

Chapter 6

FRANZ LUDWIG'S GRANDCHILDREN (1)

Benedict's children

**Louis Edward, Tilly, James, Edwin William, Amelia, Helen,
Charles Frederick, Fanny, Bennett, and their children.**

LOUIS EDWARD, named after his two grandfathers, was Benedict's eldest son. He and his new bride, his uncle Francis Louis's eldest daughter Bella, sailed for East India with his newly-born son Elbert, where Louis Edward was given important work in connection with constructing railways. Like so many other von Bibras, he was clever with his hands, but he was not a trained engineer and he found the work very difficult at first, especially as he was ignorant of the language of the country. Coming from Western Australia as he had, the climate of India, though trying, did not affect him as adversely as it did the less acclimatised Bella, who also had pregnancies to contend with, for in 1864 Ernest Willy Arthur Louis was born, followed the next year by Eva. Bella had been less than three years in India, but the climate, a propensity for tuberculosis and three pregnancies in three years to contend with were too much for her, so Louis Edward sent her home to recover. However, she did not live more than a few months, and died in Launceston.

Her young husband was devastated. He never married again.

He was left in a difficult position. Struggling with his grief and guilt and trying to master his work and a new language and strange native customs, he did the only thing he found possible - he left his baby daughter and two tiny sons in the care of his native servants. The ayas adored the children and spoiled them, and their father, easy-going and affectionate, did the same, so that they were disciplined far too lightly. The result was to be evident all their lives.



Isabella von Bibra.



Louis Edward von Bibra.

India was still regarded as a deathtrap for children, cholera, heat-stroke, typhoid and snake-bite all contributing to the numerous small graves in cantonment cemeteries up and down the country. Louis Edward was determined that his children should get away from such dangers and also receive an education, but did not know how to achieve this. His sister Helen suggested a solution. Helen was living in New Zealand and was married to a Captain Herrold, whose ship used to trade between that country and Tasmania. While in Launceston he had formed a firm friendship with a Mr and Mrs George Baker. Mr Baker ran a very efficient school, and when Captain Herrold told him of his brother-in-law's dilemma he and his wife, having no children of their own, offered to care for the two boys. The thought of his sons returning to Tasmania appealed to Louis Edward strongly, and having made enquiries about the Bakers and discovered that they were highly regarded and were a good christian couple, he allowed Elb and Ern to be taken under their care. He could not have chosen a more suitable home for them.

It was rather easier for him to solve the problem of Eva. She was sent home to England, probably staying with her aunt, Amelia Sommerfeld, and in that country she received as extensive an education as her brothers did in Tasmania.

Left alone in India, Louis Edward seized the opportunity to travel to Germany and visit the von Bibra places of which he had heard so much. An interpreter was necessary wherever he went, but he was welcomed warmly by everyone, and brought back mementos and photographs.

It was a great comfort to him when his father, BENEDICT, arrived in 1870, bringing everyone but his daughter Helen with him, for he had missed them all sorely. Meanwhile, he kept in constant touch with his children, and was glad when Eva's education was completed and she was able to join him again.

Louis Edward and Eva were perpetually hard up, their whole lives being dominated by a want of money. He wrote to his son Ern in Tasmania: *'The Gleicherwiesen line are proverbial for not allowing money to stick to their fingers for long.'* His son Elb, once again in India many years later, wrote: *'My money seems to have wings and flies away "through the air; I know not where"'*. Eva wrote: *'The von Bibras are more apt to lose than to gain, for they trust others too much.'* Yet she and her father were somehow always able to



Ern von Bibra's family, c1900.

