



Bordeaux, November 25th 1897.

T.V. Ryan, Solicitor:

DUBLIN.

My dear Sir:

I have yours of the 22d November.

The Desegaulx affair seems determined to drag itself into the dullest and lowest kind of a romance--the romance of an unprincipled adventurer, and I fear, a silly girl. Poor child! She would better marry a smart "butcher, baker or candle-stick maker" in her own country or a "broth of boy" without a farthing in Ireland, than this spurious count, without fortune, title, profession or principle. That is her business, however, and if she likes to bid for a life of shame and misery, I for one am quite content that she should have it.

There are some things still to be noted in regard to the affair which may interest you. Notice in the papers you have, and of which you sent copies, the following particulars:

1--There is no such thing as a "Lord" Mayor of Bordeaux. The assumption of that title is a false pretence intended to magnify the value of his certificate.

2--The French Consul in Dublin does not sign his certificate of the marriageability of the ci-devant "Count", as "Baron de"-----anything. Why? Because he dare not. If he should sign an official document as "Baron" he would lose his head and be liable to some punishment for using a false name besides. Yet every French officer who has a legal title signs every official paper with it.

3--The fact that the Consul has the "Acte de Naissance"; that a copy of the same has been duly certified by the proper officer and his official character certified by me, and by me mailed to the Consul, and that the parties do not produce the same to you and Mr Nevins, is proof positive that the claims they make are not in accord with it. A Frenchman who is what he pretends to be, would no more think of entering into a marriage-contract without exhibiting his birth-certificate than an Englishman would think of undertaking a journey to the North Pole bareheaded. The "Acte de Naissance" is the foundation-stone of personal credit in France. No man thinks of engaging in any serious matter without it. He who refuses to produce it when required is at once discredited.

4--The Consul's certificate is cunningly planned to avoid the charge of having certified that his nephew is a count. In fact it declares no such thing.

French titles--hereditary titles always follow the baptismal name in all legal or formal proceedings--never precede it. In birth-registers deeds, contracts and all serious matters, the name and title are always ~~given~~ given thus:--"Louis Francois Henri Nouailles, conte de Portes." If the Consul had said? "Alexandre, Joseph, Henri Desegaulx, Comte de Nolet," he would have **formally** asserted the title and been guilty of a serious offence by falsifying the birth-register; but to place a title before the baptismal name in an official certificate, is no falsification of the "Acte de Naissance," since it is meaningless, just as if he had said, "Monsieur" or "~~E&~~ L'homme". You will notice the same thing in all the other certificates.

"Monsieur" or "L'homme". You will notice the same thing in all the other certificates.

5--The Mayor's certificate seems to me very cool, knowing the close political relations that subsist between him and Brault as members of the same faction. You will notice that he nowhere uses the familiar phrase found in every French certificate of character "a moi bien connu" -- to me well-known, as we would say. You should note that "le plus honorable" or "le plus important" as applied to a family or business, does not mean exactly as "the most important" or "the most honorable" but "a very important" or "a very honorable." Thus, "Charles Keohler," which is M. Aubian's business name, is "a very honorable shipping firm of Bordeaux," but there are others who could buy him out with their yearly profits, almost, perhaps actually. So the name of Desegaulx & Co., has an excellent and ancient reputation--that is, it pays its bills and has always done so--but it is a small business--so reputed in the trade, and recently not so well regarded as it once was.

6--As to the young man himself, I fear I shall have to abandon the charitable view I took of his life and character. The detective I employed was chagrined at the doubt cast on his accuracy, and now makes this further statement, which he says he gets from a branch of the family who were, they say, scandalized at the mother's pre-nuptial irregularities with Aubian even before that time. These people say that his conduct with the girls in the "Maison" was even at that age so shockingly miscellaneous and undisguised that it was too much even for Bordeaux. No one could have minded his having a mistress--that is, indeed rather expected of every young man--in a quiet and unobtrusive way; but they declare that in his case, it was so gross and shocking that it became absolutely necessary to send him away. This you will remember was the first report, which was derived, as I understand, especially from persons connected with the business and familiar with affairs of the "Maison" or firm. I merely wish to show that my desire not to be unjust made me perhaps too charitable.

7--The statement from the Chancellerie, is a stunner. I wonder that they dared make it. It is a practical denial of their claim of title. You will note that it merely asserts the nobility of the family, which no body has denied. It does not say that this man is the Comte de Nolet, or Comte de--anything else. Yet if he is a Count he must be Count of something--de Nolet--de Portes,--de Langoa--de--something. He cannot by any possibility, under French law and customs, be simply Count Henri Desegaulx. The simple fact is that he is a remote branchlet of a noble house--and that is all there is of this claim. If he were in the right line--providing there is a count, the Chancellerie would have given him that title with the record of its derivation. As it is, the full document no doubt gives the collateral strain by which he is related to a noble house--probably a female line which can only inherit after failure of all male lines. Indeed, it may be a hundred removes from the right line, and the nobility so attenuated that it can hardly float a simple "de."

I have sent for a copy of the "Acte de Naissance" but may not get it in a long time. When I do, I will send it to you. As it stands, it seems to me there is a combination which ought to take the glamour out of any person's thought of pride, gain or credit in such an alliance. Well we have--

1--Mr Aubian, illegitimate, authorized by law to adopt the name of his putative father, Chas. Koeler. A man of some means, not rich, and of good commercial reputation, who is reputed to have made a misalliance in

marrying Mame Desegaulx. If this was a misalliance to him it must have been the same for her.

3--Madame Desegaulx, the owner and manager of a small business received from her first husband. Married as soon after his death as the law permitted, contrary to the custom of good society here. And lightly spoken of as having been the mistress of Aubian during the lifetime of her first husband. Not a grave offence in France, but not an ennobling fact in an English-speaking country.

3--The son, having no fortune or business except such as his mother or step-father may give him; without profession or stability; without any specific attainment or promise that he will ever be anything more than to-day. This with a past at least not without shadow and a claim of title altogether false.

4--All these backed by a man who claims to be a "Baron" but does not dare sign a letter to a Consul in France with such title.

If the young lady is in love with the fellow and must have him regardless of his circumstances and conditions, for Heaven's sake let her marry him. But in that case, her property should be put strictly in trust and he cut off from all control of the same, and all interest or reversion in case of her death. She should be allowed absolute control of the income of the same, if for any reason she should choose to live separate and apart from him, as she would most probably have to do in the course of two or three years. Thus carefully guarded she might, if she insists, be allowed to try the experiment of living with a French husband who cares more for his wife's "dot" than for her heart, and regards marriage simply as a means for gaining a livelihood without effort.

Yours very truly,