

Believe It Or Not Causes Hunt For Sea-Borne Coffin

(By CHARLES BURNEY WARD)

(In New York Post of Oct. 13.) A West Indian hurricane, as the world still remembers, swept Galveston, Tex., September 8, 1900. As an incident of its tragic havoc it swept out to sea the coffin of the late Charles Francis Coghlan, famous actor.

Ever since that fatal day Coghlan's daughter, Mrs. Gertrude Coghlan Pitou, now of Bayside, L. I., has searched for her father's coffin. She and her husband, Augustus Pitou, who was once the late Mr. Coghlan's manager, have hired men by the year and spent thousands of dollars on the twenty-seven-year-long search. They received never a hint until—

Mrs. Pitou was reading the EVENING POST of September 15. She turned to the sports pages. There, Robert L. Ripley's cartoon caught her eye.

"Believe It or Not," she read, "Charles Coghlan Comes Home! He died in 1897 and was buried in Galveston. When the tragic flood came his coffin was washed out to sea and the Gulf Stream carried him around Florida and up the coast to Prince Edward Island—2,000 miles distant—where he was born."

"This was news to Mrs. Pitou! She showed the cartoon to her husband, Mr. Pitou, who is now bookkeeping manager of the A. L. F. Langer Theatrical Enterprises, read the cartoonist's inscription. Two lesser points were untrue. The late Mr. Coghlan was not born on Prince Edward Island and he died in 1899—not 1897. But for the rest—could such a thing really be possible? Mr. Pitou could not be sure. Neither could Mrs. Pitou.

Consults Cartoonist.

Yet this was the first definite hint in all these years that either had ever had which would indicate the possible final resting place of Mr. Coghlan's coffin. "Hope springs eternal"—they would actively resume the search. They telephoned the EVENING POST. "What we would like to know," said Mr. Pitou, "is where Mr. Ripley got that information. We have never once heard that suggestion. We know Mr. Coghlan was not born on Prince Edward Island. He was born in England. That much we know is untrue. And I believe it's impossible that the Gulf Stream could carry the coffin all around Florida and up to Canada."

(Incidentally, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the late Mr. Coghlan was not born in England, but in Paris.)

"Find out where Mr. Ripley got that," Mr. Pitou asked. "Where did I get it?" Mr. Ripley replied to the reporter's question, "why, two of the late Mr. Coghlan's closest associates have set down the incident in their published books. They are none other than Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson and Mrs. Lily Langtry. As for the possibility of the Gulf Stream's carrying the coffin to Prince Edward Island, I checked up with a capable sea captain and several authorities on ocean current, who say it's quite possible.

Ripley then cited Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson's book, "A Player Under Three Regimes". In telling how he took the late Mr. Coghlan from his home on Prince Edward Island to play Mercutio in "Romeo and Juliet" in London, Sir Johnston writes (pages 165-6):

"In about a year, I think, he died at Galveston. Shortly after his burial there a great storm came up from the Gulf, which swept his coffin, with others, into the sea. The Gulf Stream bore him around Flor-



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Tomorrow's Radio Program

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22nd International Radio Programs CONCERTS

- 10.00 A. M. WOO (508) Phila. Crystal Tea Rm. 12.30 P. M. WCAE (517) E. Pitts. Orchestra. CFCP (411) Montreal. Orchestra. 2.30 P. M. WCAE (517) Pitts. Orchest. 5.30 P. M. WOO (508) Phila. WOO Trio. KDKA (316) E. Pitts. Concert. 6.00 P. M. WEAP (492) N. Y. The Weep Enders to WEAF, WRC, WEEI, WGR, WCAE, WJAR, WTMJ. 6.30 P. M. WBZ (333) Springfield. Feature NBC. CFCA (357) Toronto. Music. 7.00 P. M. WNAC (353) Boston. Selections. OKCL (357) Toronto. Concert. 7.30 P. M. WBZ (333) Springfield. Quartet. 8.00 P. M. WLW (428) Cincinnati. Orchestra. 8.30 P. M. WMAK (545) Buffalo. Music. WEK (265) Cleveland. Trio. WRC (469) Wash. Week Enders. 9.00 P. M. WJZ (454) N. Y. Philco Hours. KDKA, KYW, WHAM, WJR, WLW. WTAM (400) Ohio. Cavaliers. KDKA (316) Pitts. Philco (WJZ). WEEI (448) Boston. Old Gold (N. Y.) 9.30 P. M. WGR (303) Buffalo. Joint WEAP. 10.00 P. M. WMAK (545) N. Y. Studio. WLW (428) Cincinnati. Studio. 10.30 P. M. WSAI (361) Cincinnati. Studio Pro. SPORTS-TALKS 7.00 P. M. KYW (526) Chicago. Uncle Bob. 8.30 P. M. WQJ (448) Chicago. Stevens. DANCE ORCHESTRAS 6.30 P. M. WLIT (405) Phila. El Patio Or. WJZ (454) N. Y. 2 Mediterranean. 8.00 P. M. WIP (508) Phila. Orchestra. 8.30 P. M. WRC (479) Wash. Elkins. WBZ (333) Springfield. Reismans. 9.00 P. M. WGY (380) Schenectady. Dance. 9.30 P. M. WTAM (400) Cleveland. Ev. Jones. 10.00 P. M. WHK (265) Cleveland. Dancing. WPG (272) Atlantic City. Dance. (Copyright, 1927, by International Radio Programs, Chicago.)

