

238  

---

6

W.P. Rutter  
Jan 19 23





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation



LORD NORTHCLIFFE





May from A.S.



Photo. E. O. Hoppe

Nathaniel 1918



10# 1746581

# LORD NORTHCLIFFE

*A Memoir*

BY  
MAX PEMBERTON

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LIMITED LONDON

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,  
BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

## “HAMPSTEAD”

BY ALFRED C. HARMSWORTH

(Published in the *Henley House School Magazine* for April 1882)

THERE is a spot, a paradise on earth,  
Within short distance of the city's toils,  
Where Londoner, fatigued by noisy streets  
Or pent-up office, can his health repair.  
There the fresh breezes from the glorious Heath,  
The blanched cheek with colour can supply—  
There from the heights the city can be seen  
All draped in clouds from many a chimney's smoke:  
Then, turning round and looking west, descry  
Far o'er the mead the glistening Brent's smooth tide,  
And further still from out the trees is seen  
The slender spire of Harrow's distant church.  
Down in the grassy vale with hedges lined  
The swiftly moving train its journey makes,  
Breathing out mists of snowy cloudless hue,  
Which hasten upward to their kind above.  
There Cockney sportsman whiles away his time  
With rod and line, surrounded by his friends,  
Who eagerly the bobbing floatlet watch.  
Perchance a tiny perch the bait allures,  
And then 'tis good as many a playhouse scene  
To watch the excitement of the achieving crowd.  
There the proud avenue its head rears high,  
And smilingly looks down on happy pairs—  
There the bright gorse with yellow blossoms gay,  
The sunny heath with pleasing light illumines—  
There by a shady walk 'neath ancient trees,  
A spring whose virtues are unbounded, flows,  
Above, a tiny lake, down in yon vale—  
An ancient-looking castle meets the eye—  
The ivy-mantled church with slated spire,  
The narrow straggling streets—the beauteous views—  
To enumerate the charms of this fair spot  
Would occupy the span of many a life.  
Hampstead—the spot which most of all I love,  
The place of which I never yet have tired.





## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

THIS Memoir of my friend Viscount Northcliffe seeks to show him as I knew him. With the controversies of his later life, I have little to do. This is not in my judgment the time to estimate his true place in history, nor to pronounce a measured verdict on those political disputes in which events embroiled him. I have endeavoured to speak chiefly of the friend and the man—to me a great and beloved friend: to all, I believe, a very remarkable personality and a very great patriot—who rendered imperishable services to his country and who never will be by his countrymen forgotten.

M. P.

## CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
AUTHOR'S FOREWORD . . . . .	vii
I. THE BOY . . . . .	1
II. THE PERSONAL SIDE . . . . .	14
III. THE BEGINNING OF THINGS . . . . .	23
IV. IN PATERNOSTER SQUARE AND FLEET STREET . . . . .	34
V. EARLY YEARS AT ELMWOOD . . . . .	42
VI. THE DAILY MAIL . . . . .	53
VII. LORD NORTHCLIFFE IN HIS OFFICE . . . . .	73
VIII. THE MAN BEHIND THE NEWSPAPER . . . . .	106
IX. NEWFOUNDLAND . . . . .	118
X. THE TIMES . . . . .	125
XI. LAST YEARS OF THE PEACE . . . . .	141
XII. LORD NORTHCLIFFE IN THE WAR . . . . .	148
XIII. LORD NORTHCLIFFE AS A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT . . . . .	160
XIV. THE BRITISH WAR MISSION . . . . .	173
XV. SPEECH MADE IN U.S.A. BY LORD NORTHCLIFFE . . . . .	181
XVI. LORD NORTHCLIFFE AS A MOTORIST . . . . .	187
XVII. LORD NORTHCLIFFE AS A GOLFER . . . . .	197
XVIII. SOME OLD FRIENDS . . . . .	207
XIX. THE DAILY ROUND . . . . .	215
XX. A PERSONAL NOTE . . . . .	219
XXI. SOME STORIES ABOUT LORD NORTHCLIFFE . . . . .	230
XXII. THE END . . . . .	240

## CHAPTER I

### THE BOY

IN the summer of the year 1879, a well-built and unusually handsome boy of fourteen years of age stood with his bicycle at the corner of Marlborough Place and Hamilton Terrace in St. John's Wood and spoke to another boy whose enthusiasms appeared to be his own.

The bicycle was of an ancient pattern, a stout machine built by one John Timberlake. It had a fifty-two inch wheel in front and one of nineteen inches at the rear. The tyres were solid but heavy and the brake was always dangerous. The rider, I remember, was dressed in a grey knickerbocker suit and wore a polo hat so placed that an obstinate forelock, almost golden in colour, could not fail to obtrude itself upon the notice of an observer.

We were strangers to each other, Alfred Charles William Harmsworth and I, but we quickly became friends. The sport of bicycling was then comparatively new in this country; for it had not been until the "seventies" that Starley invented what was called "the Spider," and so put upon the road a machine which was again to open the highways of England to us. But it was a sport which captured my imagination even when a small boy, and I soon

learned that it had made a similar appeal to my new friend.

We talked bicycles for a quarter of an hour, and then rode up and down the broad Hamilton Terrace together. Soon I discovered that I had made an acquaintance possessed of quite remarkable virility. There is a little hill by St. Mark's Church in the wide roadway, and up this the rider went at a speed I had hardly seen equalled before. To this day, I have in my mind the picture of that typical British boy, bent over the handles of the ancient machine, and driving it headlong as though a laurel awaited him at his journey's end. I was to discover afterwards that he did all things like that—all save the monotonous rounds which the Dominie dictated, hateful unless they concerned that life or literature with which already he had determined to associate himself.

When the ride was over, he suggested that I should go to his house, and we adjourned to an old-fashioned villa in the Boundary Road, not a quarter of a mile from my father's place. Here several other robust lads, to say nothing of some wide-eyed little ladies, greeted Alfred as he came in, and already seemed to recognize him in some way as a trusted leader. Whether my friend, Lord Rothermere, was among that company I cannot say; but certainly I met him a few days later and learned that he was then already possessed of a fine reputation for mathematics. For the moment our business was a long drink of lemonade in Alfred Harmsworth's dining-room; and there we were sitting when there entered one of the most courtly gentlemen it has ever been my lot to meet.



The late Alfred Harmsworth was in many ways a fine type of the English barrister. His bold head suggested historic pictures of famous judges, and his personal magnetism was such as we associate with the leaders of the Bar. It was impossible when talking to him to believe with Carlyle that the grand manner perished at the French Revolution; and to this manner he added a keen sense of humour which rarely failed him.

This chance encounter I shall ever regard as fortunate. It would be absurd to say that at that time I thought much about careers, or looked across the valley of the years to ambitious heights beyond; but certainly I perceived at the outset that I had made a friend unlike any other friend I had ever known. The same masterful personality, which, in the years 1915-16, braved the contumely of the nation, could at the age of fourteen influence all other boys who came in contact with him; share their views and, in a sense, command their obedience. We did, I think, the things which Alfred Harmsworth desired us to do, went where he willed us to go, and felt instinctively that he was born to be a leader. For my own part I spent my days with him for some years afterwards, until, in fact, I went to Cambridge, and he, who greatly desired to go, was caught up in the mesh of the journalistic net and landed surely upon the shores of his destiny.

We were both at school at that time, he at Henley House and I at Merchant Taylors'. Perhaps he was not a zealous student save of those things which made a sure appeal to him; but he quickly got to work upon

a school magazine, and setting it up himself in the shop of one Ford in Kilburn, he gained his first real knowledge both of printing and of journalism. This little magazine I venture to think one of the brightest that ever came out of a school house. It was at once newsy and it was literary. The touch of personal journalism in it was marked; the brothers J. V. and Alexander Milne, who ran the school, frankly thought it a considerable performance.

Truly can it be said that there never was anything of the prig about Alfred Harmsworth. He played the common games with zest; football in the Southern fashion where "you kick the man only when you cannot kick the ball"; lawn-tennis with condescension and cricket with much success. But I shall always hold that the same instinct, which in after life was to force the motor-car and the aeroplane upon the nation, biassed his mind at that time toward the bicycle, and that it remained his favourite toy. In any case, we were rarely off our bicycles when we could be riding them, and there were occasions when we rode more than a hundred miles between breakfast and dinner.

I recall some of those excursions vividly. In the year 1880 we discovered a boy who had that invaluable possession for other boys—the use of a country house kept in admirable order by an amiable aunt. This particular house stood some forty-three miles from London upon Telford's great Holyhead Road—was, as a matter of fact, some nine miles from Dunstable, in the village of Little Brickhill, which lies by Fenny Stratford. Here we were invited in the summer

holidays, and, disdaining trains, we explored this part of Telford's Highway for the first time. The journey occupied us some four hours, yet Alfred Harmsworth survived the hills of Dunstable so well that upon our approaching our destination he blew a ringing call upon my regulation bugle, to the astonishment of our hostess's coachman, who assured us that he thought it was the "sogers from Staubans."

Little Brickhill was then an exceedingly primitive village and its people true rustics. We had not been in the place three days when a lout challenged one of "they Lunnon chaps" and came into the garden of the house seeking Alfred Harmsworth. He was met in the carriage drive, and I enjoyed the privilege of as pretty a set-to as any boy could desire to see. Viscount Northcliffe was ever a great fighter. The same courage which carried him through a hundred journalistic and political battles was much in evidence when he was quite young; and certainly upon this particular afternoon he gave the lout a sound drubbing almost before the fellow had time to realize that he had caught a tartar. Then he went into the house to play the music of "Olivette," a light opera by Audran, just beginning to be exceedingly popular.

The young Alfred's playing was at that period entirely by ear. He made himself the master of some musical technique afterwards; but in these early years he could sit down at the piano and play with remarkable accuracy almost any tune he had heard. Light French music always appealed to him, and, unlike most "vampers," he had a considerable gift of harmony and his chords were the wonder even of



trained musicians. This ability, no doubt, he inherited from his distinguished mother, herself a brilliant musician and composer and one who played the piano with command and sympathy even in her eightieth year. But it was a gift which delighted other than boys. I have heard adults ask him to play again and again even when a mere boy. Nor was anything more characteristic of his impetuosity than the way in which he would dash to the nearest piano, with the dust of the high road still upon his clothes, and rattle off some waltz which certainly was worthy to be heard in a ball-room.

Our stay at Little Brickhill was the first real holiday Alfred Harmsworth and I had had together, and we regretted exceedingly the closing days of it. There was an excellent billiard-table in Mrs. Browning's house, and there we learned to accomplish masterly breaks of even eight or ten unfinished. The woods about were glorious and found us tramping afar; while the vicar of the parish was ever a delight. They used to say of him that there had been a memorable Sunday evening far back in the ages, when, to the astonishment of a congregation of a dozen, the clerk had announced from the chancel steps that there would be "Naw sermon to-night; passun's gone fishing." This may have been *ben trovato*, but I recollect a Sunday when the worthy cleric invited us both to late tea, but implored us not to come earlier, as he had a most important engagement. Driven by curiosity, we took the Vicarage in the flank, so to speak, and, peeping through the bushes across the ancient lawn, we discerned the figure of our would-be



host stretched at full length upon a sofa, a bottle of port by his side and his Litany boots very much in evidence. One merit he certainly had, and that was the brevity of his sermons. Never on any occasion had they been known to exceed a term of five minutes.

The era of the motor-car found us passing that venerable church on many subsequent occasions; but rarely did we make such an excursion upon the great Telford highway without some reminiscence of those quiet Sundays, of our walks in the glorious woods, and the toil and sweat of the hilly Dunstable Road as we had known it. Toil and sweat, indeed, were the words; for upon our first return from a delightful holiday, Alfred Harmsworth declared his intention of riding the forty-three miles to London without dismounting from his bicycle; and this feat he accomplished, balancing himself adroitly against a wall at Finchley to drink from a roadside fountain upon the only occasion when we made any halt at all.

Upon our return to London we fell into the habit of a common day, hardly varied during the rest of the vacation. He would come to me about eleven o'clock in the morning and we would set out for Hampstead Heath together.

This early affection for Hampstead remained unchanged through the years. Many a delightful essay upon Hampstead has Viscount Northcliffe written, and certainly his earliest memories were of that wide heath which so many poets and essayists have walked. He was but five years old when his father took Rose Cottage in the Vale of Health, said to have been at one time the residence of Leigh Hunt; and there in

his seventh year he began to take his first interest in newspapers. The cottage stands to-day almost as it stood then. It is a low wide-fronted building, trailed with creeper and roses and little suggestive of that London the heart of which lies but five miles away.

At the time of which I am speaking, Hampstead was almost the village that it had been in the days of the Georges. The heath was wild and almost desolate upon any ordinary week-day. You could walk in the woods of Highgate and believe yourself a hundred miles from the Metropolis. The people of Hampstead were in the main the artists and the men of letters of whom London talked.

Fitzjohn's Avenue had but just been built. Edwin Long and Pettit and Frank Holl were all living there. Du Maurier, the great *Punch* artist, whose son, perhaps, is the most popular figure upon our stage to-day, occupied a delightful old house not far from Jack Straw's Castle; and the then Mr. Walter Besant, with Buchanan the poet and novelist, were worthy representatives of literature. These people all stood as idols to us in that primeval age. Alfred Harmsworth knew the young Longs very well, and we used to pass with veneration the brand-new studio in which the supposed masterpieces were painted. How little did we then foresee that changing fashion would sell them for a song when a quarter of a century had passed!

We discussed all these great people as we lay under the trees of Hampstead and thought of our own future. I have no hesitation in saying that Alfred Harmsworth cared even at that age to talk little else

but books and journalism. Our reading had not been wide, but our enthusiasms were many. He certainly had read almost the whole of Thackeray; and while his admiration for *Vanity Fair* and *Esmond* was profound, the Irish blood in him would have it that *Barry Lyndon* was one of the greatest of his books. Of the works of Dickens he preferred *David Copperfield* and the immortal *Pickwick*, and I doubt if there were any event in either narrative of which he could not have given a good account. To these affections he added a very sincere one for the works of Defoe, Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith, and among his earliest literary efforts was a quite successful imitation of the great Irishman's essays.

Possibly the love of literary style came to him from his talented father. The late Mr. Harmsworth, when in Dublin, had contributed many profound essays to the *Dublin Review*, though, as Mrs. Harmsworth reminded me recently, the Irish editor had shown his appreciation of them by not paying a penny for the work. But the love of literature, nevertheless, was in the house, and it found expression in these essays, of which I do not think the writer, if living, would be ashamed even were they published to-day.

He would write them after we had returned from our morning walk to Hampstead, when, having lunched together, he had grown weary of "Olivette" and "Le Cocq." There was a round table in my father's library at St. John's Wood at which we would sit and plan those great achievements which were intended to astonish the world, but failed to do so. My own idea at that time was to write turn-over articles for the *Globe* news-



paper—for which the unprecedented sum of a guinea was paid; and also to finish a melodrama which should find acceptance at the Surrey Theatre. As the latter *chef d'œuvre* was written upon five sheets of notepaper and had as many murders in as many pages, it failed to find acceptance; but my *vis-à-vis* wrote more than one delightful essay which found a place in his school magazine, and even, if my memory be correct, had an article accepted in that very *Globe* newspaper to whose columns I aspired.

We did not go much to the theatre in those days, and, apart from a yearly visit to the pantomimes, our interest in it was slight. Alfred Harmsworth was always an admirer of really great acting, and was a cordial friend of the late Sir Henry Irving. But the theatre never made a sure appeal to him. As a boy he was exceedingly fond of comic opera and when "Rip Van Winkle" was produced at the Comedy Theatre it had a no more zealous applauder. But I think it must be said that even the boy cared for few of these things, and that the dramatic humorists always found him difficult to please. His appreciation of the great comedies was sure, and he watched "She Stoops to Conquer" and "The School for Scandal" with real zest; but that overmastering bias towards the newspapers was even then manifest and they and great literature may be said, even at the age of fifteen, to have been his obsession.

Our week-ends at this time were a fashion unto ourselves. People had not then learned to leave London from Friday until Monday or Tuesday; but we, inspired by our bicycles, soon discovered that it was

an excellent thing to do. A Bicycle Club was then founded in St. John's Wood, and some of its members were to attain athletic fame. They became friends of Alfred Harmsworth, and were with us upon many of the week-end excursions. Among them I would name Mr. George Jeffrey, who played football for England and Cambridge and was at Caius College with me; the late A. E. Stoddart, one of the greatest athletes that ever lived, though not very fond of the bicycle; Mr. O'Connor, a son of the scene-painter at the Lyceum Theatre; and two sons of Mr. Frith, the artist. My elder brother, who was afterwards to become a champion cyclist, was one of the most ardent of our members, and incited Alfred Harmsworth to performances which for his age were distinctly imprudent. Upon one occasion we had a Club ride on a Saturday to St. Albans, and upon returning to St. John's Wood at midnight, my brother suggested that we should go on to Eastbourne for breakfast. The majority of us declined the proposal with thanks, but the undaunted Harmsworth immediately accepted the invitation, and the pair set off amid cheers. I heard a few days later that they encountered a heavy mist in the neighbourhood of Uckfield, and were compelled to take refuge under a hedge at four in the morning, and there to remain for a couple of hours. Nevertheless, they arrived at Eastbourne about ten o'clock, went immediately to bed, and having slept until five in the afternoon, departed at once upon their return journey. Of such stuff were the cyclists of the year 1880 made.

In these amusements the years passed. We saw a great deal more of the country than our fathers had

seen, and established some affections which were enduring. As a boy, Alfred Harmsworth had a warm admiration for the Isle of Thanet, and many of his holidays were spent there. The air of Margate he found especially beneficial, and this early bias ultimately induced him to establish a country house in the district. But before that time came, he had lived for a little while in a delightful old cottage at Broadstairs, and already begun that collection of the literature and books of Thanet which was so admired by those who visited Elmwood. And just as this delightful house was the culmination of a boyish interest, so may the possession of Sutton Place, by Guildford—the great Tudor house which he sold shortly before his death to the Duke of Sutherland—be set down to bicycling days on the Ripley Road.

Ripley was at that time a truly primitive village. I do not know which of the pioneers among us was the first to discover it; but discover it we certainly did, and at the Anchor Inn we spent the best part of many a week-end. Soon the place became a cycling fashion. There would be forty or fifty riders at lunch at the Anchor every Saturday; and from being a mere ale-house, the thing became a highly prosperous concern. To reach it by lunch-time we had to leave St. John's Wood before nine o'clock in the morning, for we had a run of more than thirty miles to make; and having spent the day in often hopeless attempts to extract fish from the River Wey, we would leave at five or six in the afternoon and reach St. John's Wood about ten o'clock.

These journeys made us familiar with every mile of



the famous Portsmouth Road we had to traverse. We used to go from St. John's Wood to Acton; thence to Kew Bridge and Richmond, and, striking through Hampton Court, would first find ourselves upon the famous highway where it cuts across Esher Common. It was a delightful road then with a beautiful gravelled surface—since destroyed by the omnivorous car—and villages which were old-world in every sense.

Alfred Harmsworth was always the life of these pilgrimages. He had many friends and certainly no enemies as a boy. I should describe him then as given to high spirits but never to elation. He had a romantic bias, but added to romance a most practical temperament. He was staunch in friendship but exceedingly well able to take care of himself when the other cheek was not offered. Indeed, there were very few boys who did not envy him.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PERSONAL SIDE

ALFRED CHARLES WILLIAM HARMSWORTH was born at Chapelizod in the County of Dublin on July 15th, 1865. His father was the late Alfred Harmsworth of the Middle Temple, barrister-at-law.

His mother, a very remarkable woman, was daughter to Mr. William Maffett, a well-known private banker and land agent, and came of the tenacious, practical, acute stock of the County Down. Mr. Maffett gave his daughter an unusually liberal education for those days; before she was seventeen she had travelled a good deal in England and on the Continent. She learned to know men and women; her judgment became shrewd and penetrating. From her were derived many of the qualities which made her eldest son famous. Between them there was always the most perfect affection and sympathy. Never did a day pass, when Lord Northcliffe was out of England, without a telegram from him to his mother. When he was at home his visits to Poynter's Hall in Hertfordshire, where Mrs. Harmsworth lives, were very frequent. No more beautiful relation ever united parent and child.

No wonder, then, that Lord Northcliffe felt a strong sentimental attachment to the place of his birth.

In 1910 he took me to see it. The journey was undertaken with characteristic impetuosity. As Mrs. Harmsworth has justly observed, "He who lives with my son should keep his bag packed." We had had a delightful holiday in Scotland. He had not been well, but a month at the Braid Hills Hotel above Edinburgh, many days upon the links at Loughness and Kilspindle, some fishing at Auchterarder, and finally a visit to Turnberry completely restored his energies.

One day he sent his man to my room very early in the morning to say that we were going to Ireland. Having packed with feverish haste, I soon found myself in the car on the way to Stranraer. That night we left for Larne. I thought we were going on directly to Dublin, but no, we found ourselves on the following afternoon playing golf at Newcastle, Co. Down. The next day he told me the real purport of our visit.

"I am going to take you," he said, "to see the house in which I was born. I bought it many years ago, and we are going to sleep there to-morrow night."

The programme was carried out to the letter. We reached Dublin after a delightful drive, and going out through the beautiful Phoenix Park, we came at last to a villa with a high wall before it, and the River Liffey running at the end of a shady garden. When Mrs. Harmsworth herself occupied this truly perfect little home, it must have been relatively in the country, though now it is almost a suburb of Dublin. Herein her husband lived while practising for the Irish Bar and writing a little for the reviews. And

it was here that Mrs. Harmsworth took the great resolution, and, abandoning everything that was dear to her, decided that a London practice alone could satisfy the ambitions of the young barrister, and that a London practice he must pursue.

So was Lord Northcliffe brought to London. Though he was but two years old at the time, he remembered clearly the night he left Chapelizod. Fenians were manœuvring near the village and a riot was expected. Hastily his mother wrapped the boy in a heavy shawl and carried him, at dead of night, to a brougham that was waiting. The drama of that hour was never forgotten.

The life of Dublin when Mrs. Harmsworth lived there was not that of the Dublin of our time. Rather it resembled the social life of London as we have known it in recent years. For then, indeed, it was a capital, and it had a "season" which was well recognized; while its spacious squares and streets had not that shabby-genteel appearance for which latterly they have unhappily been noteworthy. Nevertheless the city did not permit the social liberties of our own time. To ride on an outside car was as heinous an offence where a young woman was concerned, as would have been her appearance in a hansom-cab in the days of Victoria.

Arrived in England, the young people made their home in Hampstead. They lived for a time in Rose Cottage by the Vale of Health pond. As showing the different times in which we live and the comparative poverty of facility for travel then existing in London, Mr. Harmsworth thought little of walking from home



to the Temple and back. His duties in connection with the legal business of the Great Northern Railway involved continuous travel, in which he was often accompanied by his little son. At the early age of eleven, Lord Northcliffe had the unique experience of riding from Grantham to London on the foot-plate of a locomotive. His vivid recollection of that journey and the grimy condition in which he arrived at King's Cross is characteristic of a tenacious memory. One incident bears witness to the fact that his powers of observation were no late development. He noticed upon this journey that the fireman of the engine made certain gesticulations as they passed through country stations, the man seeming to imitate the playing of a concertina. When he asked the man why he did it, the fellow laughed and looked at the driver. Eventually he decided to confess. It meant, he said, that they had a "tall-hat man" aboard—that is, a Director of the Company—and his gestures were to warn all and sundry.

Hampstead was at that time by no means the popular playground it is to-day. There was no Tube, few facilities of street car, omnibus or train. Finding at length that he was too far from his work, Mr. Harmsworth moved into an old house in the Grove End Road, St. John's Wood; and later, to the Boundary Road, where there was an excellent garden and adequate accommodation for a large family.

Alfred was at this time sent to the Grammar School at Stamford, an old foundation, then unfortunately under the control of a disciplinarian of whose methods Lord Northcliffe could speak harshly even after forty

years. Such was the impression left, that when his old pupil visited Stamford recently, he told me that he looked into the room where he was caned and remembered his master with loathing.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Harmsworth, I may note, believed over-much in the early education of children. They thought the cultivation of original observation more important than an acquaintance with the twaddle of which children's books usually consist. In this manner it came about that their sons and daughters, of whom there were fourteen, developed a considerable knowledge of natural history. Alfred was the eldest of the family. Then came Geraldine Adelaide, wife of Lucas White-King, C.I.E., subsequently Professor of Oriental Languages, Trinity College, Dublin; Harold, now Lord Rothermere; Cecil, certainly one of the most popular of all our parliamentarians; and Leicester, also a Member of Parliament and a baronet. Seven other of the Harmsworth family are still living.

Though he did not begin to learn to read until he was seven years old, Alfred Harmsworth made extraordinary progress once he was started. He mastered the rudiments both of reading and writing in a few weeks, so that, when he was eight years old, there was no suggestion that he had not learned his pot-hooks and hangers at five. Nor had the cultivation of the faculty of observation been without its effect. The power of seeing things as they are, and not as other people tell you they are, was one of his surest gifts. He believed that it could be mastered by anyone who made up his mind to see and deduce

for himself. Again and again I remembered him lamenting that this faculty was not sufficiently cultivated by Englishmen; nor did he fail to point out what the lack of it had cost them.

\* \* \* \* \*

When he returned from Stamford, he was sent to be educated by the brothers Milne at Henley House, Hampstead. His father wished to send him to a University, and when his friends one by one became undergraduates at Oxford or at Cambridge, he was naturally drawn towards following their example. But by this time he had developed opinions of his own; decided opinions, upon which he was determined to act. One of these was that there were many better ways of fitting oneself for the battle of life than spending three or four years at a University. He wanted to learn life from life itself, and not from books.

Lord Northcliffe married, and, fortunate in his mother, he was equally fortunate in his wife. Lady Northcliffe was a Miss Milner; she lived until her marriage in Oxfordshire. From the earliest days of her husband's career, she was associated with it. She shared his triumphs and encouraged him in dark hours, spent her life in seconding his efforts and in winning golden opinions from all who were brought within the orbit of her gracious personality.

Their first country house was Elmwood, in Thanet. I think it remained to the end the most favoured of all the country residences Lord Northcliffe occupied. Relatively small, its gardens are beautiful and abound in fine old trees, which are elsewhere rare in Thanet.



At its doors lie the famous Kingsgate Golf Links, where Lord Northcliffe accomplished some quite remarkable performances for a man who took up golf so late in life. At Elmwood in the early years of his career some strenuous work was done in the foundation of his great enterprise. In the bungalow there a slate still hangs upon which there used to be recorded some new idea for one or other of the many enterprises in which he was engaged even in the early years of his success. From the gardens of the house there is a magnificent panorama of the Channel and the North Foreland and those coastwise lights by which the ships of England go. Lord Northcliffe believed greatly in the air of Thanet, and much of the vigour of his life was to be attributed to it.

For a little while he had a country house in Norfolk and another at Reading; but finally he took Sutton Place, which he sold ultimately to the Duke of Sutherland. Sutton is in many ways the most beautiful of all the Tudor houses in England. It stands a few miles from Guildford, but so secluded that when Cromwell's men set out to find and to destroy it, fable says they lost their way and left the great house unharmed.

Sutton Place, as most people know, was built between the years 1520 and 1530 by Richard Weston, one of the Councillors of Henry VIII. Having visited the Loire, this traveller appears to have been much influenced by the movement towards the architectural fashions then in vogue, and we discover the influence of the Renaissance in every line of Sutton.

To-day the building suggests the very quintessence

of the mediæval age. The magnificence of its long gallery, the quiet dignity of its entrance hall never fail to impress the stranger. Here came Henry VIII and all his glowing Court about him. Here from a gallery musicians "made sweet music" while Elizabeth dined. Through three centuries the house maintained its Catholic tradition. Many a priest fled thither from the Jacobean persecution. Mass was said daily in the Chapel, and is said even now in a little Oratory in the park.

