole family went to France or Germany where my brother Boy was studying. We returned to spend the rest of the summer in Cordelio.

It was a big house. The ground floor, all laid with marble, had the staff rooms, the kitchen, storerooms and one room set up as a veritable grocery where the provisions from France and Holland were stored.

On the first floor was the dining room which took up the entire front of the house, then big and small sitting rooms, a conservatory and a little room at the back where I did my homework. The second floor was taken up with the bedrooms, all opening onto a hall where there was a large staircase. The laundry was in the attic from where there was access to three terraces. The vast attic, walled with wardrobes and cupboards where all the bric-a-brac was kept, was a delightful place for the children on the rare occasions when they were allowed to go there. An immense stove in the lower hall was supposed to heat the whole house.

The view over the harbour and the entrance to the gulf was so extended that one could see first of all the masts of the incoming ships before they emerged little by little on the horizon. Accustomed to this view, my parents felt closed in whenever they left their house.

In 1949, we converted the Smyrna house into 4 apartments.

The life led by my parents at the start of the century was carefree, easy, comfortable and sparkling.

Smyrna was still a city lived in by many Europeans for whom the Capitulations (abolished in 1923 after the Treaty of Lausanne) accorded every privilege.

The population of the great majority of the city and the surrounding villages were “rayas” (Christians) of Greek Orthodox origin, who spoke Greek, but had Turkish nationality without any of the privileges. One spoke Greek to the domestics and in the shops on Rue

Franque where all the European shops were found and where one could find everything, imports being free of duty.

The Turkish quarters extended around Mount Pagus and the bazaars had the same location as the “çarsi” do today.

The Jewish quarters were Karatas, Karantina, and Geuztépé. The raya population disappeared during the painful exchange of minority populations between Greece and Turkey after the disaster suffered by the Greek army in 1922. Many Europeans left also after the events of 1922 and never returned, and one group of Jews emigrated hoping to find a new homeland in Israel. The Turkish authorities did nothing to keep them. Today, the population is completely Turkish and speaks only Turkish.

Life at the start of the century was comfortable, prices were low, to the amazement of all the families of consuls posted there. It was the luxurious life of the Orient, easy and generous.

In our house there were many servants. Several chamber maids, a chef, his assistant, a dressmaker and ironer all year long and, when the family grew, a German governess and up to two English nurses. In the country, a boatman and several gardeners.

When all this group gathered to eat, there were between 10-15. The character of the team was the “kavas” Recep, an Albanian, as were all kavas. He was lavishly dressed in baggy culottes, a fez, a short open jacket (boléro) embroidered in gold, a large belt around his waist into which were tucked daggers and pistols.

He was supposed to keep guard on the house and spent his days on a chair, sipping coffee, or he sat besides the coachman when my parents went out or when the children travelled by carriage.

He had a touching devotion for all members of the family. When one of my brothers was born, Recep ran through the city shouting, “We have a son!”.

As the devout Muslim that he was, women, and to a greater extent little girls, were for him of negligible significance. I took my revenge when, aged 10 or 11, and influenced by news from England about the Suffragettes, I became a fierce Suffragette. I wore their colours as a tie and proselytised. I asked for the signatures, in an exercise book, of all my supporters, who really only wished to please me. The signature of which I was most proud was that of the kavas.

My only fear was of earthquakes. One winter, after the disaster at Messina²⁰, they took place nearly every day. The city of Smyrna had been destroyed seven times since ancient times. It had had several sites. One so-called clairvoyant used to walk around announcing the next destruction of the city, something which vividly caught my childish imagination.

My mother had put packets of biscuits and jugs of water under all our beds where the metal springs offered a certain security. We had to get under the bed at the first warning.

Staring at the “frabalas” (? Greek) of my bed, how my fear made me tremble so that I ended up creating my own earthquakes.

My father had the first gramophone in the city. One time, in the middle of the night, he placed the apparatus in the window and played “The William Tell Overture”. Not knowing the cause of the sound, the neighbourhood was in commotion. People anxiously leaned out of their windows or ran madly in the street. Recep could not understand anything

²⁰ The Richter Scale 7 Messina earthquake occurred 28 December 1928 killing between 60,000 and 200,000.

about the racket. He unsheathed his sabre and rushed outside, shouting, "It is the revolution. Soldiers are coming, led by a band." When the disc had finished, it became calm again. No one understood what had happened to my parents' great amusement.

It is Recep who saved the town house, spared from the fire of 1922. He held off the Turkish soldiers who wanted to occupy it.

During the burning of a yard where we had some barges under construction, my brothers had gone to help put out the disaster. The fire service was precarious, almost non-existent, and people arrived from roundabout forming a chain with buckets of water. As my brothers were separated, Recep ran from one to the other, then began to cry and begged them to stay together. "How can I protect you if each of you three is on opposite sides?"

When, in 1924, my brother Carol was sent to Athens for a few days, Recep begged my brother Hendrik to accompany him to Greece. The situation between the two countries was still very tense so that he was not able to go in his Muslim dress, wearing a fez. To accompany my brother, he proposed to dress as a European, which was an immense sacrifice.

It was only a few years later that the fez was abolished in Turkey; and even then Recep and Hassan the chauffeur, a magnificent Circassian, refused to comply, saying that that they would sooner fight than be separated from their fez. My father and my brother Hendrik finally persuaded them to cede to authority, fearing seeing our house turned into a fortress with our Muslim personnel wanting to barricade themselves in there to fight.

They were, moreover, not the only recalcitrants. Mustapha Kemal, wanting that the dress of the people should not single them out any more than that of a European, decreed the abolition of the fez on penalty of hanging. Overnight, it was required that the fez be replaced with alternative headgear. The population, though hostile to this sudden change, dared not resist. The city's boutiques could not supply sufficient hats and caps. One saw the most odd assortment of headwear. Europeans who were solicited extracted from their attics old top hats, military caps from various nations, old-fashioned and fantastic headgear. I even saw worn miniature Maurice Chevalier boaters, which used to be handed out at the time in Parisian night clubs. Several old Turks who did not want to take off their fez at any price put a hat on top or even the sides of cardboard boxes round the fez. While getting used to it, they seemed awkward and ridiculous, not knowing even how to make a greeting. It was a pathetic sight.

To get back to Recep, this tender heart nevertheless had some unsuspected cruelty. He had a Cretan wife, very beautiful, with magnificent eyes. She lived in Bournabat where they shared a house with her father. She went to work in town every morning. Recep was in disagreement, due to certain matters, with his father-in-law. Moreover, the two nationalities didn't like each other and the two men argued frequently. One morning, for some dark reason that we will never know, Recep waited for his wife to go by. She wore a dress and a spotlessly white scarf, with a bouquet of jasmine behind her ear, as she walked slowly to work.

He threw himself on her and stabbed her countless times with a knife. As the unfortunate woman was dying, Recep went into the next-door house which was lived in by two old European ladies. Still holding his dagger dripping with blood he asked for a coffee to pull himself together. Faced with the ladies horrified air, he told them calmly, "Don't worry, I am the kavas of Mr van der Zee." A recommendation for complete calm.

The views of the family were split, whether to give him the means to defend himself at the trial or to let him go his sorry way. Taking account of his many years of devoted service, my father judged it appropriate to hire him a lawyer. The latter pleaded crime passionel and Recep was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in Smyrna Prison. His record of good conduct meant that the prison governor released him after eight or ten years. He died

several years later, still the guardian of the Smyrna house, which we no longer lived in having moved to France.