PISQUID NOTES.

Mr. John McInnis of St. Peter's is at present visiting in Pisquid. The farmers in this vicinity are busy engaged in digging these potatoes. Mr. John Ostride spent Sunday last the guest of Mr. R. A. McDonald. Miss Eliza McDonald, R. N., has returned from a very pleasant visit to Grand River. Conductor Reddie McDonald, Charlottetown, spent a few days with his brother, Angus A. Our School is progressing favorably under the efficient management of the teacher, Miss Margaret Birt. Miss Bernadine McDonald of Peakes, was visiting in Pisquid last week, being the guest of her cousin, Miss Eliza McDonald, R. N. Miss Katie McDougall, Blooming Point, spent a few days with her uncle, Mr. Patrick McKinnon before returning to Boston. Among the frequent visitors to Pisquid recently was Mr. Alphonus McLellan of Grand River, being the guest of Allan J. McDonald. Miss Florence McAvinn returned home from Boston some time ago and is at present residing with her uncle, Mr. Patrick McKenna, Charlottetown. Our potato King, Mr. D. J. V. McDonald, Maple Hill, is about finishing, as is well known, derelicts in the stream rarely are carried to Europe. The late Mr. Coghlan, Mr. and Mrs. Pitou admit, once had a summer home at Fortune River, Prince Edward Island. And they want and intend to find out whether they can "believe it or not"—that "Charles Coghlan came home!"

London Is Queried

A like report of the curious incident, or alleged incident, is given in "The Days I Knew", by Lily Langtry, who appeared in several plays with the late Mr. Coghlan. These sources of the report's origin were given to Mr. Pitou. "It's strange," he said, admitting that Sir Johnston and Mrs. Langtry both had been good friends of his father-in-law. "But I'd like to know where they got it. Please," he asked, "find out Forbes-Robertson's source of information. This is not just a newspaper story to us. It's a very serious matter. If we thought they could be any truth in it we would start a search of Prince Edward Island."

The EVENING POST sent a telegram to its London office, instructing the representative there to get the facts from Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson. The representative wrote him a letter. The reply came by radiogram to the EVENING POST.

Forbes-Robertson writes, "I am very much pained at the news you report gives. Where I got the statement about my friend's body I have no idea, but I distinctly remember it was given me by one in whom I had confidence. Indeed, I think two people told me the story. It is very stocking that this evident myth should have been put in my book. I take it that his daughter has consulted George Tyler, who was Coghlan's manager for some time."

Other Reports Traced.

George C. Tyler, theatrical producer, whose office, incidentally, is in the same building with that of Mr. Pitou, at 214 West Forty-Second Street, said Mrs. Pitou had not consulted him, and added: "I have heard that story of Charles Coghlan's coffin not once but a number of times. I was once his manager, and close friends of his have told me since of his coffin having been found on Prince Edward Island. It was washed ashore, as I heard it, at Fortune Bridge. I remember once, years ago, when I spoke of its having been found on the beach at Galveston, somebody corrected me—I forget who it was—and told me it had been carried in the Gulf Stream to the Canadian island. It has been told to me by several persons in whom I have confidence."

Charles Francis Coghlan was an Irish actor, born in 1841. He first appeared on the stage in London in 1860, and came to America in 1876. He was leading man in a number of plays with his sister, Rose Coghlan, who was as famous in the profession as he. He also was leading man in companies with Mrs. Fiske and Lily Langtry. He died in Galveston, November 27, 1899, and his body was placed in a granite vault in a cemetery there.

Gulf Stream Goes Northward

How that coffin might have been carried by the Gulf Stream to Prince Edward Island is a question which probably could long be debated, with many points of proof for both sides. Prince Edward Island, a Province of the Dominion of Canada lies in a semicircular bay of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Fossil plants, abundant there, and beds of peat, dunes of drifted sand, alluvial clays and mussel mud, occurring in and near its creeks and bays, show evidence, many say, that they could have been washed there from the Gulf shore of Texas. The Gulf Stream, as oceanographers point out, flows northward from the Gulf of Mexico and follows the eastern coast of the United States to a point east of the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. It is narrow and deep with a current that travels approximately eighty miles a day. It is joined by a current which comes from the West Indies and follows the same course.

Might Have Carried Off Coffin

In this connection, cartoonist Ripley tentatively points out that, since the Galveston flood came from the West Indies, there might have been a backwash after the hurricane toward the West Indies. This possibly could have carried such a thing as a coffin out through the Gulf to the point where the West Indian current joins the Gulf Stream. The Gulf Stream, when it passes a point between the Bermudas and the coast of the Carolinas, divides into several small ocean streams. And one of these streams, whose definite courses have not been traced positively, might well have carried Charles Coghlan's coffin to Prince Edward Island. Especially might this have been a destination for a derelict in the Gulf Stream,

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