To Sutton Place, as to Berkeley Square, went most of the distinguished visitors of our time. Ever eclectic in her hospitalities, Lady Northcliffe's parties were the delight of the privileged friends. In later years, when he had become a victim to the great infatuation, Lord Northcliffe built a nine-hole course at Sutton Place which greatly exasperated his friends. Needless to say, it was exceedingly modern and vastly scientific. The best players could not get round it under 80 until Vardon appeared and shattered its record to pieces. I was at Sutton Place when he came down to try his luck, and gallantly offered to play the best of three distinguished amateurs then staying in the house. Their handicaps were scratch, 2 and 4, respectively, and all were players of nerve. But a day of humiliation awaited them. Vardon won every hole to the 10th, and it was on the 11th green that the three of them first succeeded in getting a half. This, perhaps, we can understand when I add that Vardon's record was 66 strokes.

Latterly, Lord Northcliffe remembered his ancient affection for Elmwood in Thanet, and paid frequent

visits there when he was in England. But he was ever a man of movement, and once declared to me the wisdom of never sleeping more than four nights together in the same locality. He was very fond of the South of France, and latterly spent a good deal of time at Roquebrune, a beautiful villa by Cap Martin. In this bias toward the Riviera he was imitated by his able brothers; Lord Rothermere, himself, that great organiser; Sir Leicester Harmsworth, Member for Thirsk; Mr. Cecil Harmsworth, whose literary accomplishments and personal charm were long since recognized by the House of Commons; Mr. St. John Harmsworth, whose tragic accident in a motor-car long years ago has been an abiding source of grief to his relatives and his friends,—all these, with Sir Hildebrand Harmsworth, at one time the proprietor of *The Globe* newspaper, helped Lord Northcliffe from time to time in the control of his many enterprises; all bear witness to the divers gifts possessed by this remarkable family.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BEGINNING OF THINGS

IN the summer of the year 1885 I met Alfred Harmsworth coming out of the reading-room of the British Museum.

He wore, I remember, a black Inverness cape such as was then fashionable in London, and a silk hat immaculately glossy.

Our meeting was quite an accident, and to both of us, I think, very welcome. I had been three years at Cambridge and had seen my friend only during vacations. Occasionally he had written me a short note in that pencilled and characteristic scrawl now so highly prized by those who have received it; and had told me a little about himself. He was, I had vaguely understood, already seeking that journalistic career which had been his boyish ambition. The then Mr. William Ingram of the *Illustrated London News*, influenced almost wholly by the excellence of the work that the boy had done for the Henley House School Magazine, invited him to join his editorial staff and to promote the fortunes of a paper called *Youth*. This paper I myself had never seen, nor had I while at Cambridge thought much about journalism. But upon coming to London at the end of the year 1884, circumstances diverted my activities into this



particular channel, and I found myself driven by hard necessity to become, like Autolycus, a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles.

It was not easy to make a beginning in those days. The old school of editor did not want new contributors. There was nothing so conservative as the newspaper tradition of the time. Grave and reverend personages, who wrote leading articles in musty offices, continued to write them because they were grave and reverend. The editorial staff was organized upon the methods of the Civil Service, and the boy who did not begin at the bottom rarely had any chance of getting to the top. So the would-be seeker after fame who was without influence found himself at a disadvantage which is not known in this age of enterprise. It was almost impossible to see any editor at all, and even a distinguished member of the Cabinet of that very year 1885 heard Mr. Mudford, the editor of *The Standard*, shouting down the stairs that he would not see him.

The difficulties being what they were, it would be impossible to say that I took anything approaching a plunge into literature. At the best, I did but wag a toe in that chilly water. Vain attempts to write biographies of dead geniuses about whom Fleet Street no longer cared; essays upon subjects which should have been popular but were not; a few sporting articles and some society notes for the weekly papers were the sum of the achievements until this happy day when once again I met my friend Harmsworth in the British Museum.

He was then barely twenty years of age, but in

wisdom grown old. When I told him that I had come to the British Museum to get some facts about Dickens, he laughed at the absurdity of the proceeding. "No newspaper editor," he said, "will look at an article of that kind at this time of day. What you want to do is to get the news. Come along and we will have a talk about it."

Here was the beginning of what I shall call the second period. For the next few years, at any rate, I was once more to have the privilege of being associated with the friend of my boyhood—indeed, of living with him for a period. It was he who taught me how to exploit the elusive editor; it was he who put the unwanted essay into the fire and substituted for it ideas which were practical.

We lived for a time in St. John's Wood, and afterwards for many months at the foot of the Hampstead hills. I will not say that at that period the Alfred Harmsworth whom I knew was that miracle of energy and action with which later years have made me familiar. For one thing, he enjoyed poor health, and was not strong as a boy. The period was in a sense one of quiescence. The volcano, I think, was on fire at its depths, but nothing came from it but a little smoke and flame to remind those about of its existence. We were not hard workers during that year, and we did not have much success. Almost every day we arrayed ourselves in the best clothes that we had and sallied forth to brave the lions of Fleet Street in their dens. "First impressions are everything," he would say to me, and when a hansom-cab driver of the old type hailed us his



satisfaction was not concealed. "We are all right," he remarked one morning, "the cabbies want us for a fare."

I may here observe that he was at this particular moment no longer connected with the boys' paper *Youth*, and that he had become a mere free lance. It was almost hopeless, as I have said, for a young man to attempt to get employment on one of the great daily papers to which he had not a powerful introduction, and the energies of the beginner were necessarily confined to the more popular and weekly journals.

Of these our early attack was directed against *Vanity Fair*, then the property of Mr. Thomas Gibson Bowles and accounted the best written of them all. For this admirable paper, as we justly thought it, we both wrote many articles, and also attained some success in the office of Mr. James Henderson, who was then the proprietor of *Young Folks*. As all the world knows, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island* for this publication—and under the title of *The Sea Cook*—and it was of *Treasure Island* that we heard a good deal from Mr. Henderson, a remarkable old Scotch publisher, when we visited him in Red Lion Square.

He told us that to his great disappointment the book was not a journalistic success. Stevenson has admitted as much in his own fine account of it, and I have often heard the late Sir Wemyss Reid, who was subsequently the managing director of the house of Cassell, say that the firm bought this glorious romance with hesitation and were never confident that it would become a satisfactory financial proposition.

Alfred Harmsworth, however, admired the story enormously from the beginning, and I well remember the pleasure with which we both of us met Robert Louis Stevenson in the office of a weekly paper called *Orange Blossoms*, to which he had just carried the MS. of that altogether Stevensonian romance *Olalla*.

This introduction was the only satisfactory thing that we ever got out of that particular periodical; for having accepted many of our articles—and indeed Alfred Harmsworth then wrote some of the most delightful essays—a receiver took possession of the property and his attentions became unremitting.

This was a great blow to a household which had to make much of odd guineas. None of the papers paid us very well; indeed, some of Harmsworth's clever leaders for a big morning paper were paid for at the rate of half a guinea a column. Elsewhere remuneration was often precarious. The secret possibly lay in the fact that few of these journals were real money-makers, and that the great revolution in the newspaper world was yet to come. Had the somnolent old gentlemen of Fleet Street then been aware that their Robespierre had appeared in Manchester, perchance their activities would have been awakened; but they went on in the old sleepy way, such new papers as appeared being mostly failures and the successes of the established organs rarely contested seriously. We, in our turn, got all the guineas out of them we could—alas! all too few. And our hands being often idle, we spent long hours upon Hampstead Heath or the tennis court, and wondered whither we were drifting.

From this uncertainty I shall always maintain that Alfred Harmsworth was awakened by the oddest turn of fortune. We had not been doing very well. The guineas had become fewer, the walks abroad more extended. One lucky day, however, we chanced to be walking down Farringdon Street upon our way to the Metropolitan Railway station. We had visited the offices of *Society*, then occupying that very building at 108 Fleet Street which was subsequently to witness so many of my friend's achievements; and having failed to dispose of our goods our spirits were not of the best. It was at this critical moment that, chancing to pass a lofty building upon the left-hand side of the road in Farringdon Street, I saw that it was the office of *Tit-Bits*. Of this journal a good deal had latterly been heard in London. One copy had come into my possession, and I had read the amazing intimation that a guinea a short column was paid to contributors by return of post. So much I explained to my companion as we stood at the door and perused the contents bill.

"This fellow," said I, "must be a millionaire; let us go up and see him." And up we went into a great bare room upon the first floor, where the properties included an amiable-looking gentleman at his luncheon. A word and we discovered that here was the person we sought—the late Sir George Newnes upon the very threshold of his brilliant career.

"What do you want?" he asked me.

"To write an article for your paper," I said.

"Upon what subject?"

For a moment I was taken aback. A subject had



not occurred to me. Then, remembering the crazy nature of the building in which we stood, I said boldly, "I want to write an article about jerry builders."

The amiable gentleman at the table said that he would take the article, and we left him with expectation. Two days later the work was completed and some fortnight afterwards, sitting together in our mean study at Hampstead, Alfred Harmsworth and I heard an unfamiliar double knock at the door below and instantly concluded that another MS. was returned. Upon this occasion, however, there was not that dull thud which can so chill the neophyte's heart, and when I answered the door a registered letter was thrust into my hand. It contained three golden sovereigns and three shillings in orderly array, and never was the effigy of the good Queen Victoria more welcome in any household.

I shall always say that this trifling episode influenced Alfred Harmsworth's career as nothing which had hitherto happened to him. He bought the early copies of *Tit-Bits* and began to study them closely. His quick brain perceived the enormous possibilities of the new journalism. Well do I remember him coming into my bedroom one morning and telling me why George Newnes was making so colossal a success.

"The Board Schools," he said, "are turning out hundreds of thousands of boys and girls annually who are anxious to read. They do not care for the ordinary newspaper. They have no interest in society, but they will read anything which is simple and is

sufficiently interesting. The man who has produced this *Tit-Bits* has got hold of a bigger thing than he imagines. He is only at the very beginning of a development which is going to change the whole face of journalism. I shall try to get in with him. We could start one of these papers for a couple of thousand pounds, and we ought to be able to find the money. At any rate, I am going to make the attempt."

And make the attempt he did with his accustomed energy. From that time and for some months after the pair of us thought of little else but those few odd thousands which would permit a journalistic venture.

Often have I looked back and wondered what must have been the subsequent feelings of those who refused us. My own father knew Alfred Harmsworth exceedingly well and admired him greatly, my mother ever had a warm affection for him as a boy; but when it came to investing in such a dangerous thing as a newspaper, the supposed sagacity of Mincing Lane asserted itself, and a kindly refusal rewarded us.

Later on I visited Lady Meux at her house in Park Lane and tried to tell her what I thought of my friend's genius and of his prospects. And for a little while I thought that here lay Mecca. Lady Meux consented to the venture and would have gone on with it but for the intervention of the family solicitor, who pointed to the stability of the ancient newspapers and sternly asked how any young man could hope to compete with them.

All this was discouraging enough, but it never discouraged Alfred Harmsworth. Day by day he

told me that sooner or later the hour would come. Day by day we hoped, like Micawber, that something would turn up. Meanwhile, there was always the clever George Newnes to be written for and regular work to be had in the office of Mr. James Henderson.

To this day there lies in an old trunk of mine the first chapter of a novel we planned together, with the magnificent title of *The Black Hand*. The plot of this was entirely Harmsworth's, but unfortunately it began and ended with an episode. A man going home late at night sees a white hand sticking out of the black waters of a silent pool. What happened or was to happen further, I am wholly unable to say. Sometimes I think that the whole thing was one of those elaborate and kindly malignant jests of his of which he was a master. The very absurdity of the melodrama was probably in his thoughts while he was inciting me to write it.

Unfortunately, and to my great regret, the development of this fictional enterprise was interrupted in a way I had not foreseen. It was then that he received an unexpected offer from the firm of Iliffe & Sons of Coventry to go there and take a hand both in editing and managing their excellent business. Thus for nearly two years, while he was recovering his health, I saw him only upon his weekly visits, though we corresponded frequently. They were invaluable years for him; for now for the first time he obtained a close insight into a great printing business, and we may be very sure that no opportunities were lost. At Iliffes' I should say there came the real awakening of



those great mental activities and the acquisition of those habits of work which never deserted him. His health being completely restored, the volcano was now seen in eruption, and those about experienced the warmth of its fires. Greatly impressed by the magnetism of his personality, but extremely appreciative of the work he was doing for them, the late Mr. Iliffe himself told me some years ago that he had never known so remarkable a young man nor one of whose success he was so sure.

*The Bicycling News*, I may note, was a well-printed paper to which we had both contributed as mere boys. The Iliffes also printed a daily paper and were the owners at that time of *The Cyclist*. Their large circulations permitted the young editor to perceive what would be the effect on the newspaper industry of the then recent introduction of pulp paper and improved presses. This Coventry house was above all things a house of enterprise. It knew what America was doing in the printing industry, and it taught the boy to look across the Atlantic for many of his mechanical inspirations.

If it did not also enlarge his mind, it was because that had already thought ahead of it. I am convinced that even when Alfred Harmsworth left me in Hampstead he was already determined that he himself would found a newspaper enterprise which should surpass any then in existence. In these ideas his years at Coventry confirmed him, and when his early playmate from Dublin—Mr. Carr—came forward with an offer of capital, he quitted Coventry without reluctance, knowing that at last he had his

feet upon the first rung of that ladder which would lead to fortune.

Young as he was, the days of his boyhood may here be said to have been over. He remained a boy in temperament for many years, but in his activities and his way of life he was already that dominating personality we learned to know and to admire. Henceforth recreation was to become for him the necessary counterpart of his unremitting mental activities. Yet from the start he so planned his life that life should mean much to him. No Scotsman tramping the great high road to England came to London more determined to conquer than this handsome lad, who already had the wisdom of the journalistic sages and was soon to cast down so many idols.

## CHAPTER IV

### IN PATERNOSTER SQUARE AND FLEET STREET

ONE day—it would have been in the summer of the year 1887, I mounted a flight of stairs in a dingy old building in Paternoster Square, and there was asked by a very small office-boy what was my business. Before I could answer, Alfred Harmsworth himself appeared and greeted me with his accustomed warmth. At last he was the proprietor of a quasi-newspaper business and here about me were the instruments of his enterprise.

The building was old and dingy, but the room in which I stood was cheerful enough. The proprietor, I remember, wore a morning-coat suit in a pleasant shade of fawn and had a rose in his button-hole. He seemed very happy, though he did not disguise from me that the business was not very flourishing. The idea of it was to publish here the American sporting magazine called *Outing*, and also a little technical paper, *The Private Schoolmaster*. But to this there was to be added a series of popular books which should be founded upon informatory lines. Alfred Harmsworth thought that I could write one of these, and he invited me to do so.

“Why not a popular book about Cambridge, my dear Max?” he said—“nothing about the trips

or that sort of thing, but just a popular account of every-day life up there, and especially of the games, a book not unlike *A Day of my Life at Eton*."

He went on to tell me that two such books were already planned by him, and that he had finished one. The venture was to be called the "All About Series." His first book treated the subject of our railways. It was a bright little thing, but had not much substance: nor was a subsequent volume entitled *The Way to the Winning Post* of much real interest to sportsmen, though possibly of service to the neophyte.

I took away these "samples" and went home to write my book upon Cambridge—a monumental volume, alas! which lies to this day unpublished in some forgotten safe. The disaster that overtook it was the sudden turn in Alfred Harmsworth's fortune for which he had been waiting since we visited the office of George Newnes together. A new and wonderful enterprise found him suddenly engrossed in its possibilities. He cared no more for shilling books, and soon, I believe, forgot their very existence.

I have seen many accounts of this eventful beginning but none which my memory declares to be wholly accurate. As I remember the affair, it came about in this way. One of Harmsworth's friends was Mr. Edward Markwick, the barrister. He was then a leader writer upon the *Daily Telegraph* and we used to regard him with proper awe. Especially did we as boys like that story which depicted him dictating the policy of the universe in a palatial office in Fleet Street, and sipping incomparable coffee while he did



so. But this, after all, was of little use to my friend; and when Mr. Markwick proposed that he should approach a certain retired naval officer and get money for a new venture, he took a different status altogether.

Shortly afterwards he set off on the quest. The Captain, I believe, had gone to Naples, and thither he was pursued. A few days later a cablegram with a single word reached Harmsworth in London. That word was "joy," and joy indeed followed after.

So here was the unspeakable money at last. Not in vain had the dreamer sat upon my bed and spoken of his dreams. No sooner had the unconsenting seaman consented than the enterprise was launched. The idea of it was not of the instant. Some years previously I had been told in our rooms at Hampstead of this scheme which Alfred Harmsworth kept so secret, and in which he so greatly believed. His investigation into the whys and wherefores of newspapers had taught him that one of the most popular columns was, without exception, the column devoted to answering correspondents. He himself had answered many correspondents when he was temporarily upon the staff of the *Lady's Pictorial*. He knew the confidences with which people entrust newspaper editors—the readiness with which they can be encouraged to write, and their fidelity to that organ which lends them a cheerful ear. All this inspired him to make his first attempt a weekly journal wholly devoted to answering the letters of the curious.

It appeared on the 12th day of June in the year 1888, in the shape and upon the model of *Tit-Bits*,



but with a golden cover which was soon to be known throughout the kingdom. It chanced that I myself visited the old offices in Paternoster Square upon the morning of that memorable day, and found myself in the very thick of this opening engagement. It was not a strenuous battle. The Commanding Officer appeared interested rather than anxious. He showed me the first copy of *Answers to Correspondents* with no more apparent elation than he would have passed over the *Daily Telegraph* in the old days.

I observed that his scheme had been carried out faithfully. The journal was self-described as interesting, extraordinary and amusing, and the reader was further invited to enjoy corresponding on every subject under the sun. A penny paper, it included a number of articles of popular interest—one upon "Ancient London," another upon "Silk Stockings," yet a third upon that engaging topic "How to Live on Nothing a Year." So far, I gathered the new enterprise had not made a great appeal to the newsvendors. Messrs. W. H. Smith and Sons' order was very moderate, and, of course, there was very little country sale. To some extent business was done by the hawkers about the town, who liked the look of the golden cover and flourished it in the faces of the pedestrians of Fleet Street. Still, there it was, and none knew better than the man who talked to me about it that some day it would become a success. Had he not determined that it should, and was he not well aware that his will implied also a way?

For all its cleverness, the growth of *Answers* was slow. People apparently did not care very much

about the correspondence side of it. They preferred to have their questions answered in old-fashioned columns which you needed a spy-glass to read. Alfred Harmsworth quickly perceived this, and just as later he altered the whole scope and purpose of the *Daily Mirror* in a night, so this day he set out to reshape his venture. With a new scheme in his mind he invited various contributors, *quorum pars fui*, to write him a series of articles which should appeal to the great new public for whom he meant to cater. I myself was sent upon all sorts of odd adventures—down in a diver's bell, upon a locomotive engine, in a postal railway van, up a steeple,—upon any adventure, in fact, which his judgment dictated. A powerful and popular serial story was introduced, and the newspapers of the English-speaking world were searched for interesting paragraphs. Yet, with it all, the journal still groaned a little upon its wheels and its pace was disappointing. It needed the great "idea," and that idea was yet to be found.

Before this happened Lord Rothermere—then Mr. Harold Harmsworth—had joined the firm. It needed courage upon his part, for he was then earning an exceedingly good salary in the Civil Service, and had left school accounted a brilliant mathematician. He took over the purely business side of the enterprise, and with such swift results that a balance sheet which had hardly shown a profit quickly became one with a return of two thousand pounds a year.

Upon this there came to his brilliant brother the great idea of offering to the British public the remarkable prize of a pound a week for life. It was in

the October of the year 1889. Dreaming in bed one morning Alfred Harmsworth had conceived the idea of buying an annuity of fifty-two pounds a year for that reader who made the nearest estimate of the amount of bullion in the Bank of England upon a certain date. The daring, the novelty of this were beyond all precedent. People talked about it in trains and omnibuses—you heard of it wherever you went; and, naturally, the older-fashioned editors frowned upon it and clamoured for the intervention of the State.

I was in the offices of *Answers* very frequently at this time—they had been removed to the building at 108, Fleet Street, formerly occupied by the newspaper *Society*—and witnessed for myself the rising of that phenomenal tide. Seated in an immense armchair, Lord Rothermere would rise from time to time to go to the telephone and to order another ten thousand copies. Literally by leaps and bounds did the circulation mount. No longer could anyone doubt what was to be the future of the paper; and when a few months later a second prize of the kind was announced and considerately stopped by the authorities upon the very eve of its adjudication, *Answers* must have been bringing in a profit of nearly thirty thousand pounds a year.

This money, wisely enough, was for the most part thrown back into the enterprise. Anyone who thought that Alfred Harmsworth would rest upon his laurels, take his profits and settle down to leisured ease knew him but ill. There were a hundred schemes already in his mind. Sometimes, to the alarm of



his brothers, he spoke of this or that enterprise which must be put immediately into being. The ink of success upon the pages of *Answers* was hardly dry when he produced *Comic Cuts*, the first halfpenny illustrated journal which this country had ever seen; *Forget-me-not*, a penny paper for ladies; and a second paper in the *Comic Cuts* vein, to be followed by three or four more before a couple of years had run.

The inspiration of *Comic Cuts*, I think, he owed to the fact that *Ally Sloper* was then a prosperous penny journal and stood without a rival. The close study of the printing trade, Lord Rothermere's remarkable ability as a business man, and his unrivalled power of organization, made it now possible to produce a rival to *Ally Sloper* for a halfpenny, and to reap a substantial profit upon the venture. Well do I recollect walking down Fleet Street with Alfred on the day when *Comic Cuts* was published, and witnessing the speed with which the hawkers were selling it. In a fortnight's time the brothers knew the result of their second venture—it was already showing a profit of twenty-five thousand pounds per annum.

Here, then, was the great adventure come to its own at last. In two years' time the firm was making a profit of more than a hundred thousand a year. Consternation and incredulity reigned in the older houses. Such headlong and apparent recklessness had never been known in Fleet Street before. For my part, I had then joined the house of Cassell, to found for them the boys' paper *Chums*, and I well remember the late Sir Wemyss Reid telling me not to pay attention to anything those "young Harmsworths"

were doing. "That firm," he said with some solemnity, "will be in the Bankruptcy Court before another year has passed."

Alas for him, the boot in a sense promised to be upon the other leg. It was the older houses which suffered grievously in their dividends because of this virile and utterly amazing competition. Napoleon sweeping armies from his path did not sweep them faster than Alfred Harmsworth demolished the ancient traditions. Papers that had been spoken of as Banks of England in their own way, were shaken to their very foundations. Rivals appeared and vanished like snow upon the desert's dusty face. Wheresoever you went in the world of journalists, you discovered agitated men trying to borrow capital to imitate "the Harmsworths." Some succeeded to their own cost: many were blessed by fortune and failed. Those who did enter the fray very soon discovered that more was necessary than a faithful imitation of *Answers* or of *Tit-Bits*, and a place upon the book-stalls in which to display it. They did not perceive what they lacked; but Alfred Harmsworth, perchance, could have told them. As men are born with a sense of the theatre, so was he with an instinct for understanding the great reading public which has never been surpassed, nor is ever likely to be. And to his genius was allied the great business gifts which Lord Rothermere brought to the house.

Together these built up that success which was soon to be spoken of as miraculous, but was in effect nothing but the result of brains.



## CHAPTER V

### EARLY YEARS AT ELMWOOD

IN the year 1888 Viscount Northcliffe married Mary Elizabeth, the daughter of the late Robert Milner, of Kidlington, Oxford. He had known her since he had been ten years old, and truly had fortune favoured him once more. Many gifts of charm and grace and beauty did Lady Northcliffe bring to his house; but as the gentle and modest mistress of great destinies, surely we may say of her that she was the only wife Alfred Harmsworth could have chosen.

The young people lived first in an old house at Hampstead; but they spent their summers at Broadstairs, and there I visited them in the year 1889. It was a time of some anxiety for my host. His business was not yet established, and its future had yet to be ensured. Both of them, however, spoke of it with a quiet courage which was inspiring, and I remember how Lady Northcliffe told me of her husband's ceaseless application; of his long hours of reading; of his amazing powers of concentration. She herself helped him with a devotion upon which he was ever able to rely; and together they spent long and happy hours in an old-world cottage upon which the sun rarely refused to shine.

It was upon one of these visits that we discovered

Elmwood together. A dogcart had been purchased and an amiable horse, who condescended to trot with us over the white roads of Thanet and occasionally to halt that we might not be insensible to the view. Returning from an expedition to Sandwich one day, we drove through the village of St. Peter's, and beyond it the ancient village of Reading Street, which was then but a mere collection of cottages, some quarter of a mile, perhaps, from the North Foreland Lighthouse.

At a turning of the village street, our ancient horse decided upon a little self-reflection, and, pausing to admire the view, he allowed us to see over a high wall, beyond which lay as beautiful a garden as Thanet could show. To our surprise we perceived that this estate was to be sold; and enquiries being made next day, Alfred Harmsworth purchased it, to the great indignation of a stranger, who believed that the property was already his. Henceforth Elmwood became the best beloved of all his homes. The house was always small, but he quickly built upon it—first a fine billiard-room, which has now become a great study; then extensive stables, which were subsequently to house his many motor-cars, and a series of outhouses which had hardly a match in Thanet.

In such a home he always loved to live and to work. The gardens were delightfully secluded and the old trees in them quite wonderful. There was a little bay beyond the downs, and then the white cliffs and the blue sea and those golden sands for which Thanet is famous. Here Alfred Harmsworth would walk alone for hours while planning some new venture.

And coming home to the model of a Canadian farmhouse he built in the gardens, he would find his secretary waiting for him to write upon a slate the ideas of the day and the instructions for the great staff nearly a hundred miles away in London.

Elmwood, be it said, was quickly modernized in so far as the appurtenances of science go. Many bathrooms were added. There were telephones from room to room and an elaborate installation of the system to London. Possessed of but seven bedrooms, the hospitality offered there was ever intimate. No gangs of ill-assorted guests were permitted, nor that mob week-ending which had become such a terror before the War. Lady Northcliffe was ever too discerning a hostess to permit this kind of thing. Yet I venture to say that never was there a house where hospitality was dispensed more generously, nor one in which the laughter of young people rang out so frequently.

Once every summer Alfred Harmsworth gave a bachelor party to his intimate friends. We ate and drank riotously and chose our own amusements. I have never seen such peaches or grapes as came from his famous houses, and in the old days his French cook assuredly was matchless. To these parties would come his brother Harold; Mr. Marlowe, the editor of the *Mail*; Sir George A. Sutton, who served him devotedly from the beginning of things; perhaps a distinguished American passing through this country; the well-known scholar, Mr. Wood; and any of his brothers who happened to be seeking a holiday. There was no golf course at Kingsgate in those days,



and he himself had a great aversion to the game, being a lawn-tennis player of no mean power. One day he said to me, "I have done many foolish things in my life, but I have never done anything so foolish as that." Later on he became an ardent golfer, as far as his work would let him be. It was his only recreation latterly, and I sometimes think that it prolonged his life for some years.

If he did not play golf at Elmwood in the 'nineties, he played many other games. Often was it my privilege to be there and to watch him at his daily work in those momentous years between 1890 and 1894, when his business was growing with such startling rapidity. Not then a convert to early rising, he would remind me that it was better not to get up until the day was aired; but he and his charming wife would generally be seen about nine o'clock in the garden amid their roses, and the stranger might well have been forgiven had he described them as mere children. Breakfast would be laid in the open under the shade of an immense copper beech; and there we would sit with piles of grapes and peaches before us and the glorious air of Thanet giving us an appetite for the feast to follow. Breakfast over, Lady Northcliffe would go to her duties—while he would make his first appearance in that bungalow where so much of his early life was spent.

"What policies and combinations of men have been made in that room!" he said to me one day. Even that observation hardly measures the truth.