Shortly after his sentencing, the woman who had taken care of his children brought them to Cordelio where we were spending the summer. The visit was unannounced and we had no toys to give them. We found in the attic a box of Christmas tree decorations and gave them those. The youngest child, about two or three years old, wanted to bite on a glass fruit. "If you put that in your mouth you will die", said the woman. "But I am not afraid of dying. Papa is in prison.", replied the orphan for whom the only dispenser of death was his father.

Many years later, when my sister-in-law Christine died in Vienna, my nephew Hendrik received the most touching letter of condolence written by Recep in prison. He offered heartfelt sympathy for the poor child who had lost his mother and wept with him for his loss. What a lack of conscience or aberration after having made his own children orphans.

Before describing life in Smyrna, I would like to tell something about Savery, Duke of Rovigo (1774-1832). A politician, he succeeded Fouchet as minister of the police. A French general, he was Napoleon's aide-de-camp. He emigrated to Smyrna and stayed there from 1816 to 1819. Loyal to Napoleon, whom he wanted to accompany after Waterloo, he was arrested on board the Bellerophon, escaped and took refuge in Smyrna in 1816. He did business with Wilkinson (an ancestor of William van der Zee) and lost his fortune through unfortunate speculations.

For his debts which he had not been able to settle with Wilkinson, he left him his papers on his death. The French government wanted to buy them, but Wilkinson offered them to the Foreign Office. As a reward, he was appointed British consul for life to Smyrna, which in those days was one of the most important ranks in the Near East.

In 1811, Chateaubriand, who had passed via Smyrna on his way to Jerusalem, wrote about the people whom he had met. "The merchants who did me the honour of coming to see me were rich, and when in turn I went to see them I found in their homes elegant women who seemed to have received each morning fashion wear from Leroi. Located between the ruins of Athens and the rubble of Jerusalem, this was another Paris, where I arrived on a Greek boat and left with a Turkish caravan, which divided in a striking manner the scenes of my journey."

When Lamartine wrote about Smyrna in 1850, when he came to see the property which had been offered him by the Sultan, he said, "Europe has few cities more European. A society numerous, polite, hospitable, lettered, artistic, comprising all languages and customs, made Smyrna a universal colony."

The tradition continued through to the start of the century. The women were renowned for their beauty (as a result of the mixtures of races) and their allure. The grand couturiers used to look for their models in Paris and the elite of the colony rivalled it in sumptuousness and elegance. It was about who gave the most brilliant hospitality. My parents' dinners, prepared by the famous chef Alexis, who worked for us for 18 years, always 18-24 covers, were famous. I have found endless menus, with sorbet in the middle of the meal to aide the digestion and enable you to continue. Meals which we would be incapable of facing these days.

My mother's Christmas trees had become famous and were the joy of all the children we knew. They were put up on Christmas Eve and it was a big event. The preparations, the huge tree which we decorated secretly, created an ambiance of happiness and joy.

All our young friends waited for this day with as much impatience as ourselves, and I still receive, 50 years later, Christmas cards from friends who evoke the nostalgia of those times.

My mother could not conceive of Christmas without a tinselled tree. Her great generosity, her desire to please, her joy of giving was such that she kept nothing for herself. Despite being spoiled by my father, she didn't possess any jewellery, as she gave everything she had as gifts. Her sole luxury was her extreme elegance and the refinement of her houses.

She could therefore celebrate Christmas with complete generosity thanks to her immense joy of giving, and from the youngest to the oldest, the most humble to the most eminent, no one was forgotten.

Like everywhere else, the ladies of Smyrna had their day of being at home to guests. My mother's was Tuesday. Her friends met en masse in her drawing room and the speciality at our house was hot chocolate topped with crème Chantilly, an innovation then that everyone loved, especially the nursery which got its share.

Many foreign colonies had their clubs or circles. "The Greek Circle", "The Hunting Club", "The European Circle" (founded in 1891 and called the Casino in those days). Each Circle had its annual ball, on top of grand charity balls, "Hospital Saint Antoine Ball", etc. There were also several private balls, including those of the Paterson family who lived in a grand house in Bournabat. They invited the Vali, governor of the city, who placed soldiers on all the roads to protect those invited from possible attacks by brigands.

I have found newspaper articles from the time describing the great elegance of these balls, as well as the dresses worn by the ladies. The most elegant woman was crowned by the local press as queen of the ball. This distinction was often won by my mother.

The carnival, a rather popular event, was also an occasion for celebration. People walked in masks in the streets. But many people also dressed up, paying visits, being mysterious and intriguing.

On the evening of New Year's Day, groups of children went from door to door singing about the birth of Christ and the arrival of the new year, accompanied by daoulia, a sort of local drum. The singing went on for part of the night and began again at dawn on New Year's Day.

The kavas, furnished with a plate of change, gave something to each group.

The New Year Day's custom was the same as in France in those days. My father spent the afternoon visiting all the ladies he knew, while my mother received innumerable gentlemen coming to bring their good wishes.

It was a beautiful time where one enjoyed, even in Turkey moreover, a real freedom, of a breadth of view without extremes and of a great tolerance. To be liberal had a real meaning, well forgotten since the wars of 1914-18 and 1939.

One could travel across Europe without a passport and without any control, something which now seems inconceivable.

Here is a sample of a dinner menu given by the governor of Smyrna in 1907. I made a copy. The menus of the great dinners of this era were just as grand.

MENU

Consommé à la Royale
Zéphirines fondantes
Coquilles de filet de poisson
Tournedos à la Chatelaine
Salamis de perdreaux sur canapés
Punch glacé au Champagne
Asperges en branches
Médallions de foie gras
Dindonneaux à la broche
Salade de saison
Pilaff aux truffes
Gâteau Remember
Glace panachée
Dessert

Government Palace, 7 August 1907.

Part 2

After the 1914-18 war, life was never the same in Smyrna.

At the start of the war, the famous Vali of Smyrna, Rahmi Bey (father of Alp Arslan), a man of great valour and a friend of many Europeans, advised my father to send his family away urgently. Turkey was about to enter the war and to ally itself on the German side.

My father returned late one evening after this meeting. The whole night was spent in making preparations, and the next day my mother and the children were put on board one of our ships, the "Wilhelm Frederick". It was a turbulent night and the sea was raging. My mother ordered the captain to put into shelter so that the children could sleep while waiting for the storm to abate. We were inspected by a French torpedo boat curious about this ship stopped in the middle of the night. It approached us and asked us over a megaphone what we were doing. The captain replied quite simply that, "Madame gave me the order to stop." More and more intrigued, a launch came alongside and some marines boarded to investigate the mystery of this ship which seemed so suspicious. They demanded to see the manifest. No cargo and all the passengers were women and children. They were greeted by my mother, a gorgeous woman of about 40, who explained our situation. They withdrew, amused and disappointed. They had hoped for a sensational war trophy.

We disembarked in Greece. My father and my brother Hendrik stayed in Smyrna. We would never live again in the Smyrna house. My brother Hendrik stayed in Turkey the whole of the war, married Christine de Andria, a charming Italian woman with a half-German, half-English mother, and lived in the town house in the winter and in Cordelio in the summer.

