

## THE WORLD'S RICHEST FAMILY

THE Du Ponts are America's foremost family dynasty. They are also the world's richest family, greater even than the Rockefellers. Two of the largest of their string of companies produce an annual income of \$300,000,000. They are great because they have always stuck together.

The dynasty, founded on gunpowder when America was an English colony, now heads a vast concern manufacturing armaments, explosives, motor-cars, paint, artificial silk and cellophane. Through its subsidiaries, Du Pont has a finger in almost every industrial pie in America.

The Du Ponts are practically in the front rank of President Roosevelt's blue-blooded enemies. But while the family was spending \$1,000,000 in an effort to overthrow Roosevelt at the last elections the President's third son and name-sake became engaged to Ethel, daughter of Eugene Du Pont, one of the "inner circle" in the family council.

Their marriage was surprising in view of the "close corporation" nature of the family, but not so surprising when it

is considered that the dynasty was founded on an act of disobedience to the family.

About 200 years ago Anna de Montchanin, lovely foster-child of wealthy Paris aristocrats, ran away and married a poor watchmaker named Du Pont.

Anna was determined that her son, Pierre Samuel, should be something. He was not much to look at, but he was an alert, intelligent little fellow, and Anna saw to it that he started life with a good education. She made many sacrifices herself to get the boy on.

Her high hopes for Pierre suffered a terrible set-back when he contracted smallpox and after long days of suffering he was pronounced dead by the doctors.

But during the rites before burial, the broken-hearted Anna thought she detected signs of life. The boy shivered. A tiny spark of life in his wasted body flickered slowly into activity. He lived, and Anna, surviving long enough to see her son marked out as a young man with a great future, died a happy woman.

Incidentally the head of today's Du Pont family is another Pierre, though he is now a semi-retirement.

The original Pierre Samuel had two sons, Victor and Eleuthiere Irene. Pierre Samuel could find neither liberty nor peace in France and he went to America with his sons. And so the stage was set for the founding of a great economic dynasty in the New World.

On a shooting expedition Irene ran out of gunpowder. He bought some American powder. Thought it was dearer than the English powder it was poor.

Here was Irene's chance. He set up America's first great powder factory at a place called Brandywine, on the Delaware River. The name Du Pont has headed the American explosives industry ever since.

Irene was given plenty of encouragement when he went back to France to get backing for his factory. The French Government, overlooking no chance to embarrass England's trade, sold him the necessary machinery at cost price, let him into the secrets of the manufacture of the best gunpowder and gave him expert advice.

In the first six years of existence the Brandywine factory returned a profit of 20 per cent on sales and the fortunes of Du

Ponts strode forward. That 20 per cent was the standard expectation of profit for generations.

Rapidly expanding America kept the firm busy at to pressure, even in the days of peace. When the American civil war came, the firm leapt ahead. New factories sprang up at Brandywine as fast as they could be erected. With all this feverish activity the Du Pont fortunes pyramided, an experience which was repeated in the Great War.

The Du Ponts have always controlled their own destinies. From among a multiplicity of brothers, cousins and second cousins bearing the name, each generation has produced at least one figure of sufficient ability to control the colossal firm.

The 40-years reign of Henry Du Pont, which ended in 1889, was an epochal one in the firm's growth and it also provided one of the dynasty's most colorful figures.

Henry was eccentric, too. He wrote every letter himself with the old fashioned quill pen, refused to use the railways for travel, and sneered at new explosives such as dynamite.

Even when everybody else realized that these new products were going to oust his beloved gunpowder, he stubbornly refused to alter his views. But he had enough commonsense and

foresight to form a "ring" of munitions manufacturers, with his own firm, of course, occupying the key position, which soon put dangerous rivals out of the picture.

Scandal was not permissible in the family in those days, but at the beginning of this century one arose that threatened to rend it with the same force as a charge of their own gunpowder.

The firm was then controlled by three cousins—Alfred, Pierre and Coleman Du Pont. Alfred did not get on well with his wife, and fell in love with another Du Pont, a distant cousin. The two scandalized the rest of the family by their behavior.

The family council sat on the problem, and the result of their deliberations was that the girl Alicia, was hastily married to one of the Du Ponts' secretaries.

The gossip and scandal still raged, and finally Alfred took matters into his own hands. He got a divorce. Alicia also divorced her recently married husband and she and Alfred were wed within a fortnight.

When they returned to the ancestral country-side the fami-

ly remained unforgiving. Nobody would visit them, and the gossip continued.

They were not dismayed by the formidable opposition. They brought suits for slander against even their own family. These suits were never finished, but they kept the gossipers quiet.

Alfred and Alicia built an enormous palace in which to live. The richest treasures of Europe adorned their home.

The family ranks closed again in 1926, when Alfred retired, to die in Florida.

The already great fortunes of the Du Ponts reached astronomical proportions in the Great War and subsequently they bought General Motors, Ford's greatest rival, and half a dozen other industries.

The younger generation of the Du Ponts are ready to take over the world's greatest business when the time comes for Pierre to let go the reins. Most of them have married other members of the family, and most of them have the hard, cleft chin of lovely Anne de Montchanin, who began the amazing story of the Du Pont. —*Condensed from New Zealand Truth.*

\* \* \*