Back Row: Winifred, Elb, Vera. Front Row: Eva, Eric, Jessie, Zillah, Louis Edward.

save enough money to enable them to travel to Tasmania from 1890 on in order to see Ern and to meet his wife and children. Winifred Blaubaum, one of these children, wrote later: *'Our childhood days were made more exciting by visits from our relations from India, and rather wonderful, too, as they loaded us with the most unusual toys and made us feel like the Royal Family with their love and attention. They were frequent visitors. Both were very distinguished looking and had snow-white hair. Grandpa had a big job in India in the Civil Service. He had an 'air' about him. He used to sit in an armchair by the fire in the diningroom and my sister Zillah and I were ever by his side. We loved warming the big poker from the fender and curling his snow-white hair, and he let us do it even when the poker was a bit too hot; he just gave us fond smiles.'*

In 1891 Louis Edward was appointed Chief Agent and Engineer of the Works where he was employed, but still he remained almost financially bereft – partly due to his nature and partly because he supported Eva and helped with the keep of his younger sister Fanny, who never married. To Ern he wrote: *'I am prostrate in the dust as regards the world's goods, have been only once worse off and that was when I was just married, but God is good and heaven is my hope and confidence.'* At times Eva lost patience with her father. *'He is easily led by others – is not firm,'* she wrote. *'He can't talk to women and his main conversation is about engineering, in which he is wrapt up, heart and soul.'* This was true, for even after he had retired he worked on at the firm for two months without salary. *'Bibra-like, he gives all he has – for nothing,'* wrote his exasperated daughter.

In 1893 he wrote to his daughter-in-law in Launceston. *'How is my Uncle Frank (FRANCIS LOUIS) getting on in Western Australia? Do you know if he got that £400, or whatever the amount was, from Germany? I fancy the amount was my grandfather's share (Franz Ludwig's) on the hereditary rights in the Bibra Estate, Gleicherwiesen, bought by a Bibra of another branch who wanted to hold the entire feudal property – Castle, Township, etc. The old Johnny who bought out all the other*



Louis Edward von Bibra, c1900.

Bibras must have had to pay a tidy amount, for there must have been a good many claimants from the various branches.'

He longed to end his days in Australia, but after spending forty-two years in India he died there in 1905 at the age of sixty-eight years.

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Tilly von Bibra, christened Matilda after her mother, was Louis Edward's sister and BENEDICT's eldest daughter. She married Colonel Jack Lloyd and went with him to live at Madras, on the opposite side of India from Calcutta. Although far from her brother in distant Bombay, her niece Eva sometimes stayed with them, and letters kept them in constant touch with each other. With her usual preoccupation with money, Eva wrote in 1894: *'The one thing to remember is to be economical, even though fashionable; that is how the Lloyds have got on...The Lloyds always fall on their feet,'* while Winifred Blaubaum, Tilly's great-niece, in later years wrote: *'Aunt Tilly, afterwards Mrs Lloyd, had a daughter, Edie. Her daughter was also called Edith, and was an artist. The son died. They had loads of money.'*

Edwin William, Benedict's next child, was born in 1841 and died the following year.

Information is scarce concerning his brother, James. He lived in Calcutta and married Mary Hickie (thought to be Irish). They had four daughters, Florence (Flo), born in 1866, Katharina, Jessie and Nellie, and one son, Frederick Hickie von Bibra. Everyone loved James, and pronounced him a wonderful man. He spent his later years in England, after his married daughters had settled there. In the foreign country of India English girls were much sought after by Englishmen, and James von Bibra's daughters had more than their share of admirers, for they were all well-bred and attractive. Jessie, unfortunately, died when in her early twenties. Florence (Flo) was a honeypot for the men. As her uncle, Louis Edward, used to say: *'She only had to toss her pretty curls at them and smile, and they came.'* Flo's Tasmanian relation, Winifred Blaubaum, (who was to have the same devastating looks, charm and fascination for men), wrote of her: *'Flo was very beautiful, as was a sister who didn't marry, and her cousin Mabel. The officers were crazy over them and would ride on horseback to the station if they knew these beautiful women were on the train – just to see them flash past was reward enough.'* However, it was not a soldier whom Flo eventually chose as a husband, but a government official in Delhi. His name was George Roden Nicholson, and it was not a happy marriage. In 1915 George Nicholson called on Eva and said he had sent Flo to England, where her sisters and cousin Mabel then lived. Their only son,

a soldier, was killed in action. Neither did Flo's sister Katherina (Kate) marry any of the soldiers who had so admired them. As a husband she chose Walter Abercrombie, a police officer in Calcutta. She, too, moved to England, and it was here in 1919 that she and a friend opened a restaurant.