My father rejoined us in Greece when my youngest brother Waldemar was killed, when he was five, in a lift in the Hotel England in Athens. It was the first major bereavement, such that my mother, whose hair turned white overnight, had difficulty in getting over it and it cast a shadow over our youth.

We stayed nearly two years in Greece where I made countless friends of whom several have remained always faithful.

Around 1916, we finally settled in Paris. My brothers Carol and René studied at the Lycée Janson De Sailly and I completed mine.

After the war, we embarked for Turkey every year at the start of the holidays. Holidays which we passed at Cordélio.

We met up again with my brother Hendrik, his wife and a charming baby who was born 6 December 1918, while we were away.

During the holidays the gay and lively life of our carefree childhood began again.

Between 1918 and 1922, the city was occupied by the Greek army. Amongst the officers, I found many of the boys whom I had known in Greece in 1914-16 and who have always stayed devoted friends.

At the Cordélio house, always welcoming, tennis parties, sea-bathing, moonlit night-time excursions and serenades restarted. Often the launches of warships in the harbour, Greek or others, came to seek us out to finish the evening dancing in town. The house was always full of naval officers of all nationalities, Greek army officers and old local friends. I certainly did not lack in dance partners and often had to share the same dance with several boys.

Then came the Disaster of 1922.

We had arrived, as usual, to spend the summer at Cordélio. Some friends, from Foreign Affairs in Paris, had warned my father that the situation was deteriorating rapidly and that it would be bad for the Greeks, but that the Europeans had nothing to fear. At the slightest alert, French, British and Italian squadrons had the order to occupy the harbour and to protect the security of their nationals.

On our arrival, the situation was already very confused. The Greek army, which had occupied a part of Anatolia, began to retreat in front of the Turkish offensive. In town, the atmosphere was heavy, people were worried, the hospitals were already full of wounded and the most alarming news was coming from the front.

And then the disaster happened, headlong flight. The remaining Greek army arrived in the city. Groups of 10 or 20 soldiers in rags, exhausted, haggard, without arms, without leadership, crossing Smyrna to reach Çesme where they hoped still to find ships which would take them to Chios. I witnessed this impressive and unforgettable spectacle from the balcony of our offices. A whole army in rout.

At Cordélio, we organized a canteen to come to the help of these unfortunates. They had marched for 8 to 10 days, sometimes sleeping while marching. Some of them sat on the parapet of our railings to eat something and then collapsed, too exhausted to continue on their way. We received many, two of whom were put on the benches of the motor boat still on the slipway. They slept so deeply that 24 hours later, when a Turkish patrol passed by, it was impossible for us to wake them up to get them under cover.

There were also some looters among these soldiers. I saw with horror one of the two take out of his pocket a fistful of rings and jewellery to offer some to me.

The following night the city no longer had any sense of order, no more police, no more protection. The Greeks had fled and the Turks had not yet arrived.

The young visitors from abroad, including my brother Carol, formed sorts of small militias to protect the terrified population.

It was reported that among the fugitives were Tchétés (fearsome irregulars of the Greek army). They were already barricaded in certain houses in the Turkish quarter, probably waiting for the night to start looting.

The French, British and Italian fleets had arrived. The ships scattered along the coast surrounding the harbour gave hope that each vessel had a sector to protect, but aside from their presence, their protection was scant.

To get to safety, I and René got on board a British torpedo boat, moored close to our house. René handled our departure during a strong wind, and while I was getting on board, he did his utmost to avoid hitting the side of the torpedo boat.

I was welcomed with a mix of stupefaction and amusement by the captain and officers. I was just asking them urgently to disembark some marines, while they were offering me "a cup of tea". They explained that they could do nothing for us, being there solely to protect their nationals. I therefore agreed to have some tea with them in order to have a chat. I told them that we had a British woman at the house (the nurse of my nephew Hendrik) and that there were other British citizens in the country. In exchange for their marines, we would show them where the British were and the captain could come in the evening to have a drink with us and would then be able to verify this.

I finally got seven young marines whom we rowed proudly to shore. I told them that they must above all patrol through Sogukouyou, a Turkish quarter, where the Tchétés were barricaded in, probably planning something bad and terrorising the population.

The "sporty spirit" of these young British swept them along. Carol, who meanwhile had returned from the city and who had a martial presence with a helmet and the consulate's

insignia, took them straight to Sogukouyou. Their trip through the streets demonstrated that the city was being defended by marines of the allied fleet. The Tchétés surreptitiously abandoned their hideouts and the population was reassured.

The captain visited us in the evening. He handed out rocket flares to the British, all gathered in the house of a compatriot located on the quay. At the slightest danger they had only to set off the flares and the captain would come to their help. Several nights later, the flares were set off in a moment of panic, but were not noticed by the torpedo boat.

Our stables and outbuildings were full of people. Unfortunate rayas or Greeks, fleeing their burnt-out villages, begged us to shelter them, believing it more like shelter in a consulate. However, occasionally, a noise, an explosion, something unknown, used to provoke a panic. Whereupon they would all start to cry out at the same time, risking their discovery by the Turks and curtains for us. We had to threaten them with a revolver to make them keep quiet. It is a horrible sensation these cries of terror of a crowd which has lost control of its nerves. We prepared meals for them in big cauldrons placed in the open air on wood fires.

The situation became dangerous. Our father called in one of our ships, the “Helka”, which was moored opposite the Cordélio house. We began by boarding grand-mama Górkiewicz, Christine and little Hendrik, the aunts, the Gandon family and their baby, some friends and bit by bit all of the disparate assembly.

Our gardener, who was carrying a trunk to the jetty to put it on board espied the Turks and had a seizure and died of fright. He had to be secretly buried in the garden. A priest amongst our refugees gave him the last rights.

During the several days when the Helka was moored opposite the house, there was the great problem of supplies, above all fresh milk for the babies which had to be brought on board daily. The responsibility fell to René, who was then about 14 years old and who still possessed his dinghy. He therefore left everyday in his light craft to come alongside the Helka with his cargo.

One day he was arrested by a police launch. A new decree banned travelling by sea. The launch took the dinghy in tow and took it to the station with René.

My father was alerted just at the moment when he was trying to save an Armenian family which wished to drown themselves. They had been sheltered by some Turkish friends, then shown the door for fear of reprisals. (Those who gave asylum to Greek soldiers or to Armenians would be condemned to death, following a recent decree.) The husband had dragged his wife, who held her baby, into open water. My father’s authoritative shouts made them turn back to the road, soaked from head to toe.

My father rushed to the police station to free René. The latter refused to leave without his dinghy which they wanted to confiscate. He stood fast and was eventually authorised to take his boat back on a trailer on condition that he did not put it back in the water.

The rout of the Greek troops was followed by that of civilians. The first to pass in front of us were a couple, the man supporting the woman who was screaming. Their clothes were stained with blood. Their two children had just been murdered. These horrific sights became more and more frequent. Soon, it became carts full of bodies which passed in front of our home.

At night, the silence was sharply broken by shots and the shrieks of people having their throats cut. From the burning villages and surrounding areas came the distant screams of the persecuted people. It was all the more striking since the nights had used to be pure and magnificent. It all took on a hallucinogenic and nightmarish scene.

And then the city of Smyrna began to burn. It has often been said that the Greeks put it to the flame before leaving; or the Turks as they arrived. The plausible version is that it was

an accidental conflagration. Armenian refugees, in their church at the centre of the town and armed with incendiary bombs, defended themselves to the last. The fire that resulted spread rapidly, fanned by a violent wind.