The building is pretty, with a verandah and porch,



and has externally a little of the air of a Canadian house. Within, it is a model of light and luxury. There is a large writing-table in the window; while the shelves about show you the first copies of nearly every publication with which the great house has been identified. A floor of parquet is bedecked with the skins of white bear—the prey of the first Harmsworth Polar expedition which inaugurated that great series of scientific enterprises for which the nation owes so much to Lord Northcliffe. Here also are crocodiles from Florida grinning at you menacingly and warning you to waste no time. A monstrous slate hangs upon one wall to this day, and is still ruled off into those compartments which the several journals demanded.

Here in the old days the work done could only be described as stupendous. Beginning, perhaps, at ten o'clock in the morning, the tasks were often carried on until nearly midnight. Files of papers and journals from all countries were carefully catalogued and searched for inspiration. There were the briefest lines dictated to editors and managers—warm encouragement for those who had done well, unforgettable rebukes for those who had failed. Every number of every journal was criticized by the Chief in those days, and not a line of them overlooked. His was ever the brain dictating the policy of that vast organization and quickening the running of its machinery. When an idea came to him he would scribble it upon the slate, lest he should lose it in the course of a busy day. There, I may mention incidentally, appeared years before its actual publication, many a notion for

the great daily newspaper which already he had determined to found some day. And there ultimately appeared the magic words *Daily Mail*, with all their potent meaning.

The bungalow usually detained Lord Northcliffe until nearly one o'clock. Then he would take a turn round the garden, or go down to the sea with his dogs. He did not very much like sea-bathing, and had the salt water brought up for his morning bath, until he discovered one day that the gardeners were drawing it from the fish-pond and adding a little seaweed thereto.

But if he did not care very much for sand in his toes, he always loved the sands and rocks of that Thanet shore, and many a day would we walk from Kingsgate to Broadstairs and talk of great enterprises as we went. The owner of a vast fortune, he knew that he was still at the beginning of things. Perchance he looked to a horizon of which none of us dreamed. The measure of his intellect was but half understood even then by his friends. I think it needed the great War and the overmastering part he has played therein to convince the nation finally how great a master of men was among them.

In the afternoon Lady Northcliffe used to give delightful tennis parties, and sometimes we drove. She herself was an accomplished horsewoman, and I remember that in the paddock a series of fences was erected, over which she would put horses old and young. Of course the motor-car made a great difference even to Elmwood. Lord Northcliffe had been in Paris in the year 1894, twelve months before the

first Motor Car Act was passed here, and instantly his quick brain had perceived the moment of the new invention.

Monsieur Lavassor was then at work upon the earliest of the Panhard cars, while somebody had already invented a motor-bicycle, which the daring Englishman insisted upon riding. It rewarded him but ill. Having mounted and started it, he found that he could not stop it; and after careering round a race-track and through a fence, he subsequently arrived in the middle of a field, where he thought it was time, willy-nilly, to descend. On the following day the same machine was mounted and ridden by a young Frenchman, who unfortunately fell with the machine on the top of him and was burned to death. These extremes none the less convinced him that here was an invention which had come to stay, and he lost no time whatever in purchasing one of the very earliest of the Panhard cars, which he kept in Paris.

I remember this well. It was a little 6-h.p. vehicle capable even at that day of attaining a speed of some thirty miles an hour, and had won one of the French races at twenty-five miles on the level. Here at last was a great instrument of his liberty. He had travelled much by this time; had been to America, and there edited a New York daily journal just to show them how it should be done; had bought the very latest Hoe printing presses for his own business in London; and generally had formed his own estimate—unfailingly correct—of American capacity and our own. Notwithstanding these voyages, however, long holidays in Italy, France and Germany, he still hankered for



that ancient liberty of the high road we had enjoyed together as boys. And here in the car he had found it. Instantly he began to tell the public that its derision of the new implement was premature. A revolution was about to overtake us, he said, and the sooner we realized the fact, the better for British industry.

Meanwhile, he himself did all that was possible to encourage this wonderful invention. Year by year he bought the new cars as they came out. When Herr Jellanae astonished Monte Carlo in the year 1900 by appearing there with the first of the Mercédès models, Alfred Harmsworth at once put his name down upon a list confined to twenty purchasers, and shortly afterwards introduced the famous car to England. That it in a way also effected a revolution he was well aware; and desiring to benefit our own industry, he sent the carriage to the Agricultural Hall during one of the early motor shows and invited every British manufacturer to inspect it. Our own industry was in a poor way at that time and its earliest productions were mostly failures. But here was a car capable of attaining a speed of more than sixty miles an hour—reliable, handsome and full of novelty. No better service could have been done the British manufacturer than to give him this opportunity of understanding why he had failed. He had been handicapped at the outset by the outrageous behaviour of those who inflicted heavy fines for breaches of a ridiculous law, while France and the United States were seizing the motor business of the world.

The car in its stables, the doors of Elmwood were



now, so to speak, open upon a road which led to the world's end. Alfred Harmsworth had always loved France, but he grew to love her more as he knew her more intimately. Some of his early expeditions at this time were altogether characteristic of him. He drove, for instance, from St. Raphael, near Nice, to Paris within the twenty-four hours. And upon another occasion, arriving at Holyhead at 2.45 in the morning, he was lunching at his house in Berkeley Square before two o'clock. And he was ever a true pilgrim of the road—a lover of adventure, occasionally a gypsy in temperament.

Apropos this story. There was an occasion when motoring with a party to Scotland he had determined to stop a night at York. Lunching by the roadside, a good-looking tramp joined the party and was regaled with wine and quails in aspic. The man admitted, upon being questioned, that he was an actor, and once had been a property master in a famous theatre. He was not asked why he was a property master no longer, but was invited instead to accompany the party to York and there to dine at one of the leading hotels. An adventurous fellow, this merry vagrant at once fell in with the scheme and declared himself delighted. He was sent to the public baths of York, there thoroughly scrubbed down, his hair was cut and he was shaved. Somehow or other a smart suit of dress-clothes was found for him and a shirt which was immaculate. Alfred Harmsworth had other guests to dinner at his hotel that night, and among them, I understand, several prominent citizens. It was his whim to introduce the transformed mendicant as

Colonel Smith, and this part the ex-property master carried out to perfection.

Naturally he knew something about soldiers, and could talk of certain regiments. But the surprising thing was that he brought excellent manners to the feast and never for a moment betrayed himself. When dinner was done, the question remained what to do with him. Here somebody had a happy inspiration. There was a train to Glasgow at midnight—the man had said that he wished to go to Glasgow. Immediately a deputy was found to conduct him to the station; to buy a first-class ticket for him; to put him into the train, and to give him five pounds. And that was the last that was seen of him. He wrote no letter; nor is it wholly sure that he ever learned rightly the name of his benefactor. Lord Northcliffe's servants had the strictest injunctions to tell no one whom his car carried, and I have seen other tramps upon the roadside similarly regaled with champagne and truffles and making the most desperate efforts to discover the title and station of their mysterious host.

The introduction of rapid travel broke in a little, I think, upon the settled seclusion of life at Elmwood. But the final abandonment of that delightful house as a permanent residence was caused by his acquisition of the *Evening News* and creation of the *Daily Mail*. These great enterprises could not be conducted at a distance. Public men naturally endeavoured to know this new and potent personality which had appeared among them. Governments became interested and politicians lent their ear. And all that while Alfred Harmsworth himself was working heroically. His

journeys carried him now to America, now to France; he visited even India and the East, and ever learned of men and methods as he went. The quiet hours were fewer, the stress and strain of life ever growing. And he was still but a boy, and other men spoke of him as such—with admiration or with malice, as the mood moved them.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE "DAILY MAIL"

I DO not know whether the *Daily Mail* is to stand ultimately as Lord Northcliffe's greatest journalistic achievement; but certainly it occupied a large place in his affections.

There have been many tales told in London of the foundation of this wonderful newspaper; but until the year 1916 there were few of them, I fear, which were accurate. Happily the celebration of the twentieth year in the story of the paper permitted Lord Northcliffe to give his friends his own account of the beginning of things, and from this it is my privilege to make large quotations here.

Nominally, he tells us, the *Daily Mail* was started on May 4th, 1896; but, as a matter of fact, it began to be born many years before. In effect it was but an inevitable development of the radical upheaval which the grandfather of the present Lord Burnham effected in Fleet Street in the year 1855. Life as a free-lance and a descriptive writer for several morning and evening newspapers had convinced Lord Northcliffe before he was twenty years old that the laxity of the direction of most of the then existing daily papers, their watertight compartments and their smug complacency had uncovered their flanks and



laid them open to a swift attack. For many years they had merely stagnated. Ponderous leaders expressed opinions about which few cared a straw. The columns were dull and heavy and the news set out with little art. A thing was done because it had been so done for thirty years; and to none it seemed to occur that there might be other ways.

“As I went in and out of these newspaper offices,” says Lord Northcliffe, “I found that their organizations were so constructed that one could never convey an idea to the man at the top. Contact with the staff was, as a rule, by postcard. There were rumours in Fleet Street about high and mighty personages who surrounded the editor, and once I did get as near to these great gentlemen as a talk with the late most gifted and kindly George Augustus Sala, who strongly advised me to have nothing to do with journalism. He had been at it for forty years, and knew. The only persons actively connected with the organizations of daily newspapers whom I ever did encounter in those days were Mr. Greenwood, then editor of the *St. James's Gazette*, and Sir John Le Sage, of the *Daily Telegraph*, both of whom did not strongly adhere to the system of impersonal relations with journalists. Mr. Greenwood did me a great deal of good by rejecting most of the articles I wrote for him. I once actually met an editor-in-chief, and no less a one than the editor of the *Morning Post*, Sir William Hardman. But I did not do so by the avenue of Fleet Street. My father and Sir William Hardman, who was also Chairman of Quarter Sessions, were contemporaries at the Bar, and Sir

William gave me advice strongly resembling that of Mr. Sala. My father himself decidedly shared their views and urged that I should abandon the Street of Adventure for Pump Court."

Happily there was never any chance of this advice being accepted. Lord Northcliffe was daily educating himself at that time for the great tasks he would have subsequently to perform. He himself declares that his real literary sponsor was Mr. James Henderson, of Red Lion House, a shrewd old Scotsman of great literary discernment, and of shrewd perception. Mr. Henderson, unlike the cave-dwellers of the great dailies, kept open table at one o'clock each day, and was accustomed to invite his staff and stray contributors, who included all sorts of writing folk, from Robert Louis Stevenson to the present scribe, to luncheon. It was Mr. Henderson, by the way, who gave to Stevenson's book the title of *Treasure Island* in place of the author's own title of *The Sea Cook*.

"As I had edited a printed school journal, there were no mysteries of type and proof for me, and so, in 1881, when I was sixteen, I found it easy to write not only for Mr. Henderson's publications but for those of Sir William Ingram, who gave me my first editorship at seventeen, and later on for Cassell's and Sir George Newnes. The competition that was lacking in the daily journals was very active in weekly publications. Sir George Newnes and Sir William Ingram and any of the editors of Cassell's were as accessible as Mr. Henderson, and, though hampered by great delicacy of constitution and continual ill-

health, I kept the wolf from the door and for a time edited *Youth* for Sir William Ingram, while constantly making attacks upon the barbed-wire entrenchments of the morning and evening papers. All these experiences were of great value afterwards, as was a travelling secretaryship, which brought me my first knowledge of affairs continental."

This equipment, as we have seen, was developed in every way by the young journalist's altogether phenomenal success in the early years of his own business enterprise. When the moment ripened for his first great adventure in daily journalism, he was already a man of unusual sagacity, while acquainted with most of the brilliant young journalists of his time, fortified by an immense fortune and a master of technique of no usual order. It is true to say that the older generation of newspaper proprietors still but half believed in the reality of things, and continued with patience to await the day of their disaster. There were others, however, who had the wit to perceive that even he was then but upon the threshold of an incomparable career, and that could they but join their fortunes to his, union would be fortunate indeed.

Of these, the most noteworthy at that time was Mr. Kennedy Jones, who was then associated with Mr. T. P. O'Connor on a long-forgotten journal called the *Sun*. Mr. Kennedy Jones, or "K.J." as he was ever known to his friends, had been described by an American writer as a husky, alert, clean-shaven young man with a slight Scottish accent, who had gained his first newspaper experience in Glasgow and Man-



chester. If we found that description of a quick intellect and over-robust personality little satisfying later on, it may pass well enough for the Kennedy Jones of the year 1894, who, sitting in an office in Tudor Street, daily watched another young editor emerge from a building opposite and depart cheerfully for Elmwood or for lunch.

As it chanced, this vicinity of windows was lucky and of considerable significance in the story of these careers so diverse. Mr. Kennedy Jones was then practically editing the *Sun* newspaper for Mr. T. P. O'Connor; but he had chanced to hear that the ill-fated *Evening News*, in which the Conservative Party had embarked between three and four hundred thousand pounds, was then such a failure that the directors would be glad to see the back of it at any cost. Being very young and very bold and his assets altogether inconsiderable, the young Scotsman sent his colleague, Mr. Louis Tracy, across to the directors of the ill-starred journal and promptly asked for an option upon it. The price fixed was one of twenty-five thousand pounds and the time permitted for the enterprise exactly one fortnight. Now, therefore, the question arose as to whence the money was to come. Neither Mr. Jones nor Mr. Tracy had, so they assured me, as much as twenty-five thousand shillings at the moment, and it was quite clear that a capitalist must be found. Here fortune smiled upon them, and the proverbial luck of the Harmsworths was seen in evidence. Looking from his window about lunch-time that very day, Mr. Kennedy Jones perceived the figure of the faultlessly attired



young man from the house opposite as it emerged from that building in Tudor Street where so many fortunes had already been made; and observing it, he took an instant resolution.

“Look here,” he said to Mr. Tracy, “they tell me that young Alfred Harmsworth has got more money than there is in the Bank of England. Go right over and talk to him”—an instruction which appears to have been acted upon directly the quarry returned from his lunch.

Characteristically enough, Lord Northcliffe declined to have any truck with Mr. Tracy. “If Mr. Kennedy Jones is the man,” said he, “send him to me.” And Kennedy Jones went, and Lord Rothermere being called to the council, the decision was taken there and then to purchase the *Evening News* for twenty-five thousand pounds.

So the new enterprise began. Alfred Harmsworth was then supposed to know nothing about daily journalism; as a matter of fact, he knew a great deal from his connection with a daily paper at Coventry. Through the years he had been waiting and seeing, but not with the object of subsiding subsequently into masterly inactivity. No sooner had he bought the *Evening News* than he sat down with Lord Rothermere and Mr. Kennedy Jones to see what was the matter with it.

“I remember,” he says, “that after a hard day’s work in editing, managing and writing for periodicals, my brother and I met Mr. Jones night after night in the ramshackle building in Whitefriars Street in the endeavour to find out what was wrong with the

*Evening News*, and why it was that a newspaper in which the Conservative Party had embarked between three and four hundred thousand pounds was such a failure that the wags of the Radical Press used to amuse themselves by having its shares put up for sale in bushel baskets and informing the world that such shares realized a few pence each. Our combined efforts soon discovered the faults in the *Evening News*. They were mainly—lack of continuity of policy (there had, I think, been eight editors) and lack of managerial control. In a few months we had established the paper in the public confidence, and were beginning to plan my long-cherished project of a morning newspaper.

“The success of the *Evening News* and the announcement of the project of the *Daily Mail*, I may note, in no way shook the complacency of the great dailies. *The Times* went on in its own mysterious way in the island of Printing House Square; the *Daily Telegraph* continued its gentle rivalry with the *Standard*; the *Morning Post* was aloof; the *Daily News*, political and literary, was the leading Radical organ; and the *Daily Chronicle*, under Mr. Massingham, was the most brilliant and enterprising of all. Their lack of initiative, through which they had fallen from the highly competitive days of the 'sixties, and their subservience to Party were a direct invitation to the assault administered by the *Daily Mail* on Monday, May 4th, 1896.

“We prepared the battle by plenty of staff work. For months before May 4th we produced a great many complete private copies of the paper. In some of

these, I remember, were inserted all sorts of grotesque features with which to delude any of the enemy who might be awake, and we saw to it that he got those copies. When we were digging the pits for the great rotary presses, a waggish enemy spy, who came over 'to see what those *Evening News* people were doing,' was good enough to remark that they had an ominously big look and were large enough to swallow up all our arduous work in the establishment of many periodicals and the *Evening News* itself. 'Better be satisfied with what you have done,' he said.

"The great world was becoming very interesting at that time. Parish-pump politics were slowly giving way to world affairs. The first sign of German hostility to England had manifested itself in German interest in the Transvaal. The latter stages of the preparation for the *Daily Mail* coincided with one of the numerous South African crises.

"Like most successful things, the instant success of the *Daily Mail* was due to the combination of good luck and careful preparation. The good luck was the inertia of the London newspapers, none of which seemed to observe the writing on the wall in the reduction of French morning newspapers from ten to five centimes and the great public desire for more cable news.

"While the project of a complete morning newspaper at a halfpenny aroused comparatively little interest among those most directly concerned (the proprietors of the penny morning newspapers and the owners of *The Times*, which had maintained its price of threepence since 1861), events proved that the



public was vastly interested at the new development, and far more so than we anticipated. We had prepared for an issue of one hundred thousand copies. The paper chosen was, as now, exactly that used by penny morning newspapers. We were equipped with the very latest *cri* in mechanical appliances. Able young men from everywhere, having watched the progress of the *Evening News*, were offering their services. We thought that we had made every provision for every contingency, but the only lack of foresight shown, if I may say so with modesty, was in not anticipating the immense demand which resulted. The actual number of copies produced on the first day was three hundred and ninety-seven thousand two hundred and fifteen, and it became instantly necessary to commandeer various neighbouring printing establishments while more machinery was being made for us."

\* \* \* \* \*

Thus we see that the *Daily Mail* was an instantaneous success.

Lord Northcliffe himself did not leave the office for the first two days and nights of its history. When he returned at length to Berkeley Square, he slept for twenty-two hours continuously, to the great alarm of the household, which ultimately ventured upon waking him.

The results of his labours were instantly perceived to be a daily paper such as we had not had before. The very make-up of it was entirely novel; the open black and white look of it most pleasing to the eye. There were none of the ponderous leaders which the



older journals then had stereotyped. Had you at that time suggested to any of these proprietors that the public no longer cared for three ponderous columns which should touch far from rightly upon every kind of forgotten subject, he certainly would have thought you mad.

Lord Northcliffe, however, had long ceased to believe in what I may call the George Augustus Sala type of article, entertaining as it was. He did not ask his band of brilliant youths to introduce the Wars of the Roses in an essay upon Tower Bridge; nor lightly to refer to the figure of Harry VIII in a sketch of the latest prize fight. "People want the news," he always said. If the *Daily Mail*, like every other great journal that ever existed, has been here and there misled by trusted correspondents, it is safe to say that there never has been an organization which preached the virtue of accuracy so consistently.

In the earliest days one of the sources of the journal's immense success was undoubtedly its unprecedented use of cables and private wires.

"Turn back," said Lord Northcliffe, "to any morning newspaper of that time, with the exception of *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*. What does one find? An immense police-court report, occupying on some occasions a whole page; from Canada and the United States hardly anything came except by Reuter's Agency. Paris, on the other hand, was a very fount of journalistic wealth under these unenterprising people—for news from Paris was cheap and the French journals were readily to be got. Germany

at that time did not interest this country at all." Yet Lord Northcliffe already knew that Germany had begun to make ready for Armageddon, and that sooner or later she would strike.

"Parliament," he said, "was very fully reported, space being given to Toms, Dicks and Harrys whose views were of no importance, and that despite the fact that a Parliamentary Commission in the House of Commons had reported years before that the additional space demanded for newspaper men in the House of Commons was not needed because it had been ascertained that the public did not read these long reports."

All this was changed in the *Daily Mail*. We had vividly written summaries of the proceedings in the House; short leading articles touching upon the most vital topic of the day; above all, a skill in the presentation of news which was altogether the instinct of the Chief. How often have I heard him praise or blame one of his staff in this very matter. "Every day," he once said to me, "there is an event which ought to be the outstanding feature of the news column. The clever news editor puts his finger upon that; the other man misses it altogether."

The *Daily Mail* satisfied its enormous public from the first by putting its finger almost infallibly upon the thing that mattered, thus safeguarding a sense of proportion which has always been of the largest service to it.

This fact was not at first perceived by its rivals. "Newspaper warfare," said Lord Northcliffe, "is very like trench warfare. Each party sees little of

the other. Both believe in gigantic enemy losses. I remember saying to Mr. Kennedy Jones, at the time when the sale of the *Daily Mail* had reached six hundred thousand daily, 'When will these people wake up to their position?' 'In about five years,' he replied." He went on to add that he was saved from competition for a long time "by the kind of wiseacres who assume an air of solemnity and write for provincial journals pompous paragraphs usually headed 'London Letter.'" These people saved the *Daily Mail* from competition for nearly five years by hinting that, despite its undoubtedly enormous circulation, its financial losses unquestionably were considerable. From time to time they would launch a rumour which they meant to be sinister, and one which implied that the price of the paper would speedily be raised to a penny. Indeed, as Lord Northcliffe added, "one enterprising Member of Parliament went so far as to circularize all his fellow members to the effect that our wicked South African policy was due to the flow of South African gold into our pocket. It did not occur to any of them to take a pencil and notebook and to work out the cost of literary expenses, paper and printing, and discover that the *Daily Mail* was then, and still is, the most prosperous newspaper in the world."

\* \* \* \* \*

To achieve such success, it need hardly be said that a brilliant staff had been gathered at Carmelite House. In the very early days Lord Northcliffe edited the paper himself, and in his absence Mr. Kennedy Jones took the chair; but almost immediately they



were joined by Mr. Thomas Marlowe, whose devotion to the newspaper has never failed during the twenty years of his immense responsibility. He was, I understand, in the editorial chair longer than any other London morning newspaper editor, and certainly it is difficult to imagine him in any other capacity than that which he filled with such distinction.

Lord Northcliffe's own tribute to this great journalist is generous, as we should expect. "His grasp of world affairs, his presentation of opinion, his happy sense of variety, you may witness every morning when you open your paper. Widely read, widely travelled, Mr. Marlowe has that mixture of English and Irish in him that gives both force and vivacity. You see his work in the paper, but you do not see that part of him which is not in the paper. His instinct for the quality of the news which comes before him daily is almost unailing. There was a morning during the Boer War when a report came to London of a great success of the British in South Africa. The *Daily Mail* printed it and was about to send it to the newsagents, when Mr. Marlowe put on his thinking-cap and decided that the news was not true. Every other London editor that day was faced with the same difficulty as that which then confronted Mr. Marlowe. The papers containing the false intelligence had been sent to press, but the fact did not weigh with this discerning intellect. Mr. Marlowe at once telephoned to the printing rooms that no copy at all of the *Daily Mail* with that false telegram in it was to leave the office. He immediately began a new paper with the prominent contradiction of the



false news which he guessed would be in every other journal. The papers destroyed were worth a considerable sum in money and the delay in the publication of the newspaper was irritating to newsagents throughout the whole country. But, as a result, public confidence in news in the *Daily Mail* was intensified and many letters of appreciation were received."

This little staff was fired even in those early days by a quite remarkable sense of devotion to the new journal. I remember when the paper was about a year old being with Mr. Sydney Prior at Cimiez, above Nice. We had travelled to Spain and Africa together, and he was taking a little holiday after what had almost amounted to a breakdown. One day a telegram from Lord Northcliffe reached him, suggesting that a certain French diplomat might be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Nice and that an interview with him might be desirable. Mr. Prior made enquiries and found that the Frenchman in question had gone on into Italy and was, I believe, to be then found in Florence. Although the matter might have seemed relatively unimportant, he at once packed up his traps, took the first train for the frontier, and did not rejoin our party for some days.

This instant response to any appeal from the news editor's room in Carmelite House was made, I would venture to say, by every member of the staff, young and old. Men abandoned days of holiday at a hint. They certainly were not willing to admit the existence of the impossible. If human energy and astuteness could bring off a coup, Lord Northcliffe ever had men

in his ranks who would do it. Indeed, we may say that there was no cannon fodder for the newspapers in all that vast organization. The ablest men have from the early days written for the *Daily Mail*. No more brilliant journalist than the great George Warrington Steevens ever added ornament to the columns of a newspaper; nor is there, I venture to think, any tragedy in the story of Carmelite House which affected the Chief so deeply as the early death of this most brilliant essayist. Let his own tribute bear witness. In the story of "The Rise of the *Daily Mail*," I find these eloquent passages:—

"There is one early star in our firmament, George Steevens, known as G. W. Steevens and George Warrington Steevens, beyond any question one of the most capable writers in newspapers since newspapers began. It is not true that the *Daily Mail* discovered George Steevens. George Steevens discovered himself, and if the discovery is to be ascribed to anyone else, it is to Mr. Henry Cust, who was for some time editor of a particularly brilliant and outstanding *Pall Mall Gazette*. George, who became an intimate and affectionate friend of mine, came to me bringing with him some articles on Turkey. Our little staff was then practically complete, and I said to him, as I always do to those who wish to work with me, 'Tell me about yourself and what you can do.' George was twenty-six years of age, had been educated at the City of London School, and proceeded to Balliol as a scholar. He obtained a first in Mods. and Greats and a Fellowship at Pembroke (Oxford).

"Think I can do anything from tying parcels

downwards,' he said, in his queer, shy, cynical way. 'Shall we say leading articles, then?' I remarked. George knew a great deal about the Navy, and preceded Mr. H. W. Wilson, author of *Ironclads in Action*, our present naval expert, as our naval writer.

"His leading articles were frankly bad. After two or three days he came to see me and said, 'What do you think of them?' 'Feeble,' I said. 'I agree,' he said. 'Let me try something else.' That something else was a report of a horse show; I think, Richmond.

"It is difficult to imagine that genius could be shown in a report of a horse show, but genius was shown in that report, and I at once saw that here was a man of extraordinary power of observation, with an entirely new way of recording what he had seen. After a little time in which he displayed all sorts of descriptive ability, we sent him to the United States to write of Bryan's campaign for the Presidency, and I still think that George Steevens' *Land of the Dollar* is the best descriptive book on the Americans, written though it was nearly twenty years ago. Steevens' accounts of the Nile campaigns and his South African war record, cut short though it was by death from enteric in Ladysmith, should be read by everyone commencing journalism. Let it not be forgotten that these writings were only part of an immense amount of work, for his industry was only equalled by his genius of style.

"He was one of a long series of *Daily Mail* 'Eye-Witnesses' in Germany, and the whole effect of his



work, as well as that of twenty other writers on Germany, including myself, should have been such as to arouse the nation. I remember a remark of his about the English and Germany. He said, 'We no longer go to Germany as we used to. Some of us go to Homburg, some of us to Nauheim; a few go further afield to some of the Austrian resorts; but the old journeys to Germany typified by Thackeray's *Kickleburys on the Rhine* are no longer for English people. It is not that the Germans are ruder than ever they were. It is that what we see in Germany is its increasing efficiency, which wounds our vanity.' Those who now turn back to Steevens' German work will see that it did wound our vanity.