Frederick Hickie von Bibra, born in 1871, was the girls' only brother. Like his great-uncle, FREDERICK ULYSSES, he was called Fritz. He often stayed with his uncle Louis and cousin Eva and was always known as 'Rats' there. He was an engineer in the Indian railway, and often visited his Tasmanian relations. Winifred Blaubaum remembered him clearly. *'Fritz von Bibra was our father's cousin and the brother of Flo Nicholson. Fritz was a very important man in India. He was a designer of big bridges. Whenever he returned to India from here the railway station was crowded with people to welcome him back. He took us to his heart and just about lived with us. After school he would take Zillah and me shopping and buy us anything and everything, as he was very wealthy. He felt the cold in Tasmania and always wore an astrakan coat. On his way back to India he met and married a very nice woman he met on board. Lily Panton was her name. They had one son, Derick, who lives outside London. For years Fritz sent out money for me to learn music.'* This son, born in 1909 and christened Frederick Arthur, was known by the shortened form of Frederick, Derick, but more often as Bertie. Lily was fearful for his health in India and when he was three took him to the United Kingdom and three years later left him there and returned to Fritz in India. The boy did not visit India again until he was eighteen, as transport was considered too dangerous to risk his travelling during the First World War. He settled in England and followed an army career, becoming a brigadier. He married Vera Kennedy and they had two sons, Colin Frederick and John Gavin. Fritz's cousin Eva did not like Lily much. She wrote: *'His wife is the manager and general boss and Fritz has to be a good boy and do what he is told to do, but as long as he is happy what does it matter? I suppose the money is mounting up, for she has a great reputation for stinginess.'* In 1920 Lily would have been gratified at the increase in Fritz's salary, for he was made manager of the State Railway in India. His sister, Flo Nicholson, said of him, *'He is one of the best men that ever lived.'* In 1955, at the age of eighty-four, he died. Nellie, James' youngest daughter and Fritz's sister, married well. Her husband was Frederick Halliday (afterward Sir Frederick), the son of Lord Dawson, the Admiral of the Fleet. Frederick became Commissioner of Police in Calcutta, and retired in 1915 and joined Nellie in England. Eva, ever ready to criticise and with her mind automatically turning to finance, said they had

heaps of money but were very tight-fisted. They had a daughter Vera, and in Tasmania Ern von Bibra named his eldest daughter Vera after her.

Helen, the aunt of the above children, was the fourth child of BENEDICT and Matilda. She was born in 1843, and was the only one of the family who did not go to India with their father. It was she who had married Captain Herrold, the New Zealand sea-captain, and had suggested to her brother that his sons, Elb and Ern, should live with the Bakers in Tasmania. Her son, Maurice Herrold, married a very well-to-do American and lived in South America, in Buenos Aires. They had a daughter named Mabel who painted china, and there was another daughter named Edith who had a son John. He became a major in the army and had a daughter Joan, who became a pilot in Auckland. Helen Herrold kept in touch with Ern's family in Launceston, and kept them amused with her long and beautifully-written letters, often mentioning an enjoyable visit she had made to Tasmania in 1914 and asking after her North-West Coast relations.

Charles von Bibra, Helen's brother, married twice. His first wife was Nellie Henbrough. They had only one child, Mabel Mary, born in 1867. Nellie died soon afterwards and Mabel spent some time in Australia. After some years Charles married again, this time to Katherina Shepherd, and in 1881 their first child, Charles Benedict, was born. Eric Albert followed in 1883 and Cedric Alexander the following year. In 1881 when her first step-brother was born, Mabel had returned to India. Her cousin Elb wrote to his brother Ern in Tasmania: *'Uncle Charlie's daughter, Mabel, came out to India from Australia last month. She is about seventeen years old and a sweet, charming, pretty, agreeable girl and has quite taken my fancy. However, there the matter rests at present, and circumstances alone will decide whether it ever gets beyond this point, or not.'* He died two years afterwards. His niece, Winifred Blaubaum, later wrote: *'Cousin Mabel lived in India in a palace at Behar. During the Indian Mutiny the tale goes that the Government buried treasure all over the grounds of the palace. I suppose time brought some forgetfulness, as lots of treasure remained even years and years after, and was often dug up when Cousin Mabel was there. She was my father's first cousin and married Ernest Mylne, who was Grandpa's cousin. He had rubber plantations. They had three daughters and two sons. Patrick was badly wounded in W.W.II and was sent home to die; he never regained consciousness. The Germans took over the home of one of her married daughters and before they moved Dorothy and her family destroyed all their loved horses, dogs, etc., and then fled. Cousin Mabel and her husband bought 'Ellenborough House' in London. Both my brothers, Elbert and Eric, stayed there when on leave at W.W.I time, and*