Faced with these scenes of hell, panicking people hurriedly abandoned their homes not knowing where to flee or to seek shelter.

There was no safety any more for anyone. In the general upheaval, foreign nationals were also massacred. Having already got on board everybody in our circle, my father decided that it was time for us to leave and I then boarded the Helka with my parents and three brothers.

The next day, our ship moved closer to the city because, meanwhile, regular Turkish patrols had absolutely forbidden anybody to leave. It was awful for us not to be able to save the people who had gathered overnight on our jetty. Our new mooring exposed us to several shells which fell around us, coming from a Greek warship outside the harbour firing blindly to hit the city or to cover, very ineffectively, the retreat of its army. We had left several small boats moored to the jetty to help people to flee, who had arrived, thwarting the increasingly strict surveillance. The last was a young Armenian, a friend of my brother Boy, who reached the Helka as we were raising the anchor.

We had even rescued a shipload of common law prisoners, escapees from the burning prison, who were drinking seawater to relieve their thirst. They were searched by my mother who feared that they might be armed. We shut them in the hold.

When we raised anchor, the city of Smyrna was nothing but an immense brasier. Our offices were burning also. Bodies floated around our ship. A macabre sight.

And so we finally left this infernal spectacle and this poor city where life had been so sweet and which had been called the Pearl of the Orient.

We headed for Piraeus where we disembarked everybody. We returned to Paris and the Avenue Foch, with grandma Górkiewicz and the three aunts, sisters of my mother. They had lived at Cordélio. My parents installed them in Paris.

I swear that I had nightmares for a long time.

My brother Hendrik stayed in Greece with Christine and little Hendrik, waiting to be able to return to Turkey where he used to run our business. They ultimately installed themselves in Constantinople and spent their summers in Cordélio.

At the start of 1924, I spent a winter full of charm and extravagance with Carol in Athens where he was undergoing training and, despite his young age, managing our office in Piraeus.

He was sensationally handsome. Tall, thin, slender, a deep look and with magnificent eyes, he drew the attention of all the women. Extremely talented, a musician, very artistic, a talented designer, he expressed himself, even from an early age, in a profoundly philosophical way in his note books that have been saved. His sense of humour made every contact with him bight and amusing.

He died on 31 October 1924 in Athens of poliomyelitis, a little understood disease then. Ten years after Valdy, to a day or so, in the same city.

He had just returned to Greece after spending the holidays with the family in Switzerland. I was supposed to rejoin him shortly. My parents, who had spent a short time in Cordélio, had seen him a few weeks before, in good spirits and good shape.

We left immediately for Athens by boat. No airlines in those days. But we arrived too late.

It was a frightfully cruel loss, a collapse of everything. My parents never got over it. Their only consolation was Myriel, then an adorable baby.

The ancient Greeks used to say that those who died young are loved by the gods. I have often thought about that.

The visits to Cordélio became more infrequent and above all much shorter. My father used to spend 10 to 15 days there on business, towards the middle of September, after the worst of the heat. No more carefree youth or happy reunions. But the house was kept animated by the presence of Hendrik, Christine and little Hendrik. His delightful little blond head all curls, his vivacity, his talent for repartee, his sense of humour and his deep love for Cordélio, the house, the garden, of which he was the product, made a harmonious combination.

I did not know of a more unique marriage than that of my brother Boy (Hendrik) and Christine. They led a quiet life, entirely self-sufficient, each one living for the other and for their child. My brother's life was split just between his family and his work. In winter, [they lived] in their very agreeable apartment in Maçka, with its extensive view over the Bosphorus.

Hendi went to the British school in Constantinople. He had a stunning facility for languages and spoke seven. Later, when in 1933 he came with me to the Dutch East Indies, he learned Indonesian during the three weeks of his stay by mixing with the Dutch students and Indonesians on board. Once in the Indies, he interpreted for us in Sumatra, Java and Bali.

My brother continued to pass the summers at Cordélio with trips to Lija where they had a small house. They used to spend short stays devoted to fishing, hunting and sea-bathing. Hendi always loved to go there. He found again the youth of the country and the life he loved.

In 1930, Christine, fine, harmonious and so elegant, died in Vienna, following an operation to remove the appendix that went wrong, varied out by Professor Halbahn, then the most famous surgeon in Vienna. Boy was inconsolable. He died in June 1933, aged 39, in Montana where my mother had moved him to from Constantinople. He had contracted a violent pneumonia while sailing up the Bosphorus by boat, on one of the first fine days of Spring when he was prematurely too lightly clothed. Always depressed, he did not have the necessary will to fight his illness.

Several months earlier he had married Joyce Giraud.

He was our eldest brother, a straight man, strong, solid, on whom everyone could depend. When with him, as when with my father, one felt protected, the centre of attention. Life was not a problem when they were there.²¹

Hendi lived with my parents in Paris and continued his studies with his Dutch private tutor (taken on by his father in the last letter he wrote), Captain de Yongh (de Jongh). This change in his life, deprived of his parents and far from the Orient which he so loved, would take its toll.

My parents took on the so faithful couple who had been in the service of my brother: Taki and Eminé.

Taki had been with us well before he got married and before going to my brother's.

²¹ Cleo Compton-Bishop recalls how her father Marcel de Górkiewicz was also devastated at Hendrik's death. Although Hendrik was his nephew, they were about the same age and Marcel considered him like a brother.

There were no more than three very short stays in the old house, which entered a sort of torpor, prolonged by the 1939-45 war. No one went there for about ten years. On return to their country, Take and Eminé became the guardians of the house.

It was during the last was that we lost what was then the last hope of the family. Hendi enlisted before being called up and joined the Dutch navy. He was in England, separated from us, and was already busy with much competence in the London office.

He joined up as a plain sailor and then became an officer in the (British) Royal Navy.

He lost his life on Christmas Eve 1941, at the age of 23, on a mission close to Tobruk, having been torpedoed twice the same day, rescued by a ship which was then torpedoed itself.

We could not face the truth, always hoping, despite and against everything, that he had been rescued by an enemy ship, that he was a prisoner, or had taken refuge on a Greek island. Every possible action was taken, but one had to submit to the appalling fact.

After such cruel bereavements, this was for us the end of everything.

The son of my cousin Frederick van der Zee was also killed in the Dutch air force. There were no more boys carrying our name in the young generation.

Their names are engraved on a plaque in the building of the old Dutch Legation in Istanbul, which is now the consulate.

Hendrik's name is engraved also in Chatham in England on the monument dedicated to the memory of sailors lost at sea during operations.

On the tomb of his parents, which his father had designed, representing a broken lily in memory of Christine, (a tomb which we had transferred from the deconsecrated cemetery in Izmir at Karsiyaka) we had engraved:

In proud and loving memory of
Sub lieutenant HENDRIK VAN DER ZEE R.N.V.R.
lost at sea on active service off Tobruk, Dec, 24th 1941.
1918-1941

My parents, who had lived in Lausanne since the war, had before the end of their lives the joy to see the birth of Christiaan, Louguy, Carole and Barbara. Hope was renewed, the family endured.

My father often used to say that he would like to see perpetuated in his children, with the same valour, the same fervour, the work that he had created. He felt rejuvenated in his sons and he was happy to see Hendrik manage the business with authority and a great ability. Carol showed great aptitude despite his young age and Hendi had all the makings of a great businessman, all the capabilities of his father and grandfather.