"George was a most original and downright writer. He took a certain attitude about the Dreyfus case which he reported for the *Daily Mail*, and it brought him almost as many abusive letters as I got last year about the Shell Campaign, and that is saying a good deal. He was not as rapid a writer as one would imagine from his style. He took immense pains over his work. Each article was a cameo, and before he wrote he had all the paragraphs up to the last one visualised in his mind. His end was as original as his work. Let me tell it in the words of a friend who was with him. Mr. W. T. Maud, the *Graphic* War Correspondent in Ladysmith, wrote to Mrs. Steevens:—

"'They told me there was no hope, though they did everything that was possible to save him. When they had gone I returned to the sick-room, sent out the two nurses, and together we passed through the



great ordeal. I said: "The doctors think you are very ill. I will cable home. Do you wish to send a message?" "Yes, write it out and send it to me for my approval," he replied. I wrote, "Steevens dangerously ill." "Do you mean that I am dying?" he asked. "They think it very serious," I answered, for I was afraid. Again: "Am I dying?" "Yes." "Soon?" "Soon." He was looking straight into my eyes. He never flinched. There was no trace of fear in that brave heart. Death had no terrors for him. He dictated the message which I sent to you. After that he turned towards me, saying, "Well, this is a sideways ending to it all—let us have a drink." "Right, old boy, I will open a fresh bottle of champagne." And I did so. "But you are not drinking," he said. I made some excuse. This was on the day that poor George Steevens died. He rallied an hour later and then sank fast. He only recovered consciousness once, and then I heard him say, "Ah, it's good to be home again." He fancied himself back in England.' "

As the years went on the *Daily Mail* naturally attracted to itself the greatest writers among us. Men perceived the meaning of circulation, and any man with a mission instinctively sought the vast publicity of these columns. From the *ultima Thule* of the British Empire there have come to us the voices of distant States—men who would speak to the mother country; for not only were their utterances reaching the inhabitants of these isles, but were cabled thence infallibly to America and the Continent, where the Paris *Daily Mail* quickly made itself a power. Few, I think, understand the measure of that achievement.

There had been since the year 1814, as Lord Northcliffe points out, "a daily newspaper in Paris, known as *Galignani's Messenger*." But in the 'eighties it began to fall upon evil days. There was less cabled news from London in it, and our own daily papers arriving in Paris between six and seven in the evening began seriously to affect its circulation. The fact, as we may imagine, was speedily observed by the shrewd brains at the head of the *Daily Mail*. A Paris edition was founded and a scheme of distribution organized which has had no equal in the story of a newspaper. Wherever you were in France in the years immediately before the War, you had your *Daily Mail* upon the day of publication as a matter of course; on the following day you got it in Spain, Portugal, Italy and Germany.

I remember being at Tours in the year 1911 with a motoring party which carried a typical Briton, who would order his ham and eggs for breakfast and not be happy unless he got them. An obliging waiter told him one morning that he had served coffee and toast and the indispensable dish, and that he now had everything as he would have had it in his own kitchen.

"No," said the traveller, "I still am missing my daily paper."

The waiter smiled in a contented sort of way and told him that that trouble would soon be rectified. He sent a boy out into the street, and a few minutes later the *Daily Mail* was upon my friend's table.

This quite wonderful skill in distribution naturally

affected the sales of the older dailies very much, and they were hard put to it to maintain any Continental circulation at all. The first edition of the *Daily Mail* appeared in Paris at daylight, and its second edition at half-past six o'clock; and these, we may say with truth, were rapidly carried all over Europe.

## CHAPTER VII

### LORD NORTHCLIFFE IN HIS OFFICE

ALTHOUGH I lived with Lord Northcliffe until his twenty-fourth year and saw him constantly afterwards, his later years had for me a personal rather than a business association. For that reason, I have asked one of the friends of that later time, who spent twenty-one years at Carmelite House, to give a sketch of the great journalist at work, and the following chapter is the result.

Although I joined the staff of the *Daily Mail* in January 1900, it was not until the following July that I made the acquaintance of its principal proprietor, Mr. Alfred Harmsworth. Parenthetically "although" may be the wrong word; for in the average newspaper offices in those days, so I am told and believe, the gulf dividing junior sub-editors and proprietors took more than six months to bridge.

There was certainly fluidity in the organization of Harmsworth House, as Carmelite House was then known. A square peg in a round hole was given reasonable opportunities for finding the square hole. In my case some article I had written suggested that as I could not possibly be worse as a sub-editor, I might prove more satisfactory as a special corre-



spondent. It was decided to send me to report the funeral of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg (better known to English people as the Duke of Edinburgh) at Coburg. From there I was to write an account of the season at Homburg, ending up with a visit to Heligoland on the tenth anniversary of its cession to Germany.

Preparatory to this journey, a sufficiently surprising one for a depressed barrister of thirty, I was ushered into the long and ornate room on the first floor from which "Alfred" distributed electric sparks over the building. I have still a vivid memory of a young and florid man, seated by his desk at the far window. He swung his chair half round to look at me, screwing up his eyes in a concentrated attempt to discover what sort of person I was. "I do not think I have met Mr. — before," he said to the friend who introduced me. Quite a commonplace remark; but as it was the first of many not so commonplace during my twenty-one years' association with him, I record it.

He was at that time just thirty-five. The *Daily Mail* was four years old, with a circulation of a million and a quarter daily. Owned by half a dozen men, among whom Alfred Harmsworth and his brothers preponderated, it must have been a gold-mine. Politically, I should say, it was at its zenith, vocalizing as it did the imperialism which supported the South African War. Certainly, I could not have chosen a moment for a first meeting with its founder when he was in better health or more prosperous or in such untrammelled possession of those qualities with which his reputation as a journalist will always be connected.

Actually, on that occasion, he struck me as a little

querulous. Another name having been hazarded by one of his staff present, in connexion with the Coburg expedition for which my friend had put me forward, Harmsworth exclaimed pettishly: "For goodness' sake do not let us send a police-court reporter." There followed a warning—very necessary then and since to the correspondent of a paper with so huge a circulation—to get my message on the wire early.

"You are sure to find a whole heap of correspondents there," he said, "all trying to get first."

He spoke irritably. No doubt he had had a heavy day's work, and his words and way of saying them have often recurred to me since as the first direct clue to the intense competitiveness which dominated his nature. Obviously, because men do not make the great commercial success that he did without being intensely competitive. Had I known a little more about the vast changes then pending in the whole mechanism of production, I have no doubt that I should have read into his observation a clue, not alone to his character, but also to his success.

For, like every innovator before him, he made one quite simple discovery which thousands of persons might equally well have made, and with it fortunes, but did not.

What was Lord Northcliffe's "Columbus Egg"? He, and the little knot of men round him who launched the *Daily Mail* in 1896, took into their calculations a fact which had been staring newspaper proprietors in the face for generations. It was simply this, that—

The morning newspaper which does not reach the breakfast-table is born dead.

In the early 'nineties London papers of current date reached spots so little remote as rural Herefordshire at 5 p.m. In Cornwall or Yorkshire or Wales or Scotland you might see one the day after publication. When I was a boy at a school in the Midlands, in the early 'eighties, I have a vague recollection that *The Times* found its way into the town at about an hour before noon. In consequence metropolitan papers had no appreciable circulation outside the Home Counties.

Before I knew newspaper offices, the high noon-tide of excitement on the editorial floors was, I believe, at about 2 a.m. To-day, at that hour, the London papers without exception are speeding to all points of the compass in thundering trains, while solitary gentlemen with sandwiches and thermos flasks are dotted about Fleet Street waiting to deal with later news. Alfred Harmsworth, his brother Harold (now Lord Rothermere), and Kennedy Jones were the pioneers in that form of speeding-up, just as they were the first to establish the simultaneous printing and publication of a London journal in Manchester. To-day that is an old story, how the copy is put on the wire in the Manchester Room in the London Office, and the type set up from these telegrams in Manchester. Twenty-two years ago, when the departure was inaugurated, I recollect as one of my earliest impressions, a few months after joining, the great care taken to make the northern edition a faithful replica of the London one. And in later years, when it was my particular province to keep libels out of the paper, I more than once had quite private pleasurable moments



of my own on discovering, say at midnight, what I was convinced was a libellous paragraph, only to be led to the further reflection that by that time it was printed and published and packed and well on its road to Yorkshire, where, a long and sad public experience has taught me, all the solicitors live.

My next interview with "the Chief" was in September, when I had returned from my special correspondent mission, with more or less measure of success. In addition to the cables which I had sent, from Coburg and elsewhere, I had in my wallet half a dozen articles descriptive of Berlin, Heligoland, and last, but not least, of the Hamburg-American liner *Deutschland*, which was positively the last word in transatlantic luxury and splendour.

These I handed over to the editor in the usual way, and waited eagerly for their appearance in the paper. The paper duly appeared day by day, but they did not; and from my sub-editorial desk, to which I had returned, I looked forlornly on what I regarded as my concluding glimpses of Carmelite House. One evening, on getting to the office, I was told that Mr. Harmsworth desired to see me next day at 3 p.m. I can recall now as I write, almost twenty-two years later, the hours that preceded that fateful interview. Actually it was very many years before I could overcome that first five minutes' shyness in his presence. Perhaps I never did; and I think that a good many others were like myself. The reason was—at least as I read it—not that he was the arbiter of one's destiny in that little world, or had an abrupt way of beginning any conversation, but because fundamentally he was



an intensely shy man himself. The relationship which existed between himself and many men who, as he once described to me, had not had his "luck," embarrassed him. If he seemed harsh in his criticism of their work, it was because he found it harder to realize as he grew older that his own rise from a boyhood as a free-lance reporter could not be successfully emulated by every young man in his employment.

Well, three o'clock arrived. I knocked cautiously at the door of the long room. This time I found Mr. Harmsworth alone and pacing up and down. In his hand was one of my articles. On a small table by the nearer fireplace, the others.

"I have read these," he said abruptly; "the others are not so bad—but this one——" and he brandished it in front of him. It was the *Deutschland* one. He opened it and began reading flowery passages about the night of stars between Cuxhaven, where we embarked in the afternoon, and Southampton, where I at least disembarked next day. Also, I remember, I had given a poetical account of the steerage (as seen from the upper deck), soliloquizing conjecturally on the life that awaited these patient emigrants (Teutons, I regret to say) who were thus starting across the Atlantic. I was rather poetically minded in those days. Alfred Harmsworth went from lucubration to lucubration with rising scorn. Then he folded the document with a snap and said in tones of the most withering contempt—

"Are you aware that the ship has a grill room?"

I observed that I thought I could make the necessary alterations.

“I am sure you can,” he said in his usual swift voice, but with quite an altered demeanour. The dejected atmosphere emanating from his latest recruit had had its immediate, though quite uncalculated, effect. “It’s all right, my boy,” he said, using the familiar shortening of my name which he used thereafter to the end, in writing or speaking to me. “I am sure you can. Take it away and put it right.”

Presently I passed to more congenial work of a kind necessary, as I believe, in all big newspaper offices, and which, I hope, I did with fair success for over twenty years. But I took away two fresh and very definite impressions from the long room downstairs. Newspaper proprietors, in my previous experiences of them from the Temple, were persons who sent you printed notices regretting that they could not ask you to contribute to their columns. Here was one, and the youngest and most successful of them, who seemed quite hungrily anxious to find usable talent in the most obscure and unlikely quarter.

Again, and this is the second impression, or rather the third of those early days, the chief proprietor had a much greater capacity for detail than he imagined. It used to be a favourite saying with him that he only saw the ends that he desired, and the workings to those ends he left to others. I know his earliest sub-editors held no such illusion. With them it was a cardinal belief that “Alfred” knew the name of every sub-editor responsible for every paragraph in the paper, and of every reporter responsible for every story. Just after midnight, when the voucher copies came upstairs from the machines, there ensued for us

the fearsome process of marking in blue pencil on each italic and even two-lined item the name of its author. After that we all went our several roads home in the comfortable faith that before any of us were awake again Alfred would be fully seised of our particular delinquencies. No doubt he was; but I never heard that anything ever came of it. Certainly there were journalistic words and phrases, such as "transpire" or "acting on information received," which he detested. To speak of "the judge" when you meant "Mr. Justice Hawkins," seemed to him to detract from the personal interest in the report of a case.

These were things he watched with lynx eyes long ago, and certainly worried over. His own early journalistic work, as I gather, had been mainly reporting, but he always appeared ready to admit—and did so once in my hearing—that the sub-editor's task was the most difficult and the most thankless, if not the most important, on a paper where condensation was of such supreme importance. The format of the paper and its symmetry were matters to which he and his coadjutors appeared to ascribe supreme importance. At the outset of one of those editorial conferences which he at one time conducted almost daily, and which I certainly attended but seldom, I have heard him say rather wearily: "It was a very long paper to-day." Brevity was in his eyes an essential factor in the production of a successful journal; and the dictum of George Eliot that the art of newspaper writing was to be able to say very little in a very great space would certainly have been received with but small enthusiasm in Carmelite House.



One day, but not yet, the secret of his methods in daily journalism will be analysed by someone qualified, not only perhaps by daily contact with Alfred Harmsworth's work, but also by ability to contrast the Fleet Street which he found in 1896 with the one he left in 1922. There is no pretence here to make any such analysis. These disjointed memories, gathered at any rate before they have faded, are meant as no more than a foot-note to the estimate of a man who in twenty-six years revolutionized journalism in this country.

Having said so much I find it easier to return to the task of cataloguing fragmentary data which impressed me without, perhaps, really disclosing to me their actual significance. I remember wondering where in the world the *Daily Mail* got its readers from. Violently new methods of distribution had tapped new sources of demand. Alfred Harmsworth and his brother and Kennedy Jones brought the London paper to the breakfast-table of their provincial reader. But they did something more. They brought into the circle of daily newspaper readers thousands who hitherto had obtained all their information from Sunday journals. Anyone who recollects those weekly budgets, mainly composed of the previous Monday's news, will appreciate the vital change in the newspaper habits of whole masses of people.

I think it was because Lord Northcliffe realized more vividly than most of the rest of us how large circulations meant all sorts and conditions of readers



that he insisted that his paper should explain itself as it went.

“Maps—maps—maps,” was one of his cries.

He did not believe in writing grandiosely of, let us say, Nijni-Novgorod without showing, even only by a thumb-nail sketch, its relation to the rest of the Russian Empire, and so to the rest of the world. He did not care for jaunty references to so many dollars or reis, without their equivalents in English pounds sterling. He considered that it was the newspaper's business to make things of this sort easy for the busy reader.

Possibly he had learnt this value of simplicity in directing his vast business in periodical publications which he and his brother had built up before their entry into daily journalism. Of that I know nothing at first hand, so will not pretend to say. But I do remember that “fine” or involved writing did not seem to him of any use. I have given some indication of that in connexion with his criticism of my *Deutschland* article. I had also, before entering the *Daily Mail* office, written a very large novel (now out of print, I may add) which contained quite a number of good things. The friend to whom I owe the fact that my journalistic career was not entirely a failure, had placed it in Harmsworth's hands. I am afraid it was too inflated, too long-winded, to commend itself to his practical and busy brain.

“I have tried to read your book,” he said to me reproachfully on the occasion of the *Deutschland* interview; “but I could not get through it. No one in my house could get through it. It led nowhere.”

Writings which led nowhere were not of the kind for which he had any use.

For sarcasm in print he had even less. In his nature he had, like most able people, his full share of that quality. But one of my earliest recollections of him was hearing him inveigh against the use of irony in some piece of editorial comment. "Readers don't understand it," he said; and with Boswellian minuteness the date (the midsummer of 1901) and the place (the drive in front of the small house which he inhabited just before moving into Sutton Place), when and where he said it, come back to the memory.

Paragraphing was regarded in those days as another essential to simplicity. An unbroken column, such as I believe I once saw in a morning paper of 1889, though possibly it may have been split up into two paragraphs, would to-day make every corner of Fleet Street rock to its foundations. And rightly so. How in the world is the newspaper reader in the morning train to keep his, or her, place in spite of constant interruptions, without paragraphs as a signpost? I know not whether that process was among the other innovations at Carmelite House as part of the general scheme of simplicity, but I can well remember that great attention was paid to it.

One does not pretend that this attention to minutiae was, or could be, sustained through the years. There was the *Evening News*, some months older (under the Harmsworth régime) than the *Daily Mail*; and presently the *Weekly Dispatch* arrived to complete the bundle which, with the *Overseas Mail*, now forms the property of the Associated Newspapers Ltd.

The attempt to apply the same microscopic attention to all four productions, to say nothing of the weekly and monthly publications from the Amalgamated Press, was bound to fail. I believe he tried, even after he had become principal proprietor and in political and domestic control of *The Times*. And I think it was those efforts, persisted in to the last, which exhausted his nervous energy and contributed to his death at an age when his friends, who grieve for him, had still hoped there was much work for him to do.

From my own observation I am inclined to give 1903 as the year when there were signs of the relaxing of the personal grip on the details of the paper. I was reporting the Whitaker Wright trial, a most intricate and indeed monotonous proceeding, impossible to explain or make entertaining for the average newspaper reader, in one column or even thirty.

Honestly I doubt whether a score of men in the crowded court, counting the judge (now Lord Mersey) and Rufus Isaacs, Lord Reading and Lawson Walton, found the case in the least degree intelligible. I am very sure that my rendering of it on the first day did not seem so to my proprietor. This he told me bluntly when I chanced, the same afternoon, to meet him on the stairs outside his room. On succeeding days I thought I would get my word in first. "Don't you think it is much clearer to-day?" I asked him directly I saw him. He answered smilingly and impulsively "Yes." After that he was estopped from further criticism; and when at the end of the trial poor Whitaker Wright was sentenced to five years' penal servitude and promptly



swallowed half a packet of cyanide of potassium—events intelligible to the densest and most careless of readers—the story, so far as the *Daily Mail* was concerned, was entrusted to more graphic hands. So all ended well. But I was convinced that my proprietor had read neither the first report which he had criticized, nor the later ones which I had invited him to praise.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            \*

In the summer of 1901 the first Coronation in this country for sixty-five years was taking its place as a topic of first-class newspaper importance. Columns upon columns of what journalists know as a magazine-page type were appearing here, there, and everywhere, upon such somewhat dull subjects as the Coronation chair, the orb, the sceptre, the ceremonial, etc.—all, however, very novel to Edwardian readers. Then, I recall, there was an article to be made out of queer incidents in former Coronations. I sent a suggestion to my editor, and he asked me to jot down the titles of half a dozen articles I proposed.

A few days later, an hour before midnight, Alfred rushed into the library where I was placidly reading my proofs, and asked me if I could be ready to accompany him in an hour's time to spend the next day with him at his home in the country and discuss the Coronation articles. I was living in Gray's Inn, consequently I was back at Carmelite House with my bag, ready and waiting a good fifteen minutes before the motor-car which was to carry us into Surrey was there to start. I had never been in such a conveyance before. Except that I have a faint picture of its



having been very heavy and cumbersome, I have not the least recollection what it looked like.

I know it was big; for in the course of our progress through the darkness of the night I observed that the objection to this novel mode of transit, as it seemed to me, was the danger of collision with another vehicle.

“Collision!—nonsense!” said my companion; “look at our size.”

About 1 a.m. we lost our way and found ourselves purring in a newly-built suburban road somewhere in the neighbourhood of Richmond. It was a cul-de-sac. There seemed no possibility of turning without knocking down at least a couple of the houses. Windows opened, and persons in nightcaps—such was semi-rural England one and twenty years ago!—spoke to us reproachfully. One gentleman, who subsequently became more lucid than the rest, told us how to get to Kingston (or was it Mitcham?), where we found a fountain to which Lord Northcliffe descended in the growing dawn and regaled himself with a copious draught of water. I think that water was likewise administered to the motor-car.

We went on to Woking without further mishap. Were there acetylene headlights even in those days? At any rate, our lights were strong enough to start hares which scuttled in front of us. Our destination was the small home just beyond Sutton Place into which at that time Lord and Lady Northcliffe were just moving. This perfect Elizabethan manor house plays a part in the memories which many of us will cherish of them both. I think its previous possessor had been Mr. Frederic Harrison, most

venerable and not the least wise of English men of letters. At the end of the War Lord Northcliffe sold it to the Duke of Sutherland.

It must have been just after 3 a.m. as we reached the front door, and there was dawn in the sky. We had a drink together in the small drawing-room. My host, in the act of pouring me out a whisky-and-soda, gave me a momentary fit of shivers by saying pleasantly—

“ You look after the fourth-page articles now, don't you? There are one or two points I want to say about them.” Then, in response to a look doubtless of urgent inquiry, he added, “ No, not before bed-time. We will keep business until the morning.”

In the morning, before breakfast, I was wandering along the upper landing when my host called to me through the open door of his dressing-room. He was in his shirt-sleeves and brushing his hair. A copy of that morning's *Daily Mail* lay on an oval table in the centre of the room. He pointed to it with one of his hair-brushes, making some observation about its contents which I cannot remember. I thoughtfully took the opportunity of pointing out that the Taff Vale judgment leader which it contained was from my pen. “ Did you write that? ” he said, “ Very good—very good.” He finished dressing. “ Anyhow,” he wound up, as we went down to the breakfast-room, “ it's a good little paper.”

All very trivial, but the words come back to me as reflecting a time when he still took the business side of newspapers as a much more serious matter than the politics. I can never remember that he ever

seemed violently concerned about domestic politics, at all events before Chamberlain divided the country on the question of Tariff Reform. His single appearance as a parliamentary candidate happened in the days before I knew him. I only have it by hearsay that he had not enjoyed the experience, and had left Portsmouth, where he stood in the Conservative interest, considerably relieved at his lack of success.

After breakfast we walked over to Sutton Place, then in the hands of furnishers and decorators. With great glee he told me from a letter that he was reading that his brother St. John had on the previous day made his first ascent in a balloon. He went on to speak about the fourth-page articles which he had referred to a few hours earlier. He said, among other things, "I consider that a man who has written half a dozen signed articles for that column has his bread-and-butter assured in journalism."

\* \* \* \* \*

Another impression of those early days was the extraordinary lavishness with which everything was done. No expense seemed to be spared in the production of the paper. Special correspondents were despatched hither and thither at a moment's notice. A whole staff of brilliant war correspondents, including George Steevens, Charles Hands, Edgar Wallace and at least four others who, like Julian Ralph, flit through one's memory, were cabling almost daily from South Africa. I have a vague recollection of a devastating earthquake at Martinique, and of a cabled account, not making more than a



column, which cost a thousand pounds. I am making no reference to the *Daily Mail* to-day, which still considers no price too high to get the best for its readers. That was, after all, the lesson which it learnt from its founder. It revealed what a great showman he was. I use the word in no invidious sense. Our proprietor's generosity was no calculated matter. In his private life, as all of us had ample opportunities of discovering, it was part of himself. In his business, and it is of that side I desire to speak first, it was equally part of himself. Certain business sides of his character seemed to be just instincts with him.

One incident illustrative of his forethought here occurs to my mind. On the morning (I think it was about noon) that London was startled by the news of King Edward's sudden illness, and the consequent postponement of the Coronation, I happened to be in the office, though mine were night hours. Kennedy Jones descended from his room to the news desk. Everyone was impressed for the task of news-gathering in connexion with the momentous affair. I know my duty was to scour London and not return without some leading surgeon, who would be willing to read everything that we printed relative to the Royal illness and operation, and see that the information we gave our readers was correct.

Incidentally, it seemed to me a tall order, and one which might take time and cost money to fulfil. I think I said so. "If ——— wants some money, he is to have it," was the swift order from the desk. Presently I found myself with five pounds in my



pocket for cab fares, careering round London in a succession of the smartest hansoms. And I had to career. One eminent surgeon after another was good enough to give me explanations of the ailment, but it was not until I had made three journeys to the house of a big man in Wimpole Street that I prevailed upon him to come down to the office that night for the purpose mentioned. He was at the top of his profession; actually I believe a specialist in abdominal operations of the kind just undergone by the King. Very properly he charged specialist fees for visiting Carmelite House for an hour a night for six nights, in order to read about half a dozen lines. He was a most charming and delightful man, whose untimely death a few years later must have been a great loss to surgery.

Naturally Lord Northcliffe had peevish and petulant moments—who has not?—when he said things which might have conveyed a totally different impression of his views with regard to making his papers the best possible. “Expense—expense—expense,” I heard him say irritably at Sutton Place on one occasion; “I don’t wonder that proprietors end up in mad-houses.” Another time there arose the question of the cost of some improvement—I believe it had to do with the paper’s weather forecasts, but I cannot remember. It was at an editorial conference in the long room. When he heard the price, ninety pounds, he remarked in his swift, rather complaining way: “Ninety pounds! We shall all be ruined.”

In the early ’nineties his town house was on the west side of Berkeley Square, a narrow-fronted, white

building in the Gothic style, next door to the big red house belonging to Lord Rosebery. With the Liberal statesman he was on terms of closer friendship than he has ever been with any public man before or since. It was, I think, the intervention of Lord Rosebery which ended the somewhat acute competition that nearly provided London with its morning papers seven days a week.

From Berkeley Square he moved to the house in St. James's Place once inhabited by the Poet-Banker, Samuel Rogers. The dining-room in which the latter gave his famous literary breakfasts retained an old-world atmosphere, which, on the only occasion in which I was in it, seemed to afford my host considerable pleasure. It was at lunch there in the February of 1908, the year in which he acquired a controlling interest in *The Times*. He was in high good humour in those days; and I can remember that he called me up on the telephone, in the course of the previous evening while I was at my work, to remind me of my next day's engagement. "I have got all the things in for to-morrow," he said.

His last house in London was in Carlton Gardens, where he died. The house in the country which he loved best was Elmwood, St. Peter's, Thanet, concerning which so much has been written recently. I visited it for the first and last time when I went to say good-bye to him in June 1921.

The house in which his staff saw him at his happiest was Sutton Place. Here Lady Northcliffe and he gathered round them the men and women who earned their livelihood in the enterprises created by his

genius. Guests of other days may well be thinking now of summer afternoons in that Elizabethan house and gracious old-world garden, and of the sincere and unaffected welcome which met them at the threshold from host and hostess. Even yet I can see the Chief standing at the doorway welcoming his friends, beaming like a great happy schoolboy.

One public function at which Lord Northcliffe presided is never likely to be effaced from my memory. It was a public luncheon only in name, short and of Spartan simplicity. The real object of the gathering was that the Chief might speak to his newspaper staffs at the most critical period of its history Carmelite House is ever likely to experience. A few weeks earlier had appeared the sensational attack in connection with the supply of shells. The rights and wrongs of that episode I do not propose to discuss here. Most people are agreed to-day that the paper had one motive alone, what it believed to be the true interest of the country.

Be that as it may, Lord Northcliffe, in publishing the attack almost exactly as he had written it, knowingly risked the destruction of everything he had built up in his business career. We inside knew so much, and he knew it better than any of us. I remember at the time travelling down the line from the Great Central Station at Marylebone, and back again in the evening. It was dreadful to see the untouched stacks of the paper upon the bookstalls. During that depressing time the unruffled calmness of the editor was an inspiration and a tower of strength



to us weaker brethren, as it must have been to his chief proprietor.

It was at this luncheon to which I refer that most of us heard the only reference to the affair ever made publicly by Lord Northcliffe. He stood up to it like a man, and a very big one at that. There was nothing defiant about him, indeed I never remember his manner more thoughtful or subdued. It may be said, incidentally, in connexion with his life of crusade, that he was absolutely outspoken and serious. He himself never realized how unpleasant the effect was. He was impulsive. Nor does great commercial success, especially when it comes early in life, tend to make such men guarded in their utterances. He said many things which he may not have poignantly regretted, but which he certainly forgot. And though he was at times retentive of what he considered an injury, and at times also could be eerily sardonic, I do not believe that his nature contained a single grain of genuine malice.

In all that concerned the mechanical side he was, in those early days, just as avid of detail as in supervising the editorial. One of my earliest recollections was of one very early May morning. Actually the time was about 3 a.m. The paper had "gone to bed," and Carmelite House was rocking with its nightly roar of printing presses. I was still at my desk in the library, busy on an article which was wanted in a hurry. The door opened. Lord Northcliffe stood looking at me from the threshold. He had driven up from Dover in his car; still, indeed,



was wearing his motor-coat and cap, and had in his hand a pair of goggles.

I asked him if I could get him anything.

“I want to know,” he said testily, “who is in charge of this paper when everyone else has gone home? What would you do if the King died?”