Mabel Mylne and daughters being presented at Court.
(Photo courtesy Mrs Barbara Fitzpatrick, Launceston.)



*the beauty of the place filled them with wonder. It has since been demolished.** 'Nellie Mylne, Mabel's eldest daughter, was the wife of Colonel Tomlinson. Bidy, the youngest girl, married Colonel Harvey of the 10th Huzzars, but divorced him some years later – because of a blonde, I believe. Charles Mylne, Mabel's son, never married.' The Mylnes were extremely rich, paying 18/- in the £ in taxation. Both mother and daughters were presented at Court, and always dressed most beautifully. They kept Eva, in India, almost fully supplied with the clothes they discarded from the previous year, thus enabling her to present the fashionable front she loved. She had nothing but praise for them. Mabel was also extremely generous to her Tasmanian cousins.

*Mabel Mylne was also good to Barney Lyne, Vera's son, during the next war. Barney later became Deputy Commissioner for Repatriation in Queensland and New Guinea.

Charles Benedict von Bibra, Mabel's step-brother in India, was always called Ben. He married twice, his first wife being Eva Tate and his second Florence Twedell. By his first wife he had a sizable family – Katherine Eva, Charles Frederick, Beatrice Sophie, Mabel Esterre, and George and Conrad, twins; by his second wife he had two daughters, Margaret Louise and Phyllis Elizabeth. He moved from India to New Zealand, possibly to be close to his aunt, Helen Herrold, and lived there until 1912, when he travelled across to Melbourne. There he became the sports manager of Spaulding & Son, so well-known throughout Australia for their sporting equipment. When the First World War broke out Ben dropped the 'von' from his name.

Eric Albert, Ben's brother and Mabel Mylne's step-brother, was born in 1883. As a boy he was sent away from India and attended Carlton College, Melbourne, before returning home. He later visited Australia several times. He was a partner in a big jewellery firm in Calcutta and married Lillian Nicol. They had one child, Thelma. Eric once wrote to Leopold von Bibra, Will's son, in an effort to contact his Tasmanian relations, and in 1931 stayed with him at 'Woodstock', Longford, when he and Lillian were visiting his brother Ben in Melbourne.

His younger brother, Cedric Alexander, married Daisy Nichol (not to be confused with Lillian Nicol, Cedric's sister-in-law), and had four children, Errol, Samuel, Louis and Lorna. Samuel (Sammy) never married and Lorna married Mathew Pollack.

Fanny was BENEDICT's daughter and the one whose mother, Matilda, had died in Western Australia soon after her daughter's birth, making it necessary for her to spend her early years in that colony with her aunt, Eliza Flaherty. She had been twelve when she went with her father BENEDICT to India, and was bewildered by the new land and missed her aunt badly. In later years she lived with her brother Charles and his second wife, Kate, Mabel Mylne's step-mother. Her great-niece, Winifred Blaubaum, wrote of her: *'I forgot to mention Aunt Fanny, another relative in India – unknown to us but very much alive through Aunt Eva's tales. She was Grandfather Louis's sister and never married. Such a regal-looking figure, judging from our one photo in the family album, with hair piled up high and tightly-filled gown and lace ruffles – but according to Aunt Eva, a bit queer, owing, they say, to her old black nurse frightening her when young by saying the hyenas would get her if she was naughty'*. BENEDICT's son, Louis Edward, writing in about 1900, said: *'Old Aunt Fan in India used to have fits of excitement, and she'd vent them on her pet dog – poor blighter, to have to be in the position of a 'safety valve' for pent-up maidenhood.'*