The whole burden now fell on René who carries the flame with courage, perseverance and competence, while waiting to be seconded by Christiaan who, I hope, will continue the tradition with success. And maybe helped by Louguy?

My cousin William van der Zee, our manager in Izmir, full of bonhomie and charm, was suddenly carried off by a heart-attack in October 1960.

The years pass, the wounds scar over while still leaving deep furrows.

My parents died in Lausanne, both of them at the Hotel Beau-Rivage in Ouchy. My father's fate was sealed after an operation on his intestine which was only able to prolong his life for two years.

He lived for 18 months and died on 5th November 1946, keeping right to the end his beautiful intelligence and all his mind, giving us some last advice and recommending us before anything else to have self-respect.

My mother followed him a year later on Christmas Day 1947. She did not want to live on without my father. Despite being already very ill, she insisted on having her traditional Christmas tree. From her bed, she directed the decoration. It was not the big, luxurious tree of our childhood, but a small, charming tree which glittered in her hotel apartment and of which no detail escaped her.

Christiaan and Barbara (at least 6 months old) arrived from Crans with their parents. Myriel and Louis brought Louguy and Carole. All that was left of the family was around mother.

The doctor warned us that we should light the tree on 23rd December. She understood our subterfuge, but pretended to believe in it. In the evening of 23 December, she had her last happiness, her last tree, all lit up as she liked them, surrounded by her grandchildren and great grandchildren: the hope for the future, those who would take over.

Mother died at daybreak on Christmas Day. A few moments before the end she asked for the photograph of my father and said to him, "Henry, I am coming".

Both of them died with a great serenity, an indication of their great spirit, their generous hearts and with a sense of duty which was the essential element of their life.

During all these years, great changes have taken place in Smyrna, which has now become a city entirely Turkish in population and language. A completely new stratum of inhabitants has moved in, coming from the interior of Anatolia, or by means of the exchange of population.

One feels stripped of one's country, required to adjust to a new language and new names. Smyrna has become Izmir; Cordélio, Karsiyaka and so on.

Ten years have passed whereby the Cordélio house, now the "old House", has lived in a sad torpor. The garden is desiccated. No more fruit trees – lemons, mandarins, oranges, apricots, medlars, pomegranates, quinces – no more avenues of bay trees, lavender hedges whose flowers scented the large linen cupboards. No more lemon verbena, rosemary or acacias. Nor my father's rose garden with its infinite varieties.

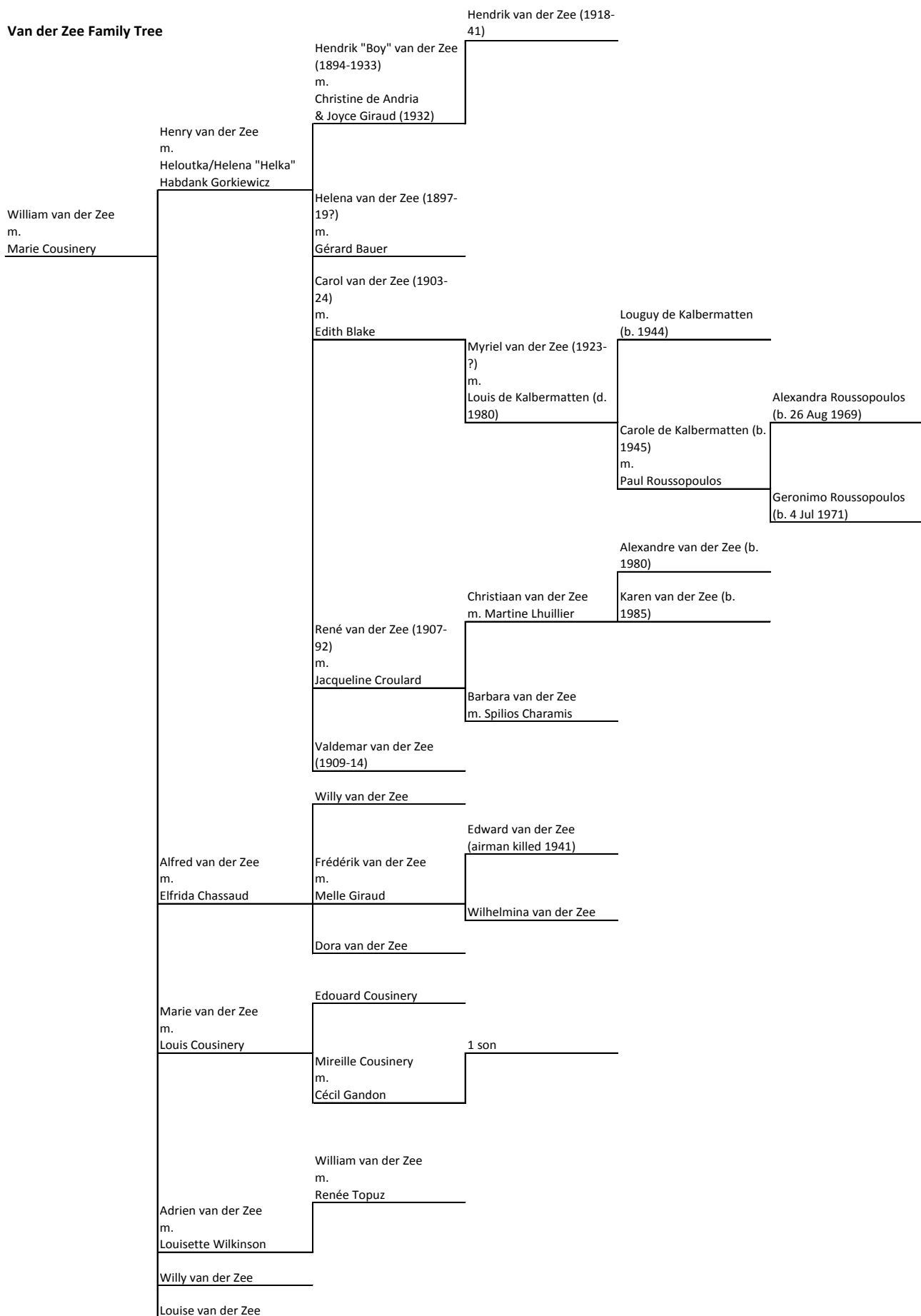
The garden showed one aspect of ruin, aridity. Tall, tangled weeds have invaded everywhere, even the tennis court.

The jetty, the rendez-vous for happy sea-bathing parties, nighttime meetings by moonlight, and around which used to moored and berthed various boats, had been demolished by storms.