My answer scarcely convinced him. But his entry had been noted and reported. A young fellow, who has since risen to a very high position on the staff, entered opportunely. I was thankful to say that he very speedily carried the Chief off to more practical parts of the building than the library at that hour, and satisfied him that the *Daily Mail* was ready for all emergencies.

Lord Northcliffe believed wholly in the efficacy of bedtime, early in and early out, for the refreshment of his weary nerves and brain. He retired to rest at nine o'clock, nor did I ever hear him say that he suffered from insomnia. On the contrary, he told me—and that was within fifteen months of his death—that he was fast asleep by ten o'clock. He was an early riser. By six o'clock he was up and immersed in the morning papers, his own included. In summer-time he would do this, the most serious work of the whole day, in the open air. The last reference he made to that daily task was once this May (1922), when he told us that he had been that morning out on his lawn at Elmwood at six o'clock, doing his work amidst the sunshine and the singing of birds.

Certainly, too, he was a believer in the efficacy of the telephone. In his room at *The Times* he had a compact little hand-receiver, hanging on the side of

the mantelpiece, and within easy reach of the elbow of his chair. This implement followed him about wherever he went. It always looked to me like a highly polished dental forceps. Telephone talking to most people is a matter of crouching over a table, and hateful at that. Not so to him. To see him leaning back comfortably in his arm-chair, holding the tiny machine simultaneously to ear and mouth as easily as a child holds a sea-shell to his ear, was to realize that telephone talking could be exalted to the acme of comfort, and to understand why he did it so much. Those with whom he spoke daily, and nightly until he went to bed, had to be quick listeners and swift with their answers. He himself spoke rapidly, but by no means indistinctly. What information he sought, he expected very much by return of telephone. If one hesitated or fumbled it was difficult to get the conversation back into its quiet course, consequently it sometimes broke off abruptly. Though I cannot speak from experience, yet I believe that in his eager, impulsive way he would call up his principal colleagues at 6 and 7 a.m. with some suggestion for the day's work, and this indifferently in every branch of his multitudinous activities. His explosions, too, came via the telephone, with all the suddenness of summer lightning. And with equal suddenness they disappeared.

I had one experience, one only, and quite enough. I was sitting in my dressing-gown in my room off Oxford Circus at 8 a.m. (I had not got to bed until one that morning), and I fancy that I was thinking of a pleasant old age in a white cottage on the southern

slopes of Lake Garda. Suddenly the telephone bell rang at my right hand, as it seemed to me more imperiously than usual. The voice of the female telephone operator asked if I belonged to my number, then, getting an affirmative reply, said, "Don't go away." There followed, on top of a few seconds' silence, a rush of words from the Chief, recounting some sin of omission or commission on my part, already six months old and by me forgotten. I think he had only just heard of it. Very obviously the matter had preyed on his mind. He ended: "Never you do that again. You know that I am devoted to you; but if you do such a silly thing again, out you go." What could I answer? I might have assumed a tone of great dignity, said coldly, "I'll go at once, thank you, just as I am in my dressing-gown," and rung him off. Well, I do not find men so ready to fight with their bread-and-butter. Instead, I pointed out that the "break" in question was in the course of doing work for a sick colleague—work of a kind for which I was singularly unfitted by my temperament. I ceased. There was an interval of silence. Then the voice resumed in placated tones. "That's all right, my boy, don't worry about it. You did your best."

Whatever prejudices the strain and grief of the War may have brought into his brain, as it did into the brain of thousands of his fellow-countrymen, he was fundamentally a man singularly without racial prejudices. One night, in the long ago, he sat talking in the library with one of his leader writers who was expressing some sentiments of a distinctly anti-semitic nature. "That may be," said the Chief;



“but I do not think that an employer should differentiate against a man because he is a Jew.” He was one of the few Christians who recognized that there were good Jews and bad ones, just as there were good and bad Christians. At one of the Sutton Place gatherings, where lunch was usually taken at a number of round tables, each containing half a dozen guests, he looked up from where he was sitting to a table across the room where was seated a favourite member of his staff who had, at that time, been with him about half a dozen years. At the same further table was seated a Colonial bishop. “Isn’t X.” (the employee referred to) “like the Bishop?” Alfred said suddenly to the guest seated next to himself. Then he added: “Do you know, X. is the noblest Jew I have ever had in my employment.”

Printed matter was the deadly serious business of his life, and seemed (from my point of observation) to monopolize the whole of it. I believe he loved music, played the piano and had composed, but I never heard him speak about a concert, or an opera, or even a non-musical play. He never went to dances, and very rarely to banquets, except those with which he was intimately connected.

During the latter part of his life he was naturally too busy for relaxations of this kind; while his failing health made it imperative that he should avoid much speaking in public or being out in the night air. What to non-golfers seems the craze of that pointless-looking game had bitten him badly.

The last afternoon I was with him we drove over to Sandwich, where he alighted, while another guest



and I spent the afternoon driving deeper into Kent. When we picked up the golfing party three hours later, it was quite a different host who rejoined us. He was cheerful and talkative, as previously he had been silent and depressed. He loved society, above all the society of the young. A kinder or more understanding man with children I had never met. At the last private meal I took with him, the only other person present was a little boy of about thirteen, who, as the Chief was careful to explain to me beforehand, was delicate, and therefore so far had not been able to go to boarding school. They were perfect friends, with the ease of real friendship. Once in the course of the meal Alfred said rather severely, "Don't eat so fast, my boy." I have a recollection that the little lad serenely altered his speed, and went on with a long account of a fishing expedition with which he was entertaining us.

There was a large melon on the table which remained untouched. And this, and a couple of boxes of honey, were by my host's directions packed securely in a parcel for me to take off with me by the afternoon train. And laden in this way I staggered from Charing Cross to Oxford Street. On starting out from Elmwood, clasping this heavy package, I hinted that it might look funny carrying food through London. "What nonsense!" he said. "Who will know that it is food? And what does it matter if anyone does?" That brought to my mind one of his prejudices, the only one that I can remember. He could not bear to see City men rushing to catch their trains, carrying fish or game in wicker bags from the

fishmonger. Why this harmless, indeed meritorious, domestic spectacle exacerbated him I never knew. But he thought it vulgar.

\* \* \* \* \*

With Lord Northcliffe, during the twenty-two years I knew him, there was never any marking time. If he believed in the element of surprise in his newspapers, he certainly practised it in all his dealings with his fellow-workers. Events followed one another with startling rapidity. You could rarely go down to your job in the evening without finding something new on hand, whether it was an Aviation Prize running into thousands, or a journey which would remove the Chief from his business for months at a time, or extra newspaper trains to the furthest ends of Britain, or some commemorative festival. All these things came upon us with such suddenness, that we were disposed not to realize that they were usually the subject of much forethought and preparation. Of the Chief's tour round the world, which started on July 16, 1921, many of us knew nothing until 7 p.m. on the previous evening.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the main I always suspect that the personality of politicians appealed to him most as subjects of interest for the readers of his papers. In early days I used to take a hand at those little biographical sketches of public men which were and are prominent features of the daily Press. One day, in speaking about this work, the Chief said: "I imagine you have not actually seen most of these people." The outcome was that I spent six months in the Press

Gallery of the House of Commons. The South African War was nearing its end. Other figures filled the parliamentary stage, though two at least remain. But my memory of these latter is not likely to be more vivid than that of those who have altogether departed. To me they seemed, even in their lives, beings of another world.

\* \* \* \* \*

If Lord Northcliffe had ever looked upon politicians with similar eyes, I fancy that a nearer acquaintance convinced him that they did not differ materially from ordinary mortals. Of his relations with them, or any of them, I am not in a position to write, nor shall I make the attempt. I have heard that they found him changeable. But I am content that they could never fairly have called him disloyal. In the course of his fighting life, he stirred up many a hornets' nest. He faced all that came to him as the result of such adventures, and never shirked responsibility or tried to shift it.

Though in small things sometimes irritable and seemingly apprehensive, he was fundamentally a courageous man. In one crisis of his life, to which allusion has been made already, he risked the whole commercial edifice which he had built up. Never shall I forget the fleeting glimpse I caught of him in the Strand, many summers earlier, in the midst of another crisis to which a reference has also been made. He was suffering from eye trouble, and was wearing blue-tinted glasses, which added to the memorableness of his appearance, so far as I was concerned. Indeed, he had only returned to England overnight



from a visit to an oculist abroad. The sight of him sitting square-shouldered in his car going eastward, his chin set and determined, left the impression on my mind of a man who had braced himself up to take the rough with the smooth, as he did to the end. And the picture I had of him then will remain ineffaceable in my mind.

If then, according to this view of him, he made no direct mark in the domestic political life of his time, his indirect effect upon it may prove to have been very great. By his own personal career he raised the status of the working journalist; and though it may be many years hence before another little free-lance reporter achieves through the practice of his first and only profession a world-wide importance, yet at least Lord Northcliffe has shown that the thing can be done.

In the many notices of his life occasioned by his lamented death I do not remember one which laid stress upon the significant fact that he, almost alone of the men who became prominent newspaper proprietors in England during the last decade, was a working journalist on other men's journals. The last time I saw him alive, or heard him speak, he referred to the days when he used to scurry to and fro between one London doorstep and another in the performance of reporting assignments which brought in a few shillings.

Those far-away days he never forgot, nor the youthful members of his staff engaged from time to time upon that kind of work. He held that the profession to which we all belonged was the finest in the world.



One of my earliest recollections of him was his insistence that the traditional Bohemianism, either in behaviour or appearance, which one connects with Captain Costigan or George Warrington, was neither a necessary nor an admirable concomitant of the craft to-day. The journalist is the servant of the paper and of the public (how useful and important a servant the latter perhaps never knows). And in the performance of that service, he or she is entitled to go through life with an independent demeanour and a befitting pride.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lord Northcliffe's journalistic campaigns were many, and they ranged from the infinitely big to what might seem the infinitely little. I have seen him as excited and anxious over the future of standard bread as when between 1914 and 1918 he was fighting for some vital change, on which he believed that the existence of the Empire depended. Perhaps he would not have allowed that any of his Press campaigns concerned themselves with trifles, least of all the campaign over standard bread. I can hear his eager voice now in remonstrance against such a suggestion, and I can imagine what he would have said. All his enthusiasms were at white-heat. He painted with a big brush, and used plenty of paint and vivid colours. He aimed at definite and clear-cut effects, and he knew that these were the only means by which he could obtain what he desired.

His interest in international politics was deep and very real; many years before 1914, it is safe to say, it dominated his life.

The beginnings one saw in those numerous journeys

to France and the United States which he took under doctor's orders to escape the English winter. During my first year on the paper, I remember, he went off to Florida to fish for tarpon—an animal which, I am free to confess, I had never heard of before, in spite of a good education. The Riviera he had known, year in, year out, from the days of his first success. Long ago, while such modes of travel were still uncommon, one heard of him traversing by motor-car the roads between Calais and Avignon and the South. He went back again and again. His correspondents in other countries of the continent found it not easy to divert him elsewhere.

Perhaps there was something in the swift Gallic nature akin to his own. He understood France and he understood the United States as few other Englishmen; but it was France and the United States under certain very different aspects. The trend of positive and unsentimental thought in either country found in him a kindred nature which spoke the same language. He knew that to such a Frenchman and to such an American, his own country in each case came first.

To himself Britain came first always and all the time. But he believed that the great Western Democracies were the natural allies in a world where the domination of Prussia threatened not remotely the ultimate subjugation of everyone else. It was easy to believe that in 1914. But the faith was less inevitable ten years earlier; and the little group of public men, of which Lord Northcliffe easily qualified as the most insistent, calling upon their countrymen to be prepared, were considered very tedious.

To be considered tedious is surely not the ambition of a practical newspaper proprietor. But someone far more competent than I, someone who was in Lord Northcliffe's confidence during those years of stress and storm, will bear witness how in pursuing public ends he threw to the winds all the tenets of self-preservation which he had learnt during his commercial life. No one will pretend that conscription is a popular kind of measure to ram daily down the throats, so to speak, of the very classes that will bear the brunt of it. Yet he never faltered in his advocacy of it, because he believed—and rightly, as events showed—that by that road alone lay any chance of survival for the British Empire.

Nor was it a pleasant or lucrative course to advocate the war-time cessation of racing; or, in the early days, to throw cold water on soothing prophecies. None of the great London dailies hesitated to do either. To the Press of the country the verdict of history must, DORA notwithstanding, assign a great part in the final victory of the Allies, not less great a part than was won by the United States Press in the 'sixties in the final victory for the Union.

Certainly, Lord Northcliffe's large public would have liked comforting assurances during those early years of anxiety and gloom. He knew too much to give them anything of the kind. It is on this fearless truthfulness that his chief claims to greatness will depend.

Towards the end of the War his native optimism could reassert itself. The mission to the United States, which entailed absence from his newspapers for

lengthy periods, was definite constructive work. I believe he did it well. We have the tribute of our former foes to the effectiveness of his efforts as director of propaganda in enemy countries. But after all these were services which any other level-headed business man, with his special training, could have done equally well.

If Britain one day raises a statue to his memory, as I believe she will, the commemorating words need be no more profuse than that he faced obloquy and personal ruin (the latter to him not a little thing), even personal disgrace, that his countrymen should see the facts by which alone they could be saved. What journalist can win nobler testimony; or, in winning such, may be denied the title of "a great citizen"?



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MAN BEHIND THE NEWSPAPER

IN the year 1904 Mr. Balfour advised the King to make Alfred Harmsworth a baronet, and in the year 1906 he was created a peer. The justice of these distinctions was universally recognized. The *Daily Mail* and *Evening News* had, indeed, rendered sterling services to the Government and the nation. To-day we may fitly remember that among them unquestionably was their true understanding of Germany and her aims.

It was a period, perhaps, when Lord Northcliffe's activities were at their zenith, though it would be difficult to say that the years abated them.

Few can imagine the enormous energy, the ceaseless movement, the ever-vigilant thought bestowed upon those various enterprises by him who inspired them. When upon one occasion I asked Lord Northcliffe what was the secret of his success he reminded me of the Yorkshireman who had invented a machine of value. "I thochit of nothing else," said the man.

The merely superficial observer might have said that Lord Northcliffe thought of nothing but his newspapers. As a matter of fact, he thought of many other things between the years 1900 and 1913. His activities and his recreations were never stereo-

typed, but they fell broadly upon certain lines. The month of January he often spent in his villa at Beaulieu after a brief stay at the Ritz Hotel in Paris. His love for the French and their city has ever been characteristic of him. Since his first visit as a boy, no continental journey ever found him very long away from the Place Vendôme. There he would halt upon his way to the Riviera, and thither he would repair upon his return journey to London. But even in Paris, the bag of which his revered mother spoke could never remain long unpacked. The morning infallibly would come when his valet would carry to the sleeping guest the astonishing news that they were leaving for Pau, or Biarritz, or Le Touquet—it might be in half an hour's time. The great car would come to the door, the luggage be hurled in, and the half-shaved and sleepy victim carried upon some tremendous journey, he knew not whither.

If these were strenuous hours, there were compensations in England. Berkeley Square had then become the London centre of Lady Northcliffe's hospitalities. She shared with her husband the desire to know and understand really able people. Brains were the surest passport to her rare parties. But accomplishment, I may hasten to add, did not go without its reward. The great singers of the day were all glad to sing at Berkeley Square. Jean de Reszke, Madame Melba, Plançon—one heard them all in the little house; while Paderewski was ever at home there, and understood the genius of his host and hostess as few who visited them. There also came most of the distinguished Americans who visited

London at that time; and there was matured that friendship of Lord and Lady Northcliffe with that great patriot and soldier, Lord Roberts, who did so much for England.

This very restricted social round abated nothing of Lord Northcliffe's activities in the conduct of his immense business. He had begun the habit of waking very early in the morning and looking over the first editions of the *Daily Mail*; and then, when that was done, of marking critically the other publications of the day. Coffee would be brought to him as early as half-past six, and by nine o'clock he would have done any ordinary man's work for the day. Breakfast over, he went to one of his several offices, to his famous room in Tudor Street, to his equally splendid sanctum at Carmelite House. There the swarm of clever young men who edited his newspaper were admitted one by one to hear a word of warm praise, or a very blunt statement of failure. New schemes would be considered; a hundred absurdities rejected, a swift survey taken of all that was happening in that vast hive. Then there would be the rapid return to Berkeley Square for lunch; the afternoon expedition in the car; a restful dinner with one or two chosen friends, and a very early retirement for at least the eight hours' rest which labour ever claims.

This programme sufficed for the early months of the year. In the spring possibly Lord Northcliffe would make a hurried journey to America. He crossed the Atlantic perhaps more frequently than most Englishmen, and he certainly knew as much

of the mentality of the United States as many. It was an early ambition of his to study that vast continent, its men and its methods, with a thoroughness habitual to him. Some of his most delightful holidays were in Florida, where he fished for tarpon in the Gulf of Mexico and enjoyed several adventures which narrowly escaped terminating in tragedy. Once he was quite some ten miles from shore in a crazy boat when a hurricane arose. He reached harbour almost by a miracle.

In America, Lord Northcliffe became intimate with Mr. Roosevelt and, as might have been expected, the pair understood each other perfectly. Both were animated by an ardent sense of patriotism and both possessed of the long view which discerns the loom of events. Edison also was a subject of great interest to the traveller, and was frequently visited by him. In America Lord Northcliffe heard first of what the Wright Brothers were doing with the aeroplane, and consequently when they came to Europe in the year 1906 he was quite prepared for the achievement of the brothers.

I remember meeting him upon his return from Pau in that year, and being told of all that had happened. The aeroplane which the Wrights flew was pulled off the ground by a weight attached to a rope, and upon this rope there pulled Lord Northcliffe, Mr. Balfour, and other distinguished public men.

When he came back to London, Lord Northcliffe knew that the problem of flight had at length been solved. He offered ten thousand pounds for a mechanical flight from London to Manchester in twenty-four



hours with not more than two stops; and this he followed by offering a prize of one thousand pounds for the first flight across the Channel. As he himself said, the British Government at that date regarded aviation as a silly fad of the *Daily Mail*. The attitude of contemporaries is best illustrated by a derisive offer of a London newspaper to pay ten million pounds for a flight of ten miles by mechanical power. But on July 25th, 1909, M. Blériot crossed the Channel in an aeroplane in thirty-seven minutes, thus winning the thousand-pound prize, and on April 28th, 1910, the impossible was achieved, and the ten thousand pound prize was won by M. Paulhan.

The possibility of these achievements had been first learned in America, as I have said, but much had been essayed in the knowledge. Few of us have ever understood the American people as Lord Northcliffe did—with the possible exception of Lord Bryce and Lord Reading. Very early in his story he perceived that all the talk about the Motherland was so much self-deception. Until the time of the Spanish War, we were in much disfavour over yonder. Deep down, undoubtedly, there was a sentiment which opportunity could re-awaken; but it was dormant then and almost forgotten.

A great heterogeneous nation, in which the old American stock was but a minority, cared little for what was doing in England, and rarely troubled to think about it. The young men who were sent to Canada at that time were no advertisement for us. The decadents of ancient families, the failures from middle-class homes, the workmen who had no skill—

these were but a poor contribution to the wealth of our great sister nation. Yet, for all that, Lord Northcliffe never would admit that the fundamental characteristic of the British people had changed, nor that we were other than the men our forefathers had been. He understood from the beginning in what America excelled and where our own supremacy lay, and he strove unflinchingly to cultivate that right understanding between the two peoples which bore such splendid fruit later on.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was good shooting at Sutton Place, but Lord Northcliffe cared little about it; he lacked the love of mere slaughter, and found in fishing his real recreation. It is true to say that he fished all over the world, but in Scotland were the best-beloved waters. "Are you surprised," he once said to me, "that rich people make a playground of this wonderful country? In Scotland there is everything a man should seek, the finest sport, glorious country, excellent food"—it was before the War—"and a really splendid people. And upon the other side of the border are the simple English waiting to be devoured." The argument sent him to Stanley Pools often; but he fished most of the Scottish waters, while in England he always chose delightful rivers and scenes which are memorable.

It was while he was upon one of these fishing expeditions that he met the Kaiser at Dalmeny. His summing up of that arch-priest of infamy was memorable. Lord Rosebery and he agreed that the Emperor of all the Germans was in a sense a windbag,

but they did not fail to perceive how dangerous these windy properties might be. One story of this visit has always remained in my mind. It illustrates so well the Scottish independence of character and the absolute aloofness from snobbishness of the Scottish mind.

On the day the Kaiser was to arrive, Lord Rosebery went out into the grounds of Dalmeny to see that all was prepared for the august visit. He discovered a very old gardener digging up a flower-bed and spitting occasionally upon his hands to ameliorate the labour. The following conversation ensued :—

“ Well, Donald, you know that the Kaiser is coming to-day ? ”

“ Ay, I’ve heard about it.”

“ Some of them, Donald, are going down to the quay to welcome him. Wouldn’t you like to go ? ”

The old man thrust his spade into the ground and thought about it.

“ Ah weel, Rosebery,” he said presently, “ there’s many of us don’t think much of him hereabouts.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The fishing holiday always found Lord Northcliffe at his best. He would climb to the driver’s seat of his car and seem to throw all care from him as he did so. The late Mr. Kennedy Jones’ motto, “ Nothing really matters,” became his at that moment. His man had gone on ahead with rods and lines and baggage, and the freedom of the high road was his. He was, as I have said, a veritable gypsy of the high road. He loved to get down in some ancient village and to ramble. He would engage in conversation



with the humblest people and always leave them happier. Once upon a wide heath he met a white-haired old gypsy lady and had a talk with her.

“ Well, mother, and what are you doing to-day ? ”

“ I’m selling matches and boot-laces, sir. If I can get a little bit of money, I can keep myself out of the ‘ house ’ all the summer.”

“ Then you go into the workhouse in the winter ? ”

“ Indeed, and I have to, sir.”

“ Well, here’s something to keep you out a little bit longer.”

A number of gold coins were thrust into her palm. She had no words to express her thoughts, but staggering and half running, she fled from us. Perhaps she believed that, even at the last moment, the treasure would be taken from her. And I have always wondered what she did with her gold.

\* \* \* \* \*

If Scotland ever stood high in Lord Northcliffe’s affections, her humorists never failed to appeal to him. Rarely did he drive down from Edinburgh to Carlisle or York without reminding the passenger beside him of the great doctor’s response when asked what was the best prospect in Scotland. “ The best prospect in Scotland is the high road to England ”—and it has been taken by many young Scotsmen upon their way to Carmelite House. His own private golf professional—Thomson of North Berwick—is full of wise saws and of golf stories which are endless. On one occasion he advised Lord Northcliffe, who had met a fat antagonist, to hurry him up the hills. “ He will no stand the strain,” Thomson would



say, "and you will have him beat at the half-way house." "That's a bad lie," said a player at Loughness to a London visitor, whose ball he found in the heather. "Ay," said the caddy, "but it's no so bad as it waur"—thus implying that he had given it a kick when nobody was looking.

\* \* \* \* \*

All these stories were well remembered by Lord Northcliffe afterwards, though there was a time when they would have meant nothing to him. He got far too little exercise in the old motoring days, and his health began to suffer under the strain. The ceaseless journeys in the great cars would have worn out most men, and in the long run I think they made some impression even upon his amazing vitality. Many of his intimate friends perceived this about the year 1909, and when a year later he determined to take a three-months' golfing holiday in Scotland, the news was very welcome.

Thomson is a masterly teacher with a few maxims which all might remember. "Let the lady go in first," he will say; indicating that you must not get your hands before the club. Or "Keep your handkerchief in your pocket"; to impress upon the beginner the necessity of controlling his arms. He does not say "Follow through" but "Follow up," thus using the old Scotch term which has so much meaning. Certainly he improved Lord Northcliffe and taught him with incredible speed. Even on his very first golfing holiday in Scotland, when he had been but a few weeks at the game, he managed to play a creditable part in certain most interesting

matches there, and was one of Lord Wemyss' party, when the Duke of Connaught was about to go to Canada. In a famous match played by the Duke and Lord Northcliffe against a Scottish pair, the Scottish caddy, as usual, proved himself no respecter of persons. At one of the holes somebody asked him where his ball was. "Yon man's got it," said the caddy, almost digging the Duke in the ribs.

These, of course, were later days. In the old days before golf had become a necessity, fishing was the chief exercise and the car the stable recreation. Wherever he was, however, Lord Northcliffe invariably made time to return to Elmwood for a few weeks during the autumn—at least during those years when the late Father Dolling was there. Between the two a warm friendship existed. They had met at Portsmouth in the year 1895, when Alfred Harmsworth was the Conservative candidate and Father Dolling the Rector of St. Agatha's, Portsmouth, that church in the slums where so fine a work of charity was accomplished.

To some it may have seemed remarkable that the founder and genius of the greatest newspaper business in the world should so esteem the society of the simple parish priest who worked in the slums of Portsmouth and was anathema to his Bishop. But the truth is that there had ever been a bias towards the High Church party in the Church of England. As a boy, Alfred Harmsworth went regularly to the Church of St. Augustine at Kilburn, built by the late Richard Kirkpatrick and famous as perhaps the finest edifice in the Perpendicular style built in London since the

Reformation. Here upon one occasion we both heard when quite small boys a sermon preached by the late Arthur Stanton of St. Albans, Holborn, and thirty years after Lord Northcliffe could tell me the text.

These incidents in his youth no doubt accounted for Lord Northcliffe's instant appreciation of Father Dolling's devotion. I met Father Dolling at Elmwood on many occasions, and could quite understand my host's affection for him. He was a man entirely without any axe to grind. If he asked for ten pounds for his poor, the giver was quite sure that the money would reach its destination. His own house was rarely his own. Every day he and his sister sat down to a dinner to which figuratively all the world might come. The meanest tramp in the filthiest rags passing that door could enter in, sit down with the Father, and enjoy a substantial meal. Not only this, but the Priest's love of little children was always a touching and beautiful thing. He made friends with them instantly. The most timid baby would come to him without protest. Amid a hundred good works done by Dolling, that for the young people of his parish certainly was not the least meritorious, as it was the most regretted upon his departure.

To the lay mind, it is inconceivable that a man who is working in the profundities of a slum, who has no thought but the welfare of the poor, should be turned out bag and baggage for the sake of a wooden table or a lighted candle thereon. Father Dolling, however, came to loggerheads with his Bishop, and being a devout Catholic in opposition to Scotch



tenacity, he was driven from his parish. He came to London to a church in Poplar, and there his friendship with Lord Northcliffe continued. A Boys' Camp was founded by Lord Northcliffe upon the cliffs by the North Foreland, and he asked for Father Dolling to supervise it. There every year, some hundreds of youngsters lived in tents and breathed that glorious air. We can imagine what this meant to the children of the city, some of whom had never seen a green field in all their lives. The youngsters were upon the sands or in the sea the best part of the day. But in the afternoon there were games and races, and these very frequently would be witnessed by Lord Northcliffe and his guests. If not the beginning of the great charity of Boys' Camps throughout the country, these ventures were at least the work of early pioneers, and as a form of practical charity, I do not imagine that they can be bettered.

Lord Northcliffe's year would end at Christmas often with a great family party in the olden style. Now all the brothers and sisters came together under the roof of a revered mother, and there for a few days lived again in that intimate association of the ancient home. It would ever be a fitting termination of months of strenuous labour and of a steady advance towards the goal of that ambition which even yet may not have been wholly achieved.



## CHAPTER IX

### NEWFOUNDLAND

LET us here remember that the prosperity of a newspaper or a periodical does not wholly depend upon either its matter or its manner. Early in the story of their fortunes the brothers perceived the true meaning of material things. No gifted young editors, no swift distribution, no bold advertisement would help them if material were lacking. Just as the Governor of the Castle had a hundred reasons for not firing off his cannon, the first being that he had no powder and the rest being excused him; so we may say of newspapers that the very first condition of their success is the due supply of that raw material without which they are not.