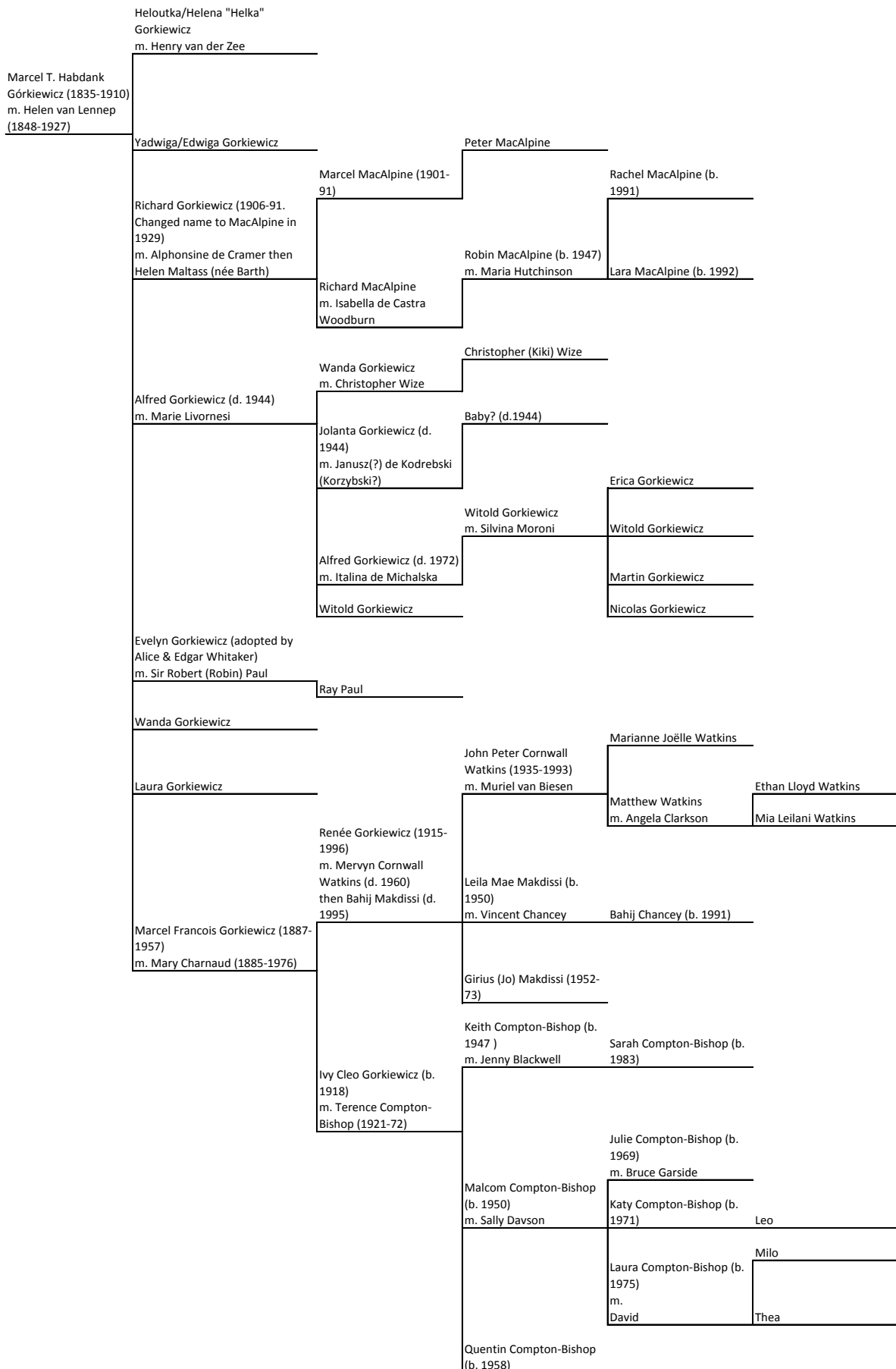
One had to get back in touch, wake up the sleeping beauty, surrounded by a dense thicket of palm trees going forth and multiplying.

But one day the faithful Eminé opened wide all the windows. An uncommon activity invaded the rooms. Washing, brushing, polishing. It is waiting for Prince Charming, the prince charmings, the changing of the guard, the new generation, who will shake off this torpor and fill with the happy cries of children, with their youth and their gaiety, these old walls whose silence was only broken by the isolated noises of the gnawing of rats and mice running through the walls.

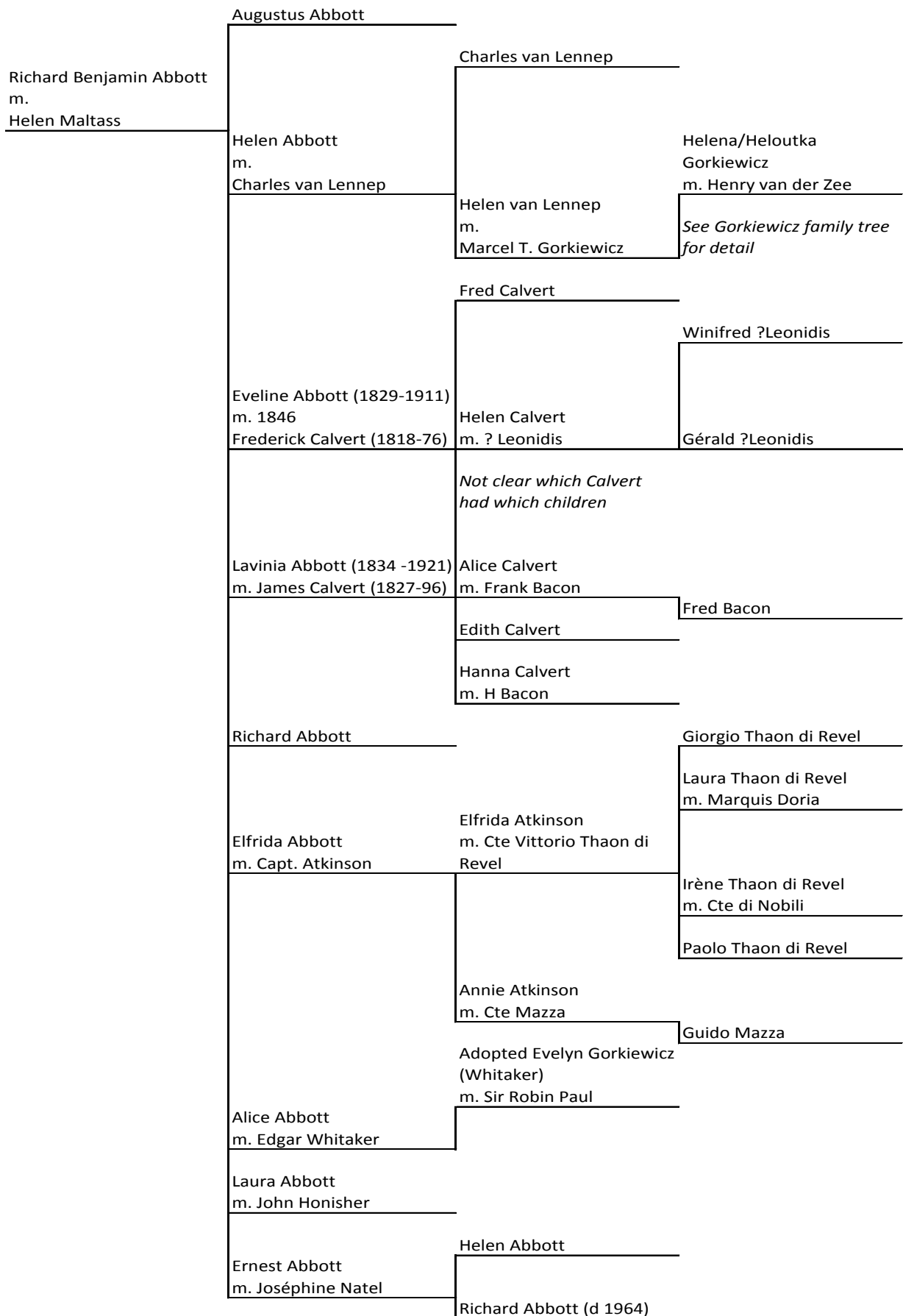
Van der Zee Family Tree



Gorkiewicz Family Tree



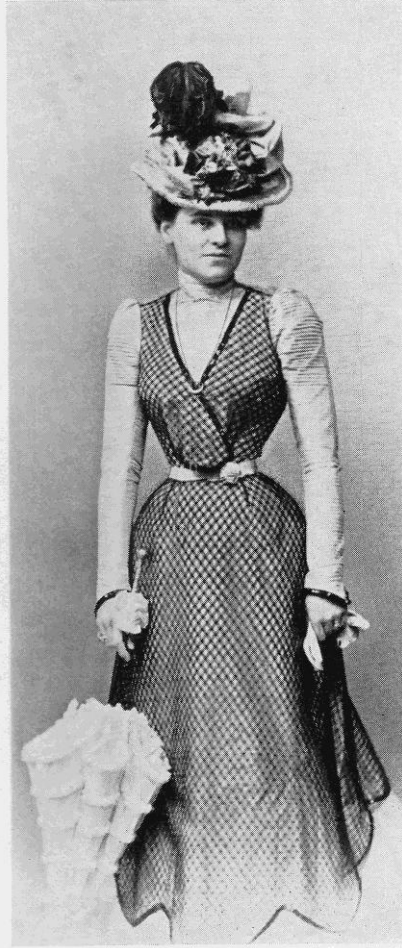
Abbott Family Tree



Photographs in the book



W. F. Henry Van der Zee
1869 - 1946



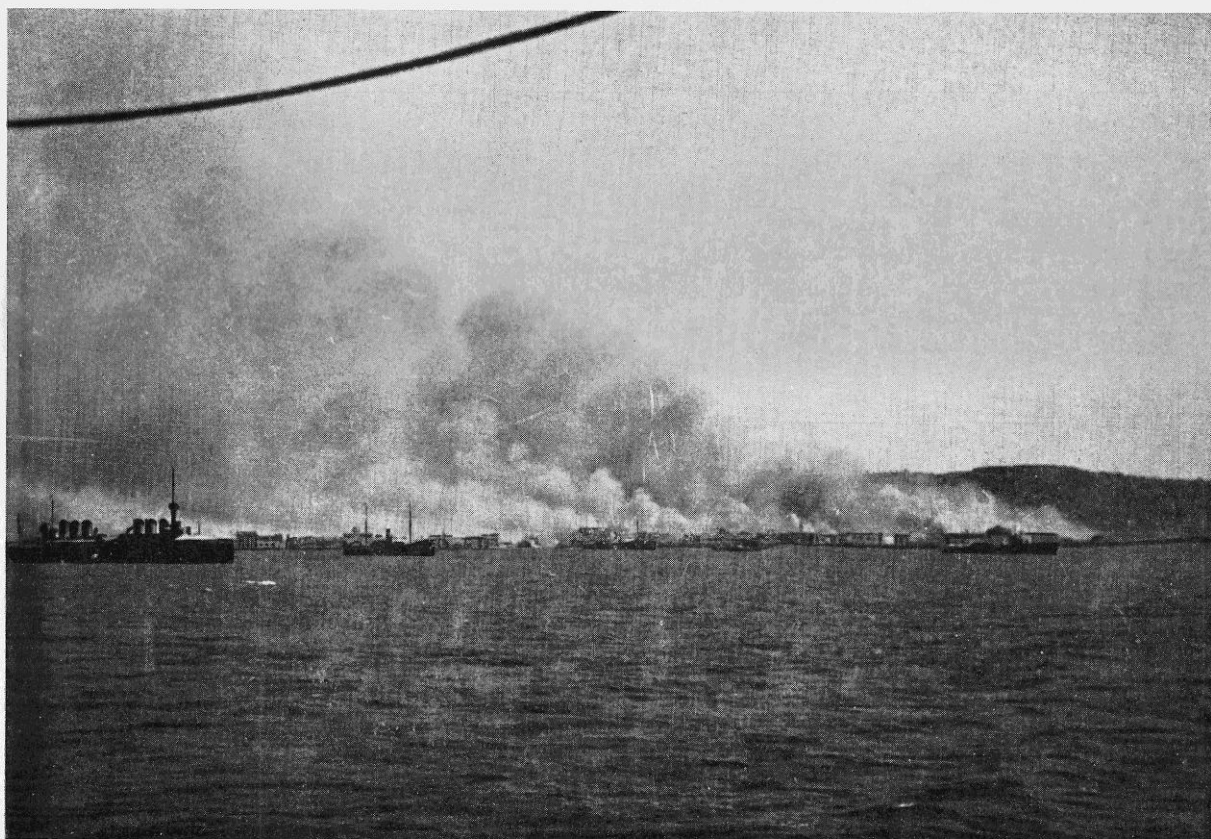
Heloutka Van der Zee
née
Habdank Górkiewicz
1872 - 1947



Henry Van der Zee
(plus jeune)



Heloutka Van der Zee
(plus jeune)



L'incendie de Smyrne Septembre 1922
sous les yeux de la flotte alliée

Notes added by Myriel van der Zee

Uncle René, Aunt Hélène and I sold the house on 24 September 1982. Being a listed building, it has not been knocked down yet, alone, between the skyscrapers.

Myriel van der Zee

Geneva, 1989.

23, Avenue Foch

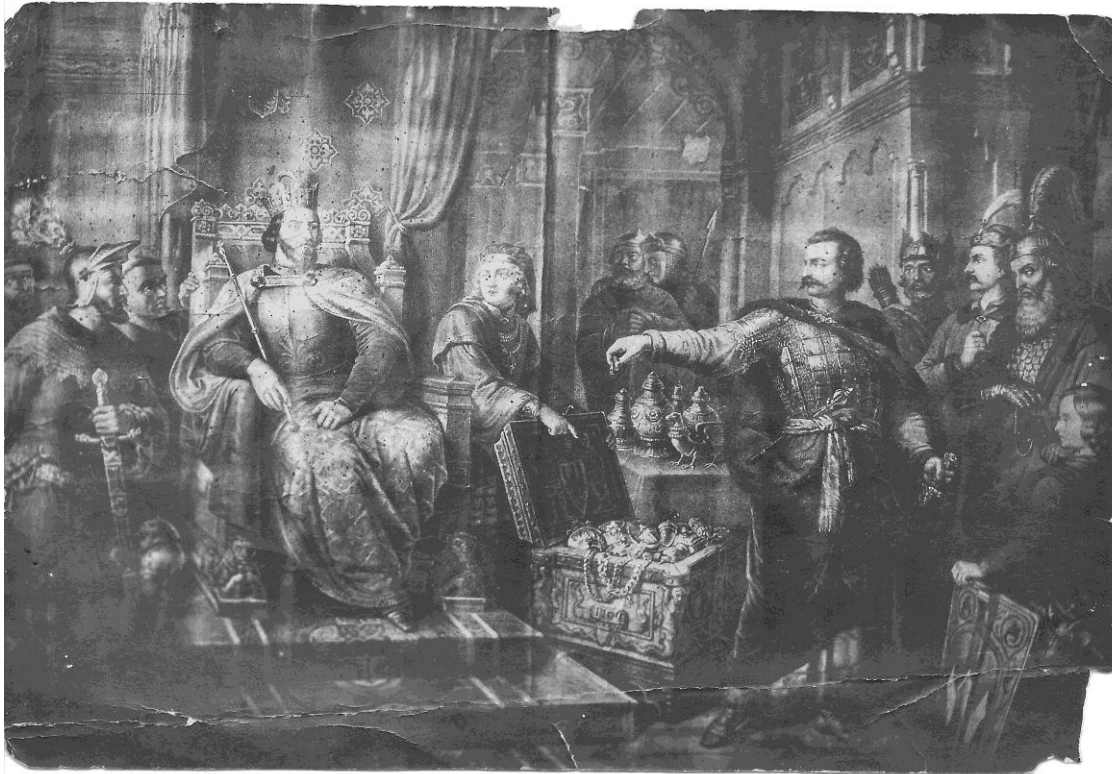
Paris 75016

Notes and photos added by Quentin Compton-Bisop

The Old House still stands in Karsiyaka (formerly Cordelio). It has been restored and the attic has been turned into a café, "Eski Ev". See below.