Lord Northcliffe and Lord Rothermere understood almost from the beginning what the paper question would become in this country as time went on; and what it would mean to their undertakings. Everywhere the transatlantic forests were being devoured by rapacious adventurers who knew nothing of and cared little for afforestation. Scandinavia was well enough; but the supplies of paper from Scandinavia might fail or war might come—as it did come. Lord Northcliffe's travels in Canada had shown him the condition of the paper industry in that country;

and slowly the conviction came to him and to Lord Rothermere that they must fend for themselves, and that so great an industry must not be at the mercy of paper-makers, who might menace its very existence.

The resolution to embark upon the manufacture of pulp being taken, the brothers set about it with their usual thoroughness. As all the world now knows, the paper upon which our modern journal is printed is manufactured from the wood of certain types of spruce which abound in Canada, in Scandinavia, and once was plentiful in the United States. The trees are cut down and chopped into logs; then rolled in powerful machines and reduced to the consistency of porridge. Water-power is vital to this enterprise, and without water-power the finest forest is valueless to the manufacturer. In Canada, unfortunately, this deficiency is relatively common, and whole tracts of desirable country are thus ruled out by nature. Of all this Lord Rothermere made the closest study when he determined to embark in the paper industry. He sent shrewd travellers near and far. Many sites in Canada were investigated and rejected. The United States themselves were obviously impossible for British enterprise and could not be considered. Finally there came the day when Sir Mayson Beeton, visiting Newfoundland upon the quest of the caribou, sent back to London a stirring account of its arboreal endowments, and thus incited Lord Rothermere and Lord Northcliffe to visit it.

Newfoundland, as any history shows us, is our senior colony, antedating in discovery any other British Dominion. It was first discovered by John

Cabot, who sailed from Bristol in the year 1497, landed at Bonavista and claimed the whole country for Henry VII. From the first our fishermen were quick to apprehend the richness of these North American waters and to frequent them. In the middle of the sixteenth century our piscatorial commerce with Newfoundland was both extensive and lucrative. We appear to have had no fewer than 400 vessels regularly fishing in Newfoundland waters in the year 1578; and the importance of the country now being realized, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, provided with letters patent from Queen Elizabeth, sailed for St. John's in the autumn of the year 1583 and took possession of the country in the Queen's name. Its colonization, we may know, was remarkably slow. There were very few settlers, and even in the year 1650 Newfoundland had but three hundred and fifty families, mostly of West Country origin. These, as a writer has pointed out, constituted the resident population. But in addition, there was a fleeting population of several thousand, who frequented the shores during the summer for the sake of the fisheries, which had then attained very large dimensions.

Newfoundland is a country of rivers, lakes and marshes. Its shores are rocky and barren, with brown walls of cliff rising often to an altitude of more than 200 feet; while there are numerous fjords to remind the traveller of Norway. "In the interior," says a traveller, "low ranges of hills diversify a great undulating plateau, and all these have a north-north-east and south-south-west trend, as have also the bays, the greater lakes and the valleys—a confor-



mation, as a writer has observed, entirely due to glacial action. Its rivers are few, but three of them at least are of import—the Exploits, the Humber and the Gander. The first rises in the extreme southwest of the island, and after a course of 200 miles, falls into the Bay of Exploits. Its width at the mouth is roughly a mile; but its channels show innumerable islands, and fourteen miles from the sea we find the picturesque cascades known as Bishop's Falls; and a little further inland Grand Falls themselves.

The scenery of Newfoundland is everywhere that of Scandinavia and sometimes greatly suggestive of Canada. Scotch firs abound and low tree-capped hills such as we meet everywhere in Southern Norway and in Spain. There are immense herds of caribou in the savanna country; and owing perhaps to this very fact, as I have said, Lord Northcliffe came into possession of such large tracts of land. In any case Lord Rothermere's and Sir Mayson Beeton's investigations confirmed the suitability of the island for one of the greatest of their enterprises. The company was quickly constituted and an agreement made with the Government of Newfoundland, by which was acquired on lease a tract of country roughly 2,300 square miles in area, with the water-power of Grand Falls and certain other valuable but smaller concessions. The lease was for 198 years at a small annual rent, and in addition the Newfoundland Government agreed to admit duty-free all machinery and plant necessary to the construction and equipment of the paper mill. Characteristic, indeed, are the developments which have followed the brothers'



initiative in this momentous matter. Very like these brothers, I found it, that they should have entered in upon a tract of virgin country, have surveyed the solitudes of this great river, the heart of forests and lands almost untrodden by man, and should have decided that here a new monument to their sagacity should be raised. Grand Falls was the home of the hunter twenty years ago. To-day a town has arisen there. Thousands of workmen are harboured in modern houses. There are churches for various denominations; halls for meeting; vast mills, and stretched across the mighty Exploits River a dam whose erection alone was a herculean task. The river itself supplies the power for, and is the very life of, this world of new activities. So great is the area of forest acquired, that, war permitting, the two thousand tons of manufactured paper required weekly for the various publications could have been supplied by it in perpetuity. In eighty years the hewers of wood could have cut down every tree which the Company bought; yet behind them the young trees would be growing, and when they came again to the place whence they started—eighty years then having elapsed—a new forest would await their hatchets.

This making of paper is a fascinating thing and well worth the study of the curious. I remember coming by road from Thanet with Lord Northcliffe one day, and receiving from him an invitation to visit the mills at Gravesend. We left the famous old high road which Dickens knew so well, and going down to the riverside, looked upon that familiar scene which must ever figure in our maritime story.

Here was old Thames brown and dirty and swirling out towards Canvey Island. Barges showed their red sails to a sun that made them gay. A great steamer had just crossed the Atlantic and lay at anchor within fifty yards of the shore. She had come from Newfoundland full of the precious pulp. Yet within a hundred yards of her there stood the old house of ancient pilots; the home of the sea dogs who had known little of paper and cared not overmuch for print. Upon this shore cheek by jowl with the great printing works where so many Amalgamated Press publications see light, stood another factory whence their supplies come. Modern and airy, and full of light, it suggested modernity in every line, and there you might see one of these great paper-making machines and marvel at its wonder.

Imagine a series of buildings a hundred yards long and perhaps some thirty wide. At one end there is high above the ground a great pan closely resembling those in which mortar is made and filled with a substance which resembles water. This pan is revolving ceaselessly and water is overflowing into it. From it a great sieve-like shoot leads down at an angle, perhaps, of 45 degrees towards a great series of swiftly turning rollers, heated by steam and maintained at decreasing temperatures. Over this sieve the porridge-like pulp, reeking with water and treacly fluid, passes in a creamy stream; but as it passes, the water runs from it and gradually it solidifies. Caught by the first of the heated rollers it begins to dry, and passing through other rollers, it becomes firmer and firmer in texture until away there at the far end

of the building, it emerges at last no longer pulp, but an unbroken sheet of perfect paper, which great bobbins wind until five miles of it is upon one of them, and a clever device diverts the supply to another. By this process ever going on at Grand Falls, Newfoundland, and here at Gravesend, *The Times*, *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Mirror*, and all their satellites are fortified. War, of course, interfered greatly with the transport from Newfoundland, and it was an open secret that the company lost some of its steamers, while all the others were in Government service. None the less may it be said that the foresight which planned and executed this colossal enterprise has borne abundant fruit, and that the achievement in Newfoundland alone would be considered the reward of a life's labour by many.

## CHAPTER X

### “ THE TIMES ”

THE story of Lord Northcliffe's acquisition of *The Times* newspaper, as told me by himself, is simple, but not uninteresting.

For more than a hundred years *The Times* had been the leading newspaper in the world, and those concerned in its erection had come to rest upon their laurels. Nevertheless, active competitors had appeared, and while the prestige of the journal was sufficiently great to ensure a large measure of public support, it was being steadily undermined by its own inaction and by external competition.

The creation of *The Times* was largely the work of one man—John Walter II, who died in 1847. It was he who conducted the journal on the lines which have been revived by its present proprietor; he who believed in the value of ceaseless enterprise and of being first with the news at any cost. John Walter, we remember, lived just before the popular use of the telegraph began, and he had to rely for his service upon mounted couriers, fast post-chaises, locomotives and steamships. John Thaddeus Delane received a thorough education from the second Mr. Walter in the matter of news-getting, and he it was who drew great attention to the first leading article in *The Times*, by



putting his news therein, rather than in columns devoted to general intelligence. I have had the opportunity of seeing a large collection of Delane's letters, many of them written in the early hours of the morning after the paper had gone to press, and dealing with some exclusive piece of news obtained by foreign correspondents or from members of the Government.

The system of the production of *The Times* newspaper in those days was as well adapted for speed as it is to-day. In this age the editorial and mechanical staff can reside at some distance from their offices, whither they can be summoned by telephone in the case of great emergency. But when John Walter II. ruled the paper, the printers lived in the vicinity of *The Times* office, and in the event of an unexpected edition were summoned by a handbell. Mr. Walter himself lived in Printing House Square, and upon more than one occasion he ransacked the pouch containing the foreign newspapers, translated them himself, and helped to set the type rather than that a moment should be lost in the issue of any important piece of news.

In the Life of the late Sir William Russell, we find this very typical account of what *The Times* had to suffer by way of competition in those days. The great correspondent had been sent to Ireland to report the trial of O'Connell, who was found guilty of treason. He was, however, robbed of the fruit of his enterprise by a trick which amused the town, but was far from amusing Sir William. In his own words, this is the story :—

“ I stepped out on the platform at Kingstown with all my baggage, a large notebook full of caricatures and *facetiae*, notes and observations, and a light overcoat in my hand. There was no one to receive me at the station, and no boat at the stairs; but one of the police on the quay showed me the lights of the *Iron Duke*. The harbour was soon vocal with that name, *Iron Duke*, and many ‘Ahoys!’ till just as I sank into hoarse silence a lantern was waved over the counter and an ‘Aye, aye,’ came shorewards over the water. Presently a boat came off for me, and as I stepped on the deck of the steamer I was received with the remark, ‘We gave you up after midnight, and banked up, but will be off in less than half an hour.’ One way or another an hour was lost ere we left Kingstown harbour; but the *Iron Duke* made a rapid run across the Channel, and in a few minutes after landing I was on my way to London, the bearer of exclusive news to Printing House Square.

“ I had been sitting all day and night in boots inclined to tightness; I was very tired, and as I tried to get a little sleep in the train, I kicked them off with some difficulty. I was awakened by a voice in my ear. ‘Jump out, sir! The cab is waiting—not a minute to lose.’ We were at Euston. The man who spoke was *The Times* office messenger. He saw my boots on the floor of the carriage. ‘You get in and put them on in the cab. They’re in a dreadful state waiting at the office!’ How I did struggle with those boots! It is a most difficult thing to put on a boot in a cab in motion, but I persevered, and got one on in less than half an hour. Then the vehicle stopped in a small square of houses, one side of which was a blaze of lights from top to bottom. The messenger opened the cab door. ‘I’ll tell the editor you’ve come,’ said he, and vanished through the door, outside which stood some men in their shirt-sleeves.

As I alighted one of them said in my ear, 'We are glad to hear they've found O'Connell guilty at last.' I did not reflect; I thought it was one of the office people, and answered, 'Oh, yes! All guilty, but on different counts.' And then, with one boot under my arm and my coat over it, I entered the office.

"There I was met by the messenger. 'This way, sir. Mr. Delane is waiting for you. This way.' There were printers at counters in the long room which I now entered, and as I hurried along I was aware that every one of them had his eye on my bootless foot and its white stocking. I passed out of the office through a short corridor. The door of the editor's room opened, and I made my bow to the man who had so much to say to the leaps and bounds by which *The Times* had become the leading journal of England. I remember him vividly as he sat there; a broad-shouldered man with a massive head and chin, square jaws, large full-lipped, firm mouth, and keen, light, luminous eyes. He was shading his face with his hand from the lamp. His first words were, 'Not an accident, I hope?' as he glanced at the unfortunate foot. 'No, sir.' 'Is it all written out?' I handed him my narrative. 'Tell Mr. — to let me have the slips as fast as he can! Now tell me all about the verdict.' And he listened intently. The first slip interrupted us; then came a second, and a third, and so on, till I sank to sleep in my chair. I was awakened by a hand on my shoulder. The room was empty: only my friend the messenger. The clock marked 4.20. There was an hotel in Fleet Street to which my guardian messenger sent off a printer's devil to order a room, and to it I drove with my overcoat and boot *pour tout butin*, and slept till noon next day.

"My waking was not pleasant. A fiery note from the manager: 'You managed very badly. The



*Morning Herald* has got the verdict! This must be inquired into!’

“It turned out that my pleasant interlocutor at the entrance to the office was an emissary of the enemy. By artful and audacious guesses, the hated rival was able to make a fair announcement on Monday morning of the result of the great O’Connell trials! It was very mortifying, for there was intense rivalry between the Montagues and Capulets of the Press. The *Morning Herald* had been running a hard race with the *Thunderer*, especially in the matter of Indian expresses, and the rising flood of railway enterprise carried with it the golden sands of advertisement, for which there was keen competition. I went to Printing House Square as soon as I could repair damages, and was received by Delane *père*, the manager. I answered the questions he put—as to whom I had spoken with at Holyhead, as to whom I saw at the stations where we stopped, guards or porters, etc., till I arrived at the office. Then I related the little incident at the door. I could not describe the men in shirt-sleeves or say exactly how many they were, or be certain whether the owner of the voice was one of them, or if he was in shirt-sleeves. Delane thumped the table. ‘The confounded miscreants! But it was sharp of them! And now, my young friend, let me give you a piece of advice. As you have very nearly severed your connection with us by your indiscretion, and as you are likely, if you never repeat it, to be in our service, let me warn you to keep your lips closed and your eyes open. Never speak about your business. Commit it to paper for the editor, and for him alone. We would have given hundreds of pounds to have stopped your few words last night.’ ”

It must not be thought, however, that there was no competition to this leading newspaper. During the



American Civil War the *Daily Telegraph* was already a power in the land, and it gave *The Times* several severe shakings. Later on, through the Franco-Prussian War, *The Times* was again badly beaten by competitors, and its position began to be seriously affected by the rise of the *Standard* and the continued and vigorous growth of the *Daily Telegraph*. Its sale steadily declined, and was further affected when in the year 1851 Sir Algernon Borthwick, afterwards Lord Glenesk, the proprietor of the *Morning Post*, reduced the price of the journal to one penny. There followed the Parnell Commission, that costly disaster. *The Times* felt in honour bound fully to report the Commission which the House of Commons set up upon that melancholy affair, and its pages were filled with matter of comparatively little public interest. I have searched the archives of Printing House Square, and looking through some of the copies of *The Times* at that date, have been astonished at their newsless nature. With the decline of the paper began the decline of its mechanical efficiency, always the pride of *The Times*, from its inception by the first Mr. Walter until the perfection of the Walter Press.

The paper, indeed, had fallen on evil days, and that fact being whispered abroad, its advertising revenue failed also. There was a time shortly after the establishment of the *Daily Mail* when Mr. Arthur Walter, then the chief proprietor, asked Lord Northcliffe's advice and sought his assistance. "Would you reduce the price of the paper to a penny?" he inquired. "No," said Lord Northcliffe, "I would make it worth threepence."

Unfortunately the internal state of affairs prevented the acceptance of this suggested policy. In place of it there came a series of startling and exciting movements for the obtaining of capital and circulation. Most of us remember the strange manœuvres which attended the early exploitation of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Well do I recollect being startled at eleven o'clock at night by a telegram which met me in a lonely part of Suffolk. The reply to it was paid, and the messenger despatched by the courtesy of the local post office believed that it was mightily urgent. I found in it an intimation that my last chance of obtaining the *Encyclopædia Britannica* expired at noon on the following day. It was signed "Manager of *The Times*, Printing House Square, London." Many thousands of these telegrams had gone over the wires that night, scaring invalids in their beds, and the source of alarm to many innocent people. Not only this, but those who lived in remote districts often had to pay a heavy surcharge for the delivery of the far from exciting tidings.

This adventure was followed by others not less remarkable. *The Times* began to print an astounding series of advertisements. Systems of puffery were adopted which were entirely opposed to the former dignity of the greatest newspaper. Articles appeared which were nothing but advertisements in disguise. One was devoted to a certain London hotel—to its wonderful wines and cooking; and for that matter, anybody could then purchase two columns in the paper for any purpose whatsoever. A front page, which had been sober through a century, suddenly

blossomed forth into gigantic advertisements, with pictures and other inartistic embellishments. The result of this was that the quality of the paper fell off. Older advertisers abstained. Public men made remonstrance; while comic journals and writers devoted their pages to the humours of the very old lady of Printing House Square.

Following the advertisements came impossible schemes for the stimulation of circulation. *The Times* offered to provide any subscriber with any books he or she might desire to have. For four pounds odd you could get *The Times* and all the new volumes. This scheme so outraged the dignity of the publishers, that they held meetings and ultimately declined to supply *The Times* circulating library at all; while they withdrew all their advertisements from its columns. Not to be baffled, and determined to fulfil its unwise pledge, the management now sought to buy London books through the dealers of Antwerp, Brussels and elsewhere. The book war became a standing subject for national hilarity; but it provoked a bitter feeling between the publishing house and Printing House Square, and eventually ended in a libel suit in which *The Times* was heavily mulcted.

It was at this stage that Mr. E. V. Lucas and Mr. Graves appeared upon the scene with their series of booklets which so amused the town. *Wisdom while you Wait* was the first of them, and in it we find some admirable satire both upon the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and the queer schemes which followed it. Meanwhile, we cannot be surprised to hear that there had been internal trouble in Printing House Square. The



paper had been left in two portions by John Walter I. He had divided *The Times* newspaper into sixteen shares; but naturally during the course of a hundred years this had again and again been subdivided. The printing business of *The Times* remained, however, the exclusive property of the Walter family; and when litigation ensued, it was between one of the holders of shares in the newspaper and Mr. Arthur Walter, whose family owned the printing.

The Manager of *The Times*, Mr. Moberley Bell, carried the paper through difficult periods, when he was in urgent need of capital with which to maintain its excellence. Unknown to him a plan had been formulated whereby the journal should be amalgamated with the *Standard* and other newspapers then under the management of Sir Arthur Pearson. The project was a secret of which no member of *The Times* staff was aware. Knowledge of it came to Lord Northcliffe's ears quite by chance. He and Lady Northcliffe were dining with a well-known peer, who is a great friend of Paderewski. The night turned out extremely foggy, and Lady Northcliffe telephoned to her hostess and begged to be excused because of the danger of getting about upon such a night. To this the response was a pressing insistency, which from the lips of a charming lady proved irresistible. Lord and Lady Northcliffe went to the house, and after dinner when the ladies had gone to the drawing-room there was a good deal of fun among the men concerning the position of the Great Central Railway, of which the host was then one of the directors. Lord Northcliffe had read the news that the Great Central



Railway was about to be amalgamated with the Great Northern, and, said the host, "the unprosperous *Standard* with the prosperous *Times*."

We may be sure that the future owner of the *Thunderer* pricked up his ears at that.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"Quite sure," was the answer.

Lord Northcliffe then remembered that Lord Faringdon, then the Chairman of the Great Central Railway, was also one of the backers of the *Standard* newspaper. He returned to his house and immediately set inquiries afoot. A useful memory reminded him that Mr. Moberley Bell was a friend and neighbour of Sir George Lewis, and to Sir George Lewis he went next day.

"Find out what you can about this," was his request. The answer soon came that Mr. Moberley Bell knew nothing whatever of the story, which he described as of a kind that was told almost every day.

"Have you heard that Lord Rothschild has bought *The Times*? How much did he give for it?"

"Threepence."

With such a moral Mr. Moberley adorned the tale, but his answer did not satisfy Lord Northcliffe. He was convinced that there must be some foundation of truth for the rumour, and he pushed his investigations far. It chanced at that time that he was leaving England for France, and before going he once more pressed Sir George Lewis to make further inquiries. Eventually definite information came from the lips of the late Mr. W. T. Stead, who learned that such a

proposal actually had been made and was then under consideration. Lord Northcliffe's answer was immediately to insert a paragraph in the *Observer*, which he was then lifting from the Slough of Despond into which it had fallen. And in this paragraph he announced that a change in the ownership and managership of *The Times* was about to take place.

Such a paragraph produced exactly the result that he desired. Scores of persons, who held fragments of shares in *The Times*, rushed to law. The paper became involved in a Chancery suit, and it emerged with Lord Northcliffe, Lord Rothermere and others as principal proprietors—Mr. John Walter himself possessing a holding second only to that of Lord Northcliffe.

For obvious reasons these negotiations had to be carried on with great secrecy. An announcement that Lord and Lady Northcliffe were motoring in the Riviera always filled me at that time with some suspicion, and I used to wonder what was afoot. As a matter of fact, the intimation coming at such a moment merely implied that my friend had gone to the Hotel Christol near Boulogne, subsequently given over to the Red Cross, and that there he was meeting Mr. Moberley Bell frequently. Together they conducted their plan of campaign with great subtlety and staved off a competition severe beyond compare. The cartoons in *The Bystander* are amongst the most amusing of those which endeavoured to make capital out of a diverting situation.

Having purchased *The Times*, Lord Northcliffe let the matter rest for some while. He was then involved

in a much more difficult task, and he had upon his shoulders the gigantic burden of the new undertaking in Newfoundland; while he had but just emerged from his strenuous bout with the pacifists of the *Daily Mirror*.

When free, he began a systematic reorganization of *The Times*, greatly helped in this and other matters by his colleague, Mr. John Walter, and by Mr. Kennedy Jones. At great expense, they installed the latest type of Goss and Hoe machines; and against the advice of those who had not studied their working, they chose the Monotypes for setting up the paper, and thus obtained that clarity of print which is so much admired in its columns. Thus was *The Times* again efficiently equipped after many years of *laissez-faire*. It retained in the main its former staff, and numbered among its employees one at least whose term of service exceeded the half-century.

There was, of course, still the bugbear of the circulating book scheme. The circulation of *The Times* had then dropped to 27,500, but the subscribers to the book scheme numbered over 4,000, and at any cost this must be abandoned. Strange to say, this drastic treatment did not affect the circulation of the paper unfavourably. *The Times* was at once greatly improved and enlarged, and it lost comparatively few readers who had subscribed to it for the sake of the books.

Throughout the whole of the tedious legal proceedings, the new proprietors had the most admirable assistance from Mr. Moberley Bell, who at once perceived that Lord Northcliffe's proposal to revert to



old methods rather than to embark upon any hazardous experiments must quickly regain the respect of the readers, shocked by the antics to which I have referred. The part played by Mr. Bell in the history of *The Times* will no doubt receive full credit when that history is written. He died in his chair at Printing House Square, his end undoubtedly being hastened by the colossal work he had undertaken, and the great anxiety attending it.

During this litigation, fully reported with all possible malignity by several rival newspapers, the general advertisements of *The Times* fell off exceedingly. Public men ceased writing those interesting letters which are such a valued feature of the paper; the Births, Marriages and Deaths notices declined rapidly; the historic Agony Column almost disappeared. Lord Northcliffe quickly put an end to this debacle. Little by little the old features were restored. Its splendid system of foreign cables, unique in the story of newspapers, was revived. The Book Club itself disposed of the astonishing variety of fancy goods which in its extremity it had provided to make up for its immense losses. Some of the letters which had been received concerning these were humorous enough. "The ham frills of the Book Club," wrote one sarcastic reader, "are just as good as its tobacco pouches." "I strongly protest," added an indignant Anglican, "against the sale of crucifixes in your establishment."

Little by little the Book Club, now the largest library in the world, was put in its proper place, and to-day no complaints, no humorous quips at its



expense are received. The adventure cost some hundreds of thousands, however, which never could be made good. To get this colossal muddle straightened out, Lord Northcliffe had to deny himself the services of one of the best of his secretaries—Mr. Alfred Butes, who gallantly went to work to tackle the tremendous problem, and finally, after years of struggle, landed the Club safely upon the shores of success.

When Lord and Lady Northcliffe returned "from the Riviera," rumours began to get about London of the change which had been effected, and were for the most part heard with pleasure. The immediate effect upon *The Times* was the return of the former advertisers. Lord Northcliffe has said that the newspaper proprietor, who would work for the national good, must be understood not only of its advertisers but of its readers. He himself ran so many unpopular causes that he was hardened to the occasional loss of circulation and advertisement; and he generally found that both readers and advertisers returned to him eventually, after a due period for reflection. This happened at Printing House Square. At the outset among the larger public there was undoubtedly satisfaction that the greatest newspaper genius of our time should thus have come into his own. It is true that for a little while the weekly newspapers and others, whose principal aim was to elevate the Northcliffe Press by abuse, showed some spleen at what had happened. They were, nevertheless, to witness the gradual restoration of *The Times*, the elimination of waste, the development of the news service, and the

reappearance of its correspondents in every leading city in the world.

When Mr. Buckle, who had edited the paper for a longer period than any of his predecessors, retired to complete his *Life of Disraeli* and to enjoy his pension, he was succeeded by Mr. Geoffrey Dawson. Lord Northcliffe chose him for many reasons. His views of Imperial matters and the German danger were identical with those of the new Power in Printing House Square. He was a scholar of Eton and Magdalen, and now is Vice-Warden of All Souls. He had relinquished some years previously his position as Lord Milner's private secretary, and for five years had edited the leading newspaper in Johannesburg. There also he had acted as Correspondent of *The Times*. The acumen of this correspondence attracted Lord Northcliffe's attention, and after a somewhat short conversation with Mr. Dawson, he came to the opinion that the right man had been found for the Blue Ribbon of the world of journalism, the editorial chair of Printing House Square.

Unfortunately, there came later on a sharp difference of opinion concerning the conduct of the War and eventually Mr. Dawson resigned in favour of the most learned and brilliant Wickham Steed, who brought to the conduct of the paper qualities which few men could match.

Attached to *The Times* is a whole library of accessory literature. Few among us are aware that *The Times* once had an evening edition. This is the *Mail*, of which a bi-weekly edition is published. There is also the Summary, which was published at a

halfpenny, and whose files I have been permitted to examine at Printing House Square. In addition, there is the Literary Supplement. The dignity of this is unquestioned, and its place among all the literary weeklies assured. There are also the Commercial Supplement, *The Times* Law Reports, and other historic proceedings; nor may I forget that the copyright in *The Gentleman's Magazine* was owned by Lord Northcliffe, and that it was his hope ultimately to reissue that historic periodical when leisure again came to him.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE LAST YEARS OF THE PEACE

IN the spring of the year 1914 I went to Berlin with Lord Rothermere and my old friend, Colonel MacGeorge. We found the city unusually devoid of soldiers, and were, incidentally, as I have learned since, a source of considerable curiosity to the secret police. What they could not understand was the presence in their city of a great newspaper proprietor and man of affairs accompanied by an old cavalry officer. It proved subsequently that a preliminary mobilization for Armageddon was then in progress, and that all troops save the necessary guards for the palaces and public places were at the mock front.

Of this we knew nothing at the time, and looking back, I remember that no thought of immediate war with Germany was in the mind of any public man during that eventful year. Perhaps it was that we were too much engrossed by the eternal Irish question which then threatened to reach a crisis. Lord Rothermere and Lord Murray of Elibank, as all the world knows, were taken into the confidence of the Cabinet in the summer of the year and came nearer than other men have ever been to effect a



settlement. Lord Northcliffe, himself, was exceedingly anxious that it should be done, and he threw the whole weight of his immense newspaper influence into the scale of compromise.

I saw him frequently during those months, and in the July of 1913 we had been to Le Touquet together. The problem of Irish affairs was understood by him as by few others. Many times had he referred to it when we were motoring in Ireland together.

The people of the country always interested him greatly. He knew them as he knew the Americans. Once when we were at Larne, we asked an innkeeper there if there were an early Sunday morning train to Newcastle, County Down, as we wished to send the man on there with the luggage. Mine host answered without a blink that the train left at 9.45. When we were in the car next day, Lord Northcliffe had his doubts. "The Irish," he said, "always are polite enough to tell you exactly what they think you want to know." And he was right. When we arrived at Newcastle that night, we discovered that there had been no Sunday train at that hour in the story of the railway. The man had to come on next day, and great was his anger.