Hélène van der Zee & Wanda Górkiewicz

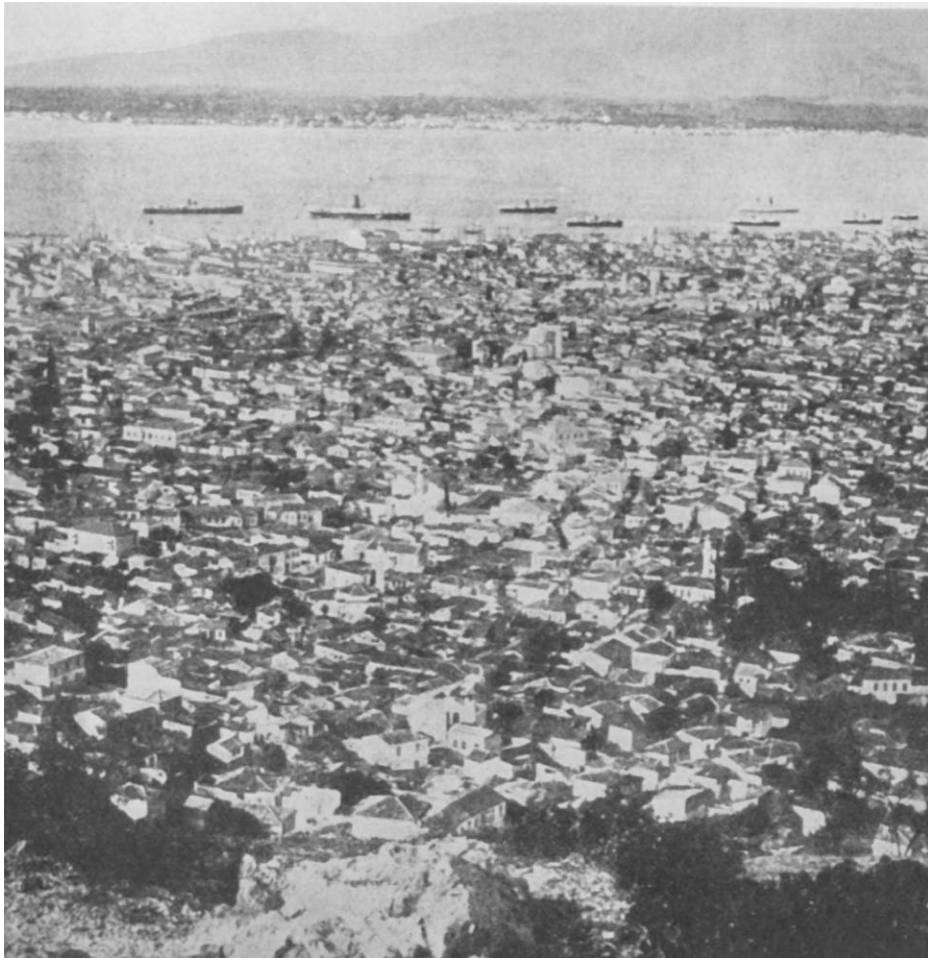


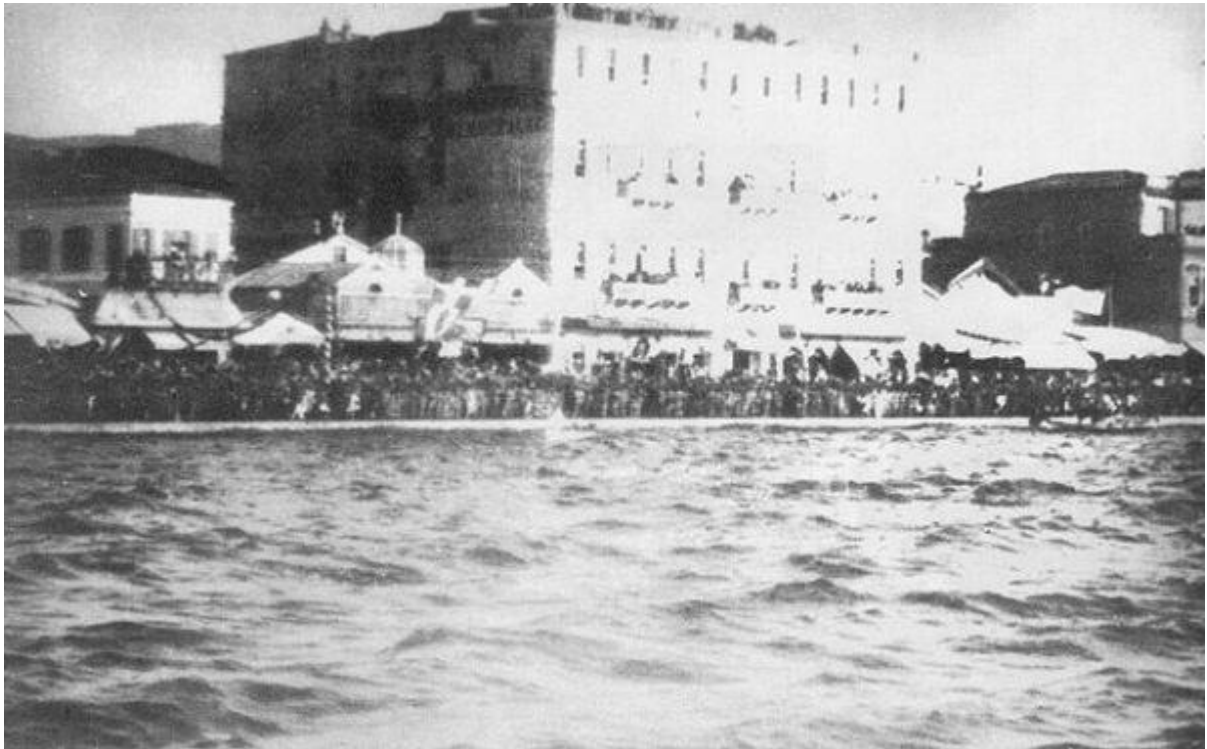
Count Jan z Gory defies the Holy Roman Emperor's attempt to intimidate him with his display of wealth and throws his own signet ring onto the treasure.



The Górkiewicz family (ca. 1895). Left to right: Wanda, Laura, Marcel T. Habdank de Górkiewicz, Heloutka (Hélène van der Zee's mother), Marcel François, Richard, Helen (van Lennep) de Górkiewicz, Evelyn, Yadviga, Alfred.

Views of Smyrna





Smyrna quay before and during the fire of 1922.