Dublin at that time was torn by a railway strike, and there we asked a railway porter what they were out for. The man said, "I don't rightly know what it is we're out for, but we don't go in till we get it." The same night, I remember, Mr. Percy, who had been motoring to Lahinch, told us that he had asked a wayside labourer how far he was from the town and that the man had answered "Half-way." "From

where?" asked Mr. Percy. "From here," said the man.

Light stories upon a journey always pleased him, though he would bear with none that should not have been told. And in Ireland the beauty of the country and the charm of the people were always remembered in his arguments. He became the most anxious and one of the most troubled men in England when the dire prospect of civil war had to be faced.

This, be it observed, was after my holiday with him in France during the previous year. At that time, I thought he was a little tired and as it were *blasé* where the public life of the time was concerned. Party politics, as such, did not interest him at all. In the newspaper world he was like Alexander—though he never sighed—and there were hardly new worlds to conquer. He had made of *The Times* a great and far-reaching newspaper. His many publications at the Amalgamated Press were all flourishing, and year by year the astonished shareholders received larger dividends. The *Daily Mirror* had amused him for a time, but had passed into the possession of his brother, Lord Rothermere. It had been one of the most astonishing of his adventures, and tragedy, comedy and even farce attended its remarkable career.

Most people remember that the *Daily Mirror* originally was a daily paper for women. The idea came to Lord Northcliffe suddenly and was swiftly executed. The sacred groves of Carmelite House were invaded by beautiful creatures in silk and chiffon, and greybeards were ordered about by them as though

they had been office-boys. Now, for the first time, "creations" were spread upon editors' tables, and things which no man should look upon were exposed to the indelicate jeers of ungallant office-boys. This would not have mattered if the women of the country had betrayed any bias toward a daily paper of their own; but despite the fact that the lighter-hearted among them were then burning churches and metaphorically consigning Cabinet Ministers to the flames, but a miserable minority responded to the advantages thus offered to them. In brief, as Sergeant Buzfuz would have said, the *Daily Mirror* was a failure.

Lord Northcliffe had made failures before in his career, but they had not mattered. All sorts of odd newspapers had at one time or other been in his possession, and proving hopeless had been passed on to more optimistic owners. But the *Daily Mirror* was another proposition altogether, and it had lost a hundred thousand pounds almost before its lady contributors had ceased to powder their faces. What to be done with it was another problem altogether. Some men, perchance, would have said that if women did not want a daily paper, they should not have one. They would have cut their losses and gone on to something else. Lord Northcliffe did nothing of the kind. He left London and went down to Thanet to think. When he returned it was to establish another immense fortune, and in doing so to make the *Daily Mirror*—now the property of Lord Rothermere—one of the most surprising successes of our time.

Why not a halfpenny daily illustrated newspaper? The idea, I understand, came to him from Mr. Clement



K. Shorter, the brilliant editor of the *Sphere*, and was instantly adopted.

The office heard the tidings and gasped. It could not be done, said the financial sages. The lady editress thought it preposterous. That it was done its million readers know to-day, and in the doing of it some of the most original of Lord Northcliffe's many enterprises are to be recorded.

When one remembers what it means to produce a half-tone block of to-day's events and to sell the picture on the bookstalls to-morrow morning, one appreciates the real wonder of this organization. But the *Daily Mirror* did not content itself by looking at home; it despatched photographers to the uttermost ends of the earth; sent "cameras" to China to ascertain what the Boxers were doing; followed Colonel Roosevelt on his African hunting trip; rushed an expert photographer out to Messina to get early records of the earthquake, and hired the Crystal Palace to amuse its readers with a brief and happy day. The speed of its pictorial executive was often almost incredible. Men developed their photographs in the oddest places—in trains and on boats and even in motor-cars. And such enterprise naturally met with a swift reward. The woman's daily paper had dropped to a circulation of 20,000 a day. The new *Daily Mirror* was not very long in reaching half a million.

This unbroken round of control and initiative absorbed Lord Northcliffe's energies until the year 1913, when I went with him to Le Touquet, and thence by motor to Brussels. I had been two years at work



upon a volume to celebrate the centenary of the Battle of Waterloo, and we visited the field together. It was no surprise to me that he knew as much and possibly more of the intimate details of that world-decisive, though puny, battle than I did; could tell many a story of Wellington, and showed a rare knowledge of the most intimate details of Napoleon's life. That the study of the little Corsican had always fascinated him, I knew, but his acquaintance with military technique was far beyond that of the average civilian, and the city of Brussels itself seemed absolutely an open book to him.

At Waterloo we found, as usual, a Scotsman standing upon the lion and, *en route*, the Royal Golf Club of Belgium, where, they assured us, many prominent citizens of Brussels enjoyed themselves by playing the first two holes and then lunching. A round of three holes appeared to be considered a prodigious performance. The course, however, was quite good and the club house excellent, but it seemed a poor affair when we drove over to Knocke-sur-Mer and enjoyed a day upon that most pleasing links. Knocke is just north of the famous Zeebrugge, and through Zeebrugge we drove upon our way. How little did we foresee what that insignificant harbour was to mean to the British people in the days immediately before us! Then it stood for a dreamy picture which some old Dutch painter should have immortalized—a picture of barges and the red-sailed fishing-boats, and a sleepy canal, and the sunshine upon all to cast its gabled images upon deep waters.

This holiday did Lord Northcliffe a great deal of

good, and when we returned to Le Touquet he began to play quite excellent golf. The true spirit of *laissez-faire* was upon him, and he enjoyed everything. Well indeed for the nation that he did so! The time was at hand when we were to need his incomparable energies at their best.

## CHAPTER XII

### LORD NORTHCLIFFE IN THE WAR

MY first memory of Lord Northcliffe in the Great War is one which carries me to a mean hospital in the Belgian town of Furnes, where he sat by the bedside of a poor old woman of eighty years of age who had been wounded by the splinter of a shell. He was greatly moved, and I could see that the thought came to him—"Suppose my own mother had been thus injured!"

"What has she done," he asked me, pointing to the pitiful white-haired sufferer—"what has she done that War should punish her?" The question was characteristic of him. Even when he was using all his great brains and influence to save his country, he could yet think of the suffering.

\* \* \* \* \*

This was early in the year 1915. He had not yet thrown down the gauntlet to the Government, and the Powers that were had not come to suspect him. A desire to see the War for himself carried him first to Paris and to Soissons, then in my company to Belgium.

We had no right to be there—no right at all. I often think that if the Hun had caught us, he would

have been within his rights in shooting us. We got to Belgium by the merest accident. An Englishman, Captain Singleton, who was then Chief Scout of the Belgian Army, obtained somehow a military pass to visit the front line accompanied by two assistants. Lord Northcliffe and I immediately offered ourselves for these unexacting posts and set out to visit the trenches. The journey began inauspiciously, and we were nearly drowned outside Calais. A wild Belgian youth, having no carbide for his lamps, set out to drive us upon a dark night from Calais to Dunkerque, and presently we found the car stopped upon a narrow bridge of planks, with the hind wheel but an eighth of an inch from the edge. Below was a deep dyke, and as the car itself was a limousine, we should have had but a poor chance had we gone over.

This relatively trifling incident showed my friend once more in the *rôle* of fatalist. He was a man of iron courage, and I do not honestly believe that he was ever afraid of anything in all his life. Once only, an enterprising blackmailer called at Carmelite House and suggested a little hush money. Lord Northcliffe picked up a heavy marble paper-weight from his desk and threw it at him—with the result that the fellow was carried insensible to Charing Cross Hospital. “I was horribly afraid I had killed him,” said my friend afterwards, to which I could but reply in the words of Gilbert, “He never would be missed.”

In Belgium, we wandered about the front-line trenches, Mary Roberts Rheinhardt often accompany-



ing us, and saw a little of the fighting and much of the desolation. Pervyse, that immortal village of the "two brave women," was then a heap of ruins, and the Germans were actually bombarding it as we entered. There were thousands of dead in the waters round about, and one hundred and seventy French soldiers had been killed, the night before our arrival, by one lucky shot at the church of Lampernisse in which they slept. These ruins we visited the day after the tragedy, and I remember the pathetic figure of a Catholic priest mourning his people and his home as he walked with us, offering to me a little crucifix from the ruins and to Lord Northcliffe a statuette of the Virgin from one of the shrines.

When we had returned to Dunkerque, there happened one of the earliest of the air raids upon that unfortunate town, and I remember the Chief saying to me, even at that early date, "We shall have them in thousands over London presently; our people don't know what is coming, but these fellows here can tell you." Yet at that date, anybody over here would have scoffed at the idea that London could be raided by aeroplane; though what the Zeppelins could do had already been made manifest.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is not my purpose in this brief memoir to enter into the scarred field of political controversy—the day is too early for that, and others will do it presently with riper knowledge. But it would be both absurd and impossible to avoid any reference to that tremendous year 1915, when it was for a moment literally Lord Northcliffe versus the country, and

it looked for a spell as though he and his fortunes must be finally engulfed.

I was with him during the three days of terrible uncertainty which preceded our declaration of War with Germany, and I have never seen him more determined.

Already there were rumours about this or that politician who would have had us stoop to the ultimate dishonour, and never, I suppose, did British newspapers render their country a greater service than in that critical hour.

Lord Northcliffe's long sojourn in Germany, in part for the treatment of his eye trouble, enabled him to perceive from the outset that it would be a long war and would involve many nations. From the beginning he never wavered in his conviction that the Prussian would be beaten and that the German Empire would eventually be split asunder. As the War proceeded, he told as many cold facts as the Censor permitted—but soon he was assailed as a patriotic pessimist. His paper was christened the *Daily Wail*, and almost daily he received letters from Tom, Dick or Harry saying that “never again should such a journal be received into the house.” Every fresh exposure of incompetence or of untruthful news was denounced as lowering to the national *moral* or as encouraging the enemy. Cartoons, threats, abuse, all had as much effect upon the head of these newspapers as upon the dome of St. Paul's. He exposed sham victory lies, ammunition lies, and again and again advocated the bombing of German towns. Then came the story of the shells, with all the roaring,

ramping excitement which attended that famous controversy.

The story is really a very simple one. From the beginning of the Great War, nobody had been more closely in touch with the events of War than he. A patriotism as ardent as that displayed by any Englishman, alive or dead, had inspired him with the belief that nothing but victory over the Germans mattered. And to that end he devoted the whole of his vast resources and of his energies. Such activity meant that he was from the first in possession of information denied to the mass of his fellow-countrymen. Well do I recollect him describing to me how, in the autumn of 1914, a tattered, broken man staggered into the office of *The Times* and told him of the Russian defeat at Tannenberg. "They have lost a hundred thousand dead," the man said, "and that is the end of Russia in this War." Yet at that time, old gentlemen in London clubs were measuring the distance from Koenigsberg to Berlin, and still speaking of the Russian steam-roller. Everywhere, indeed, popular ignorance of our doings in the War, fostered by the Government, was rampant. The most outrageous stories were believed, and a man in my own club actually declared that 70,000 Russians had passed through London, and that he had seen them and *lunched* with their officers.

It was this insistence upon knowing that enabled Lord Northcliffe to serve his country so nobly during the War. Naturally, when the soldiers could get no satisfaction from a Cabinet which believed rather in "law" than in War, they turned eagerly



to him and to his matchless instruments of publicity. Lord Kitchener, a truly great soldier and administrator, had made it plain at an early date that, while his name was a magic one with which to conjure, he had not the particular knowledge to conduct this War. The Cabinet knew that before the end of the year 1914, and told Lord Northcliffe as much. Lord French knew it at a very early date in the proceedings, and his relations with Lord Kitchener were embittered by the meeting in Paris just before the first battle of the Marne. So, when our Army needed high explosive shells and could get but shrapnel, it was to Lord Northcliffe that Lord French turned eventually—his own appeals to the War Office having been put aside in a drawer and practically forgotten.

The Cabinet, as Lord Northcliffe himself told me, tried to shirk responsibility upon the ground that "Kitchener was seeing to it." Had Lord Kitchener been ten times the man he was, he could not have "seen to" a twentieth of the burdens then put upon his shoulders. He himself had always fought with shrapnel, and he did not, apparently, see why the forces in Flanders needed anything else. So we had the lamentable spectacle of great soldiers weeping in Lord Northcliffe's presence and begging him to save them. And he knew that he could only save them and his country by some tremendous upheaval which at any rate must shake his own fortunes to their very foundation.

This upheaval came in May, 1915. It was in that month that *The Times* staggered the nation by the simple statement that :—



“The want of an unlimited supply of high explosives was a fatal bar to our success. It is to this need that our military correspondent, in the message we print below, attributes largely the disappointing results of the British attacks in the districts of Fromelles and Richebourg on Sunday. By way of contrast, he records the fact that the French in co-operation with whom we made our movement upon the German lines, fired 276 rounds of high explosives per gun in one day, and levelled the enemy’s defences to the ground.”

This dispatch was followed upon the 21st May by a leader in the *Daily Mail*—the first of a series destined to save the Army and to nullify the dope then being administered to the country. The sensation which followed upon these publications is still fresh in my mind. Germans upon the Stock Exchange burned the *Daily Mail*, and the Baltic and other Exchanges hastened to imitate this fatuous proceeding. As a cynic said, men who knew nothing foamed at the mouth because of their ignorance. The idea that the national idol, Lord Kitchener, could possibly have failed to do something which he ought to have done was not to be tolerated, and while honest men were justly affronted because they did not know the truth, every enemy that Lord Northcliffe had come into the open to snarl at him. He himself, as he told me going down to Elmwood in his car a few days after the event, believed that possibly he had ruined both his papers and his fortune. He was calmer than I ever remember to have seen him, and quite confident about the future. “The Cabinet,” he said, “is attacking me because

it must do so. Some of them at the same time are thanking me on the quiet and telling me how pleased they are. Whatever happens to me personally does not matter, but if we do not get high explosives, the Huns will beat us, and that's the whole story."

To his *confrères* on the newspapers he made the same confession immediately after the first publication of that remarkable revelation. "We may all be wrong," he said, "but if we win the War, what does it matter?"—from which moment I believe that everyone about him perceived truly for the first time the immense sincerity both of his conduct and of his patriotism.

There was a hard fight between Press and Government all that summer—indeed, through the following year. But the reaction in the public mind came more swiftly than anyone might have hoped. For one thing the Government itself was compelled to give away the case, and as suddenly as it had denounced Lord Northcliffe, the public stood to say, "Why, this man is right, after all." From that moment victory was entirely with the Chief and his newspapers. A fatuous attempt to prosecute *The Times* ended in hilarious laughter in a police court. A prominent member of the Cabinet himself was discovered to have set his imprimatur to one of the dispatches about which a furious controversy centred, and other Cabinet Ministers secretly brought their grievances to Printing House Square and begged Lord Northcliffe's support. When the year 1916 came, he was in practically an impregnable position so far as the Bureaucrats were concerned, and it was that position and that influence

which enabled him to drive Mr. Lloyd George, often sorely against that Minister's will, into the establishment of the Coalition by which alone the War could have been won.

Much of this, of course, is now common history. What is not common history is the immense strain that Lord Northcliffe suffered and the change that came over him, almost imperceptible except to his intimate friends, who were with him almost every day. He had become a grave man—he who before was often so boyish in his manner. He sold his great mansion at Sutton Place to the Duke of Sutherland, gave up his pretty home in St. James' Place, and kept but Elmwood and a little house at Buckingham Gate. His man-servants had all gone to the War or were working for the War, and but two maids now served Lord and Lady Northcliffe in their London home. From morning until night he lived literally on the telephone or in one or other of his offices—unless it were that he had gone again to the Front, as he went so frequently at the invitation of the Generals—not our own only, but the French and the Italian as well.

His estimates of men at that time were interesting, though events often modified them. Making no pretence to have any knowledge of the War himself, he was too prone, I think, to listen to the advice of the last military expert; too ready to accept his own personal judgment of the man whom he saw at work. General Cadorna he thought at one time almost the greatest man in the War; for General Pétain he had the highest admiration after Verdun; and in the end, of course, he was led to further the appointment of



Marshal Foch to sole command with all the vigour he could employ.

Many times during the black days the Chief retired from the journalistic and diplomatic whirlpools to the peace of his little house in Thanet. Thither the Huns followed him, as we know, killing some of his servants and nearly killing him upon more than one occasion. In vain he was offered Cabinet rank, and when the offer was repeated after the Armistice, so impatient was he of these attempts to muzzle his Press, that he actually sent a refusal of one such offer back by the same messenger who brought it. When he did consent to enter the arena, he was, as we know, first to take over the British War Mission, then to become Director of Propaganda in enemy countries. For the latter post, he was above all men qualified. His spies during the War literally had gone everywhere, dined with the Kaiser, lived in every enemy capital, had kept constantly in touch with the psychology of the German people, and knew exactly what should be done when the critical moment came. Recently I read in a Berlin newspaper, the oft-reiterated statement that cannon, ships, or men did not achieve work as effective for Britain as this bombardment of the enemy's ignorance on which Lord Northcliffe and his staff were employed until the very end of the War.

Some day, of course, we shall have the intimate story of all this, and with it a startling revelation of political intrigue and political malignity. I leave it to the historians with a lively sense of gratitude to come, and am content to remember my friend only



as the great and tireless patriot, who staked all that civilization might prevail, and by his very courage came at last into his heritage.

There was, I remember, at the height of the national attack upon him, an article published in the *Globe* newspaper, which always seemed to me to have done him more justice for this early conduct of the War than any I have read. It was strong meat, to be sure, but the hour was one for plain speaking, and in the course of his defence of a great Englishman, this particular writer did not measure his words.

“ Let me leave Lord Kitchener and come to Lord Northcliffe. Who is he? What has he done? Hound him down if you will, but at least have the fairness to realize how deeply all patriots are in his debt. Take some points. We are proud of our aircraft and airmen. We learn that they are the finest in the world. We are told that London is to be raided by Zeppelins, and we believe that British flying men in British aircraft will repel the assaults. I ask you, who is the one man in this whole world who has built up our air service and popularized it and in every way encouraged it? This infamous Lord Northcliffe! Throw your mind back over a few years. Recall his competitions, the generous prize money which made experimental manufacture possible; the sustained and increasing public interest which called, and not in vain, to young men to risk their lives. Lord Northcliffe did this. He was first in the field with it—and I at least thank him for it—and thousands of others, when they think of it, will thank him with me.

“ There is the matter of Lord Kitchener’s millions of soldiers. They are a voluntary army? Splendid!

But did the voluntary idea grow up in a night? Who that has read the *Mail* during these last few years will deny that day after day it has played a prominent part in proclaiming the insistent duty which men of fighting age owe to their country. Universal military service was profoundly unpopular, yet Lord Northcliffe—who, we are told, sacrifices every principle to popularity and circulation—fought unswervingly for the attainment of this necessity.

“Even more recently there is the matter of the rounding-up of dangerous aliens, naturalized and unnaturalized. You, Sir, who played a notable part in this great work, will be the first to acknowledge the magnificent service rendered by Lord Northcliffe.

“Now, Sir, who are those who are fomenting the attack? Who are the glorious patriots who are outraged by the *Mail* articles? What have they done for their country, for the Army, for the Navy, for the ideal of military service? . . .

“In journalistic achievement, Lord Northcliffe has flogged them all; in patriotic efforts through the years past he has stood on a pinnacle above the mud which they fling at him, and now to-day he has a right to have his record remembered.”

## CHAPTER XIII

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

IN the year 1916 Lord Northcliffe published his book *At the War*. The profits of it were devoted to the Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England, and its success was immediate. Even Mr. Massingham admitted that here was a War Correspondent who was showing other War Correspondents how it should be done.

People who wrote in this way had forgotten that Lord Northcliffe began life as a journalist. They had not had the opportunity of reading those delightful essays which marked the beginning of his career; nor his more incisive descriptive articles which had won him a reputation long years ago. That he would have made a considerable success in literature had not fortune directed his energies elsewhere, I have never had any doubt whatever. His quite phenomenal powers of observation and the great man's habit of being able to say exactly what he meant, were qualities which could not have failed him in authorship.

*At the War* gave the public some idea of the writer's activities after the fatal 4th August in the year 1914. It was in no sense a consecutive history of his travels, but a series of detached pictures, and it remains

quite without rival in the literature which the War has produced. Of all its pages, those which make the swiftest appeal are concerned with the great defence of Verdun and what the author calls the triumph of France. They were written with infinite labour. I know the story of them and have often marvelled at it.

By March of the year 1916 Lord Northcliffe had already achieved some of his greatest work: had witnessed the foundation of a Coalition Government; ensured a supply of high explosives to the British Army; and helped to carry the conscription campaign to a triumphant conclusion. Public opinion had swung round to him, and he had justly become one of the most powerful men in the country. None the less, he was learning every day, and more restless than ever in his quest of knowledge. When on February 21st the colossal assault upon the fortress of Verdun was made by the Crown Prince's Army, his curiosity was immediately awakened. He knew that the fortunes of France were in the balance. Those terrible days when General Pétain swiftly hurried his troops to Verdun were not terrible days to this country; for we knew nothing of their truth. But in the office of *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* everything was known; and making up his mind to see and hear for himself, Lord Northcliffe, with Mr. Wickham Steed, then the brilliant foreign correspondent of *The Times*, now its editor, set off hastily for France; and despite the overwhelming difficulties, were presently in an observation post in the very forefront of the battle.



There were many problems about this attack upon Verdun, and their nature naturally did not escape him. "What," he asked, "is the secret motive underlying the German attempt? Is it financial in view of the coming War Loan? Is it dynastic? Or is it intended to influence doubting neutrals? From the evidence of German deserters it is known the attack was originally intended to take place a month or two hence, when the ground was dry. Premature spring caused the Germans to accelerate their plans. There were two final delays owing to bad weather, and then came the colossal onslaught of February 21st."

He went on to tell us immediately of the mistakes which attended that adventure.

"They resembled," he says, "our own at Gallipoli. To begin with, there was an intimation that something was impending, made by the closing of the Swiss frontier. The French," he admits, "were not ready, although they were warned by their own astute Intelligence Department. But happily things went wrong with the Germans in other ways, and there were compensations. A Zeppelin which was to have blown up important railway junctions on the French line of communications was brought down at Revigny, and incidentally the inhabitants of what remains of that much-bombarded town were avenged by the spectacle of the blazing dirigible crashing to the ground and the hoisting with their own petards of thirty Huns therein. It is not necessary to recapitulate that the gigantic effort of February 1st was frustrated by the coolness and tenacity of the French

soldiers and the deadly curtain fire of the French gunners."

Verdun was practically saved when Lord Northcliffe arrived upon the scene, but none the less the battle waged furiously. "It might," he declared, "have been arranged for the benefit of interested spectators, had it not been that the whole zone for miles around the great scene was as surely closed to the outer world as a lodge of Freemasons." Every kind of pass had been furnished to him before he left the French capital. He was accompanied by a member of the French Headquarters Staff in a military car with a soldier at the wheel. Nevertheless, both he and his colleague were held up again and again and detained finally for some considerable period at a point twenty-five miles from the scene of the battle. "Even at that distance," he said, "the mournful and unceasing reverberation of the guns was insistent, and, as the sentry examined our papers and waited for telephonic instructions, I counted more than 200 of the distant voices of *Kultur*."

The force of the picture which follows is largely that of its detail. There have been no better accounts of a great highway which leads to a battlefield; of the countless vehicles upon it, the apparent confusion, the lumbering of guns and waggons, the infantry halted by the wayside, the ammunition which is going to the death scene beyond.

"As one approaches the battle," he said, "the volume of sound becomes louder and at times terrific. And it is curious, the mingling of peace with war. The chocolate and the pneumatic tyre advertisements

on the village walls, the kilometre stone with its ten kilometres to Verdun, a village curé peacefully strolling along the village street, just as though it were March 1914 and his congregation had not been sent away from the war zone, while their houses were filled with a swarming army of men in pale blue. Such a wonderful blue, this new French invisible cloth! A squadron of cavalry in the new blue and their steel helmets passes at the moment, and gives the impression that one is back again in what were known as the romantic days of war." By this road he passed to what will stand out, perhaps, as the greatest conflict of Armageddon.

Few could have so set the fortress of Verdun before the eyes of British readers, nor made the scene so clear to those ignorant of it. Years ago it was a name to our fathers, and to us as children, an impregnable fortress of the France which was vanquished. Yet it figured but little in the story of 1870. There is one vivid picture by Archibald Forbes which I have in my mind, of the French Emperor and his staff quitting the field of Mars-la-Tour, and riding with but a light escort back to Verdun and to Châlons. But the tide of that war did not surge about the citadel whose name is henceforth for ever enshrined above the altars of France militant.

Lord Northcliffe describes this city as lying in a great basin with the silvery Meuse twining in the valley. The scene he thought to be on the whole Scottish. "Verdun," he said, "from where I saw it, might be Perth, and the Meuse the Tay. Small groups of firs darken some of the hills, giving a



natural resemblance to Scotland. The town is being made into a second Ypres by the Germans. Yet, as it stands out in the sunlight, it is difficult to realize that it is a place whose people have all gone, save a few of the faithful who live below ground. The tall towers of Verdun still stand. Close by us is a hidden French battery, and it is pretty to see the promptitude with which it sends its screaming shells back to the Germans within a few seconds of the dispatch of a missive from the Huns. One speedily grows accustomed to the sound and the scene, and can follow the position of the villages about which the Germans endeavour to mislead the world by wireless every morning."

It was not, however, in the town of Verdun, but in an observation post commanding the great plateau of Douaumont that Lord Northcliffe witnessed some of the terrors of this mighty struggle. He saw great spaces dotted with the blue figures of the storming Huns. He heard the roar of the French guns, perceived the smoke where the Boches had been; and when that smoke lifted, he looked upon a void. Again and again, he said, these attacks were renewed. The very ground seemed to heave beneath his feet as he stood. The glass showed him men blown to atoms, shells falling amidst companies and limbs and heads hurled high in the air. But the French were the masters by the time he arrived, and General Pétain had saved them.

"Who are these men?" Lord Northcliffe asked. "Let me say at once that they are young. General Pétain—one of the discoveries of the War, till lately



Colonel, is still in his late fifties; most of the members of his staff are much younger. One hears of luxury at Headquarters, but I have not experienced it, either at our own Headquarters or at the French. General Pétain, when I enjoyed his hospitality at luncheon, drank tea. Most of his young men contented themselves with water or the white wine of the Meuse.

“In the brief meal he allowed himself, the General discussed the battle as though he were merely an interested spectator. In appearance he resembles Lord Roberts, though he is of larger build. In accordance with the drastic changes that the French, like the Germans, are making in their Command, his rise has been so rapid that he is little known to the French people, though greatly trusted by General Joffre and the Government.”

These splendid soldiers naturally gave Lord Northcliffe their own view of the battle of Verdun. He left them with the sure belief that the great fortress was safe. “The French,” he declared, “feel that they have the measure of the enemy both in men and material. They know that, given the necessary concentration of heavy artillery, either side can drive the other from the first or even from the second positions; but unless the bombardment be followed by infantry attacks of far greater vigour and persistence than any yet executed by the enemy, and unless the advance of the enemy’s artillery can keep pace with that infantry, the defending force will have time to make its third position practically impregnable.”

“That is what has happened round Verdun. To the north and the north-east the 1st and 2nd of the French lines were obliterated by an enemy bombardment with guns of which the smallest were 105 mm., while the bulk were 205 mm. Large numbers of still heavier weapons up to 380 mm. were freely used both in direct and in curtain fire. The weakness of the French forces holding the 1st and 2nd lines accounts for the insignificance of the losses. Ground having been thus gained by the Germans to the north, the French evacuated voluntarily the marshy ground east of the Verdun Ridges in the Woevre. The effect of this action was threefold. It gave the French a strong defensive line on high ground, it prevented the formation of a dangerous salient, and, apparently, it induced the Germans to believe that their enemy was demoralized. Verdun is unlikely to be taken. Nothing justifies a belief that the spirit and stamina of the German forces are equal to the task of dislodging the French from their present formidable positions.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Having witnessed the critical stage of the battle, Lord Northcliffe returned at high speed to Paris, arriving there late at night and having his famous despatch yet to write and to cable. There were difficulties of a formidable nature. No fewer than three copies written in French had to be delivered to the French Government and passed, if possible, before midnight. Wearied by the long journey, reeking as it were with dust and powder, Lord Northcliffe and Mr. Wickham Steed got baths at the Ritz Hotel and instantly set about their labours. The

French versions of the despatch were dictated to three typists at once: the English version was corrected and prepared for the moment when it might be cabled to England. Next day every newspaper of importance in the country had this unique document at its disposal. There never had been any idea of newspaper enterprise in the adventure. Lord Northcliffe went to Verdun to learn the truth for himself, and having learned the truth, he desired to tell it to as many of his countrymen as possible.

We can all remember the interest with which it was read, the surprise and the enthusiasm which it awakened. It was the first of many similar documents destined to set him in a new light before the people, and to convince them that here was a man who did not speak unless he knew.

Having acquired the habit of going to the War, Lord Northcliffe began to make a hobby of it. He told us of delightful days spent with Field-Marshal Earl Haig at G.H.Q.; of exciting journeys to the Italian mountains, where he witnessed the miraculous feats of the Italian mountaineers, and eventually saw the historic fight for Gorizia. He spoke with interest of General Cadorna, then considered one of the ablest men in the War. He had the most amusing stories to tell of the northern shores of Spain and of the hordes of gamblers at San Sebastian. He visited the Belgian Army; he wrote of our prisoners; of life in Rheims; of the search for the missing; and of the finance of the War. As the work accumulated, people perceived the immense knowledge he acquired. The year found him with an audience ever growing.



Almost alone he had saved our men from the horrors of Gallipoli—the story of which is little known, but is in its way one of the most dramatic of the War.

There had been, as everybody now knows, an accumulating interest in Australia concerning the fate of her sons in Gallipoli. The most shocking tales had been told; grave whispers where loud speech was forbidden, and innuendos more damaging than the truth. Determined to have the matter investigated for himself, Mr. Hughes sent a Special Commissioner to the Dardanelles to ascertain the facts. In due time, a most alarming letter was sent to Sydney, the Commissioner himself, meanwhile, endeavouring to reach England to acquaint Lord Northcliffe with what he had heard.

Here the High Command in Gallipoli stepped in. The Special Commissioner was stopped upon landing in France, and the copy of the letter which he had written to Mr. Hughes was taken from him. Very fortunately, however, another copy came into Lord Northcliffe's possession, and he took immediate steps to lay it before every member of the Cabinet. The result was a crisis of a kind which can be imagined. Should the Government do anything, or should it not? It was perfectly well aware that the fateful letter was then being carried at all speed to the Australian Premier. Delay could but aggravate matters; while resolute action alone might save the situation. So was General Munro despatched to Gallipoli, and despite the pressure that was put upon him, he stood by his opinions, and ultimately caused the withdrawal of our forces.



Here we see once more the value of knowledge and the meaning of fact in the conduct of war. I repeat that Lord Northcliffe made himself sufficiently powerful to bring about the Coalition of 1916, because he knew the truth; had studied the War as few in this country, and possessed in the instrument of journalism the weapons of truth which were invincible. Often has the question been put: Why, when he started his campaign in the year 1915, did not the Cabinet prosecute his papers, or even suppress them? The answer is that the Cabinet itself had then discovered those very facts upon which he based his campaign. Individually, its members knew that all was not well with the War. Lord Kitchener himself, having done a magnificent service for the country in raising the first of our great armies, could find little leisure for any other task; yet every task had been thrust upon him. If a question were put at that time—what about so and so?—the answer ever was—Lord Kitchener is attending to it. Had he possessed the genius and the strength of fifty men, he could not have grappled with the mass of detail thus thrust upon him. And thus it came about that when Field-Marshal Lord French was writing him for high explosives, the letters were put aside in a drawer at the War Office, practically ignored, and subsequently discovered when the crisis was over. Cabinet Ministers then would declare apart that they had believed Kitchener was attending to it. Their faith, perhaps, was justified, but it had ceased to be faith when Lord Northcliffe wrote his famous leader.

A little later on, as we know, there was a farcical

attempt to prosecute *The Times* for certain statements concerning the French Army. The thing began and ended in ridicule. A fatuous suggestion that the French Government had desired the prosecution was heard with great annoyance, I understand, by the French authorities, and quickly contradicted. It was proved that the statements in question had already been published in this country with the Censor's consent, and the magistrate had no cause but summarily to dismiss the alleged offenders.

From that moment, Lord Northcliffe's position became impregnable. Even the mournful diatribes of Sir John Simon but moved the House of Commons to sympathetic laughter. Who will forget that memorable outburst upon the part of this eloquent advocate when he thrust the *Daily Mail* map beneath the nose of a bored assembly and asked if it were to be tolerated. It stood later on as the true index of the Allied situation in the East; and that was three years after it was published.

It is idle to suppose that the public will readily forget these achievements. Lord Northcliffe, as Special Correspondent, revealed himself in a new light to his fellow countrymen. They discovered the eloquent writer, as presently they were to discover the interesting speaker. He brought knowledge and power to his task; but also he brought sympathy. Two of the ablest chapters in his book—*At the War*—concern the arrival in France of those whom he called "our dear soldier boys," and his account of the world-wide war work of the British Red Cross. But also he was indefatigable in his

work for the individual private; for the salvation of our prisoners in Germany; in his quest for the missing; in his recognition of the meaning of loss. No account of him, indeed, could hope to estimate the fervour of his compassion for those whom Armageddon has robbed of their beloved.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE BRITISH WAR MISSION

ONE of Lord Northcliffe's observations to me when speaking of the British War Mission to America was that the British public would never understand the extent to which Great Britain has drawn upon the United States for means to wage war. How many people realize that Lord Reading, who was Ambassador and Member Plenipotentiary, had an organization employing many thousands of English and Americans engaged in the mighty task of purchasing, inspecting, checking, assembling, transporting and exporting copper, cotton, gunpowder, weapons of every description, planes, motor waggons, raw material for planes, meat, horses, mules, oil for the fleet, beef, pork, cheese, condensed milk, leather?—take any list of commodities you like, and you may be quite sure that somebody in the United States had a commission purchasing them.

The chief commodity we bought was money. Those who knew my friend never believed that he would have quitted England at thirty-six hours' notice, unless he had realized the serious position in the United States. The task was not of his seeking; and, indeed, there were few Englishmen with a sufficient knowledge of the United States to undertake it. It is now no secret



that, long before Lord Northcliffe was asked to become the head of the British War Mission, he was offered the Embassy at Washington. This he felt compelled at the time to decline, believing that he had greater work to do in stiffening authority in this country. His immediate business was to straighten out the muddle into which what one may call the commerce of the country had fallen over yonder. The need for his presence was greater because our contract with Messrs. Morgan was then drawing to an end; and its termination would throw upon our British representative the immense responsibility of dealing with our vast purchase in the States, and the gigantic factories already erected there.

The matter being put to Lord Northcliffe, he undertook to go to America for three months; but, as a matter of fact, he remained there six. Setting about the business with his usual determination, he told me that no sooner had he landed in New York than he concentrated for eighteen hours on the immediate task of getting the vast British Concessions into one organization. This was his immediate task, and when he had accomplished it, he began, at the request of the American Government, that series of speeches upon ships, the pressing need of which was not then understood in America. It is well now, when the success of this mission is no longer a question of argument but of history, to remember how the head of it was assailed in the pro-German, English and German papers in the United States. The authorities, indeed, were concerned for Lord Northcliffe's safety, and for a time he was dogged by a body of detectives, some of

whom actually slept outside his bedroom door; while others followed him upon his walks and rides, and even to the golf links. These kindly attentions distressed Lord Northcliffe very much, and eventually his plaintive appeal succeeded in reducing the number of his bodyguard to one.

He arrived in America, as we know, in the June of 1917, and went through the great heat wave of July and August of that year. His activities can hardly be measured in words. I myself attribute the illness from which he suffered upon his return to the tremendous demands he made upon his energies during these strenuous months upon the other side. Upon one occasion, I understand, he was twenty-one days in a train, travelling from Canada to the extreme South, and was everywhere the eloquent and convincing advocate of the cause which he believed to be that of civilization.

Lord Northcliffe speedily perceived that his headquarters should be at New York, and he established himself ultimately in a series of offices there. His own residence was Bolton Priory, a very old house in West Chester County, and known as the Pelham Manor. Bolton Priory is as English a residence as could be found in the United States. It stands in a park of fifty-five acres, is built of grey stone, and possesses a lofty tower from which there is a fine view across Long Island Sound to the Island itself. Part of this house is covered by English ivy planted by Washington Irving. The garden is in the English fashion, and except for the fact that the trees are not our trees, nor the birds our birds; and that fireflies abound by

night, it is impossible to realize that you are nearly 3,000 miles from English home counties.

Directly Lord Northcliffe had settled upon his residence, he cabled to England for an English staff to follow him. Sir Andrew Caird went out, and was accompanied by a large number of secretaries and other assistants. Previous to this there had been some preliminary meetings at the Hotel Gotham; while offices at 681, Fifth Avenue, just below Central Park, became the centre of the chief activities. These offices were guarded day and night, at the suggestion of Mr. Morgan, by detectives who were on duty for eight hours at a time. The American authorities, indeed, showed every willingness to help the Mission in all possible ways, and the telephone and telegraph officials, especially, worked devotedly in Lord Northcliffe's interest. They placed Lord Northcliffe's house at Pelham Manor in touch with New York, and by private wire with Washington. When he asked for a long-distance telephone service, so expeditiously was it provided for him, that on the very day that he had made his application in the morning, he found the system installed on his return at night, and was thus enabled to talk to Pittsburg, which is further from New York than Edinburgh is from London.

“The kindness and courtesy I received everywhere in America,” he said to me, “will never be forgotten.”

If this was his point of view, that of America was one of speedy recognition. I have recently been examining numerous volumes of Press cuttings concerned entirely with Lord Northcliffe's achievements



in Canada and the United States. No such tribute can, I think, ever have been paid to an Englishman previously. We here knew very little about them. The traditional jealousy of rivals would have nothing to do with the best of them; while such extracts as Lord Northcliffe's rivals printed were almost entirely taken from the pro-German or German journals, whose hostility to him was a compliment. These papers were quoted again and again in England by newspapers which had suffered in competition with the Northcliffe Press.

All this, perhaps, was of secondary importance. The main point was that from the beginning every department of Washington did its utmost to help to get the great British muddle straight. There was no unkindly criticism of the state of British affairs during the long years when the United States was neutral; nor may we forget that, during the whole of that time, all our arrangements had to be made through private enterprise established over there for the purpose. As an instance, the great sister department of the Ministry of Munitions was, until America came into the War, known as Sir Ernest Moir and Company.

The moment the United States ranged itself on the side of the Allies—and that was just prior to Lord Northcliffe's arrival—the whole situation changed. America now had to see to the necessities of her own gigantic forces. The revelations which followed were curious. Not only did we see the spectacle of England, France and Russia competing against themselves, but also against the United States, each making vast purchases which rapidly sent up the price of everything,



even to the American people. This unpleasant situation was greatly complicated by the fact that nobody in England quite knew what was being done in America, and we had the grimly droll situation of separate English departments actually competing against each other in New York.

“The American nation *en masse*,” said Lord Northcliffe, “is a great big, good-natured giant, living in the midst of the most bounteous plenty ever known in the world’s history, a genial altruist not easily moved to anger about other nations.” In the matter of this preposterous competition the Allies were treated most gently, even in face of a certain public dissatisfaction. As an instance of this, one angry letter was received by Lord Northcliffe, in which a complaint was made that the price of condensed milk was being raised unduly by indiscriminate buying, and the children thus made to suffer; and there were many similar communications.

“John Bull wears heavy boots,” wrote Lord Northcliffe to a friend at this time. “He treads heavily on people’s corns over here.”

One day he received a cablegram saying that an enormous quantity of oil for the British Fleet was required immediately. It chanced also that the American Fleet wanted large quantities of oil at that time, and the situation naturally became complicated. John Bull wanted the supplies for his Fleet; America wanted it for hers. The *impasse* seems to have excited good-tempered amusement among those concerned; but in the end, Lord Northcliffe got his oil.

In addition to the office work and his continual

journeying between New York and Washington, Lord Northcliffe had to do an immense amount of travelling and speaking in most of the great industrial cities of America. Mr. Hamilton Fyffe thus describes a typical journey:

“Six months of this strenuous labour would have undermined the health of most men and entirely sapped their energies. Lord Northcliffe bore the strain splendidly, and the vigour of his campaign was maintained to the end. Ultimately, as we know, Lord Reading took over his staff and his duties, and shouldered the tremendous burden which must be borne by an Ambassador at Washington, who is also in charge of the British War Mission. To replace Lord Reading at Washington would, Lord Northcliffe thinks, be a task of profound difficulty. His combination of qualities is in a way without precedent. He works till midnight, and is often at his desk at five in the morning. He has very little time for exercise and practically none for amusement. To Lord Reading the complexities of the diplomatic task are ever a pleasure. He is always good-tempered and rarely fails as an amusing *raconteur*. Lord Northcliffe does not think it is possible to put any one man in his place; but that the duties should be shared by a combination of men headed by some distinguished Liberal. Never must we forget that President Wilson and his Government are Liberals all.”

On returning to London with Lord Reading, Lord Northcliffe saw for the first time for six months one of his own English newspapers. His profound faith in the virtue of concentration had denied him any

acquaintance with his own affairs during the strenuous months he had devoted to the nation in America. It was with great satisfaction that he then heard that Lord Reading was about to return to the United States, there to deal with those many delicate situations which must arise so frequently in the United States during the course of the War.

## CHAPTER XV

### SPEECH MADE IN U.S.A.

THE following is one of the first speeches made by Lord Northcliffe upon arriving in America as head of the British War Mission :

I am in America because I have been a continual eye-witness at the War on its various fronts, at the War behind the battle line, and in the War which that very witty Italian, General Cadorna, calls the most serious part of the War, the home front, the battle with the politicians.

I am here because I want to tell Americans something of the many blunders we made, that the United States may the more speedily achieve that which every democracy in the world is striving for, the destruction of an attempt to force upon the world a tyranny that would make the world not fit to live in. I am here because for a short time, or for a long time, I am certainly conducting one of the largest businesses in this great country. I am administering the spending of between fifty and sixty million dollars a week here on behalf of the British Government, and I am here to inform the British Government of all the many admirable things I see taking place, that of all the inventions and of all the specimens of American



ingenuity to which we and Europe look forward so eagerly.

It was most fitting that business men from all over the United States should have gathered at Atlantic City, representing the vast body of men of business, because it is most obvious to anybody who gives a moment's consideration to the materials and figures involved that war is no longer a question of a few hundred thousand of men in gay uniforms on prancing horses; it is a matter of whole nations in arms, supported by every business brain that can bring efficiency, organization, capital and invention to its assistance. This is a war as much of chemists and engineers as of soldiers. This is a war of transport, of manufacture, and of distribution. It is essentially a business man's war.

We did not realize the fact in Great Britain for many, many long months. We were totally unprepared for war. We had an army of about 100,000 men, more or less trained, usually less. We had, I believe, twenty million rounds of small arm ammunition, by comparison with Germany's four thousand million rounds.

We entered upon this War, as every nation entered upon this War, as every nation enters upon every war, with the idea that the War would be short. You had that same notion in 1861. As a matter of fact, in the history of all wars, it is notorious that war is a long thing; and I should be lacking in the courage of my friend Hoover if I did not assure Americans that, in my belief, studying this War from every angle, I cannot conceive it to be possible that an organization

which has been taking from the time of Frederick the Great to be built is going to be destroyed in three or four years; that a vast trust, such as that composed by the Kaiser, the Junkers, the aristocrats, and the wealthy class of Germany, are going to give up their position and their profits without a struggle to the very bitter end—a struggle that, in my judgment, will inevitably cause the German people to establish themselves on that free basis which many of them had in the past before they became enmeshed in the toils of Prussia.

One of the requests most often made to me is that I tell something of the practical things that we did in the War. Almost the first and most practical thing was to lengthen the day. There are two ways of getting longer hours of labour and of relaxation. One is a very bad way, a way that our experience in Great Britain proved to be bad; that is, to try to work people seven days a week. Apart from all ethical considerations, it is bad economy. People cannot work seven days a week at high pressure.

The other way is the way we adopted, the way invented by an Englishman, Mr. Willett, who tried for years to get our people to adopt the very simple device of putting the clock on one hour. Personally, having experience with that system of time for many months, I cannot see any possible objection to it. I myself use it in my home here in New York; and, as a result, I enjoy your beautiful American autumn mornings, and I have all the roads to myself. We had a few cranks and faddists who opposed the scheme. A good many mothers thought it would be bad for

the children to be up longer, and that they would not be able to go to sleep in daylight. But you must remember that in most Northern countries—in the north of Scotland, for example—it is daylight up to eleven o'clock at this time of the year, and the children and the animals go to bed just as naturally as they do in these southern latitudes. Daylight saving has every advantage. The people enjoy the early morning hours, they get more relaxation at the end of the day, they save coal, electric light, and beyond question it is a great improvement in the efficiency of plants and factories that have adopted that system.

The extent of those great war factories is very little known in this country. At one of them which I visited just before I came here, a place on the borders of England and Scotland—Gretna Green, where the runaway marriages used to take place—we have one plant that is one mile in width and three miles in length. I took an American friend of mine to see it, and he said it reminded him of the making of the Panama Canal. I want my American friends who are sending their boys so bravely to this War to realize that the United States will need plants of that size, and that it will need plants of that size in France. That does not seem to be usually understood here. We in Great Britain, although we are only twenty-one miles from France at the narrowest point of the Channel, have been obliged to erect establishments equal, in my judgment, to a town of the size of Bridgeport, in various parts of France behind the firing line. War is too quick a thing to enable people to send great cannons back to their home countries



for repair. It will be impossible for you to send your artillery back from France to the United States to repair. It would be dangerous for you to rely upon the Atlantic Ocean as a channel. Lying between you and the Atlantic is the perpetual menace of the German submarine.

A great many men, especially in this country, were not before the War aware of the wonderful qualities of the Northern Italians. I had the pleasure of spending a fortnight with the Italian Army this time last year, and it is a wonderfully equipped army. Its motor transport, its air service, its food, its munitions, are as good as those of any army in the world. It came, I confess, as a great surprise to me. I was not as well acquainted with the Northern Italian people as I should have been. My visits to Italy had hitherto taken me to Naples and Pompeii and Rome. I did not realize that growing up in Northern Italy is a wonderful economic development of water-power and industry; and the brains that have organized that industry are behind the Italian Army. The Italian Army is fighting one of the most difficult fights in the whole of the line; and one of the most touching things I have learned there is that they have organized their women to carry the food, that probably comes from the United States, up those mountain peaks at night for their soldier husbands.

Let every man give to this War that concentration of thought and purpose of mind that have made his business a success. Let him think of the needs of the republic as he has thought of the needs of his business. Let everything else stand aside. This



War will be won by the concentration of mind. After all, it is mind that will determine. The Germans have brought to their problem this wonderful concentration of forty years. For forty years they have been thinking and studying and looking forward to this day. It is mind that will win. When the mind of the United States, the American mind, turns from its private affairs and devotes itself to the needs of the republic in this War, with the same power and resistless energy that have made us great,—when that day comes, Germany is beaten. I think of what happened in France when the news came that the United States had taken its place among the democracies of the world to fight for liberty. I remember the emotions of the French people. I remember how the little children going to school that day dropped their books in the street and fell on their knees, lifted up their little hands, and prayed to God to bless the republic of the United States, the defender of liberty, the champion of mankind. I bring to Americans that message of the little children of France—“God bless the republic of the United States. God help her in her hour of need that is approaching. God keep her true to her mission and her faith. God give her the victory that will mean freedom for mankind, democracy for all of the sons of earth, life free from the chill of fear, life lighted with hope, light breaking upon mankind instead of despair.” God give us faith to that mission.

## CHAPTER XVI

### LORD NORTHCLIFFE AS A MOTORIST

LORD NORTHCLIFFE had not a mechanical mind, but he was exceedingly fond of mechanical toys. From America especially he bought every pretty invention upon which he could lay his hands, and the smallest present of the kind would bring him joy. Well do I remember being at Elmwood two years ago when my son had brought from Chicago a little motor to drive a gramophone. We had not seen anything of the kind before, and the pleasure it gave the Chief was quite remarkable to see. For days, I think, the dreadful machine poured out jazz and rag-time, and our host watched the wheels go round. Herein, I think, America did him the only injury ever inflicted upon so faithful a friend; for, in later years, he seemed to lose his taste for good music and sought chiefly the stuff that gramophones are made of.

At Sutton Place, and also at Elmwood, these mechanical toys were always welcome. They showed not only a boyish nature but a real perception of progress which guided him all his life. As a boy, he rediscovered England with the aid of the bicycle. Hardly had he set up in business when the telephone came to his aid and he patronized it with a generosity which then seemed prodigal. Telephones not only to his house, but in every room—telephones wherever

he was likely to sleep, even if it were but for an occasional night. Already at that time he could say to me, "America has solved problems about which we have hardly begun to think." And such problems interested him to the end.

It was very natural that such a mind should apprehend swiftly the meaning of the motor-car. He was in Paris in the years 1894 and 1895, when already the names of Levassor, of Daimler and of De Dion were becoming famous. Upon his return to England in the autumn of the latter year he warned me very clearly of what was about to happen. "The French and the Germans," he said, "have solved the problem of mechanical traction. We shall not laugh at Mother Shipton any longer. Vehicles will be drawn without horses, and in a quarter of a century the horse will be extinct." I can confess that I did not pay very much heed to these prophecies. He was not in his lighter moods averse from a habit of playful exaggeration, and I have known him tell outrageous tales which engrossed the credulous but left the shrewder minds wondering. In this matter of the motor-car, however, the newspapers presently supported his contention. We read of Levassor's famous journey to Marseilles, and of another journey to Bordeaux, when the original 6-h.p. Panhard car attained an average speed of fourteen odd miles an hour and upon a fair stretch achieved nearly nineteen miles an hour. These were facts which should have made our own people think; yet, as ever, we began too late.

"The French," said Lord Northcliffe to me one

day, "will have ten years' start of us in making motor-cars. The thing is already possible and the problem is solved, but in this country we are still compelled to go at four miles an hour with a red flag before us." His own full reports of the various motor races on the Continent helped in a measure to avert the calamity he feared. The motorist, as all the world knows, obtained his freedom in the year 1896, and from that time we began a competition with the French which did not, alas! become formidable for at least five years.

Lord Northcliffe had ridden a motor bicycle in France in the year 1895 and it had run away with him, as I have told already, had leaped a hedge, and landed him, happily unhurt, in a field. From that moment he was a convert. The year 1896 saw him in the possession of a 6-h.p. Panhard car, and early in the year 1897 he arrived at my old farm-house in Kent at the wheel of such a contraption. It was high and ugly, painted yellow, and had its seats in the *char-à-banc* fashion. I remember that we travelled as far as Sandwich in it and attained a speed which a stop watch declared to be between twenty-eight and twenty-nine miles an hour. This little car went near to costing its owner his life, for some weeks later he drove it across country to the house of Mr. Rudyard Kipling at Rottingdean and attempted to drive it back on the same day—a fearsome journey at that stage of the industry.

It chanced to be the Canterbury Cricket Week, and everybody knows what the great road to Ramsgate and to Dover is like upon such a night. Lord North-



cliffe had a little French chauffeur with him, and just outside the village of Upminster the noisy machine startled a horse in a dogcart which carried a merry party of cricketers from Canterbury to Margate. The horse crossed the road in front of the car, and Emile, the chauffeur, immediately drove his Panhard up a bank and overturned it upon the top of its owner. The result was a smash which would have killed most men, but happily did not kill Lord Northcliffe. I remember very well how by some odd play of circumstances I myself was sitting up late in the little farm-house but two miles from the scene, when some time after midnight I heard a heavy waggon turning into the drive. Its occupants seeing the light in the window, a voice hailed me, and then I knew it was Alfred. It was no time to express astonishment, and presently I was helping him and his chauffeur into the house and carrying thither miscellaneous parts of what had been a motor-car—broken lamps and torn cushions, and all the debris associated with disaster. The little chauffeur, I recollect, could do nothing but repeat, “*La route est barrée,*” while in Lord Northcliffe’s hands was a copy of Baedeker, still clutched firmly, but every leaf torn practically to ribbons. I thought surely that his arms were broken, for he could use neither of them; but an excellent physician from Birchington arriving at three o’clock in the morning told us presently that he suffered merely from a severe bruise, and that a week’s rest would cure him. Such was the first, and I believe the only serious accident he met with in all his motoring career.

Having purchased one car, he was not the man to rest either upon laurels or a lowly driver's seat. As Panhards enlarged their engines, so was he a customer for them. It seemed to me at one time that he bought a new car every month, and I certainly think that in the first years of the romance he must have had at least a dozen in his garage. A 6-h.p., a 10-h.p., a 12-h.p. and a 20-h.p. Gardiner Serpollet Steam Berline, a little Renault, a Daimler, a Napier and finally half a dozen Mercédès from Canstatt were the carriages which delighted him before the great conversion and the unwavering faith in the house of Rolls-Royce. How many of the latter's wonderful cars he possessed, I make no pretence to say, but in the last four years of his life he may have had at least five of them; and when the possessions of other members of his family are remembered, we can begin to number a fleet of these magnificent vehicles.

Lord Northcliffe always drove himself in the earlier days of his motoring experience and, as he told me, never touched man, woman, child or dog. He was very fond of tremendously long journeys, and upon one occasion travelled from just outside San Rafael to Paris in less than twenty-four hours, the distance being close upon 600 miles. Frequently he went down to Scotland in those days with only one stop at York, but latterly his progress was leisurely, and in the years 1920 and 1921—upon both of which occasions I accompanied him to Perth and the Highlands—we stopped at Birmingham, Manchester and Carlisle. The joy of the sport had passed at that time, and the car had

become to him merely one of his mechanical instruments.

“A car and a telephone and a good bed,” he said to me last year; “what do I want more?” When I suggested dinner, he treated the remark as mere persiflage.

He had motored in most countries of the world, I think. When he first went to America, he found but few possible roads there; spoke of a journey from New York to Boston, but declared that motors were kept in many towns where a man could not drive more than three or four miles in any direction. He had perceived enormous developments in the industry which must happen in that great country, and rarely in later years did he return from it without some story of Henry Ford and his miracle. He had seen the building of great roads in the United States, the foundation of the magnificent country clubs, the almost universal use of the car, and he could declare with truth that all this he had prophesied. The very mechanics at Fords he loved to see go to and from their work in a “Henry”—the name given to that wonderful carriage in its own homestead.

Motoring brought Lord Northcliffe many friends, and some who happily helped him greatly when the great call of the War came to him. No firm in this country did more for the British victory than that of Rolls-Royce, and in the superb organizing power of Mr. Claude Johnson and the brilliant engineering skill of Mr. Henry Royce Lord Northcliffe perceived instruments of victory which must mean much to us. He himself almost lived in the car during those



strenuous days—a sad man now, and one who seemed to carry his heavy burden whithersoever he went. No longer was Kent that haven of seclusion where so much happiness had come to him in the times of peace. The Huns bombed the place with their characteristic ferocity and gun-boats came and shot at it in the vain hope, we must suppose, that their greatest enemy would be hit. Lord Northcliffe went there, however, despite the danger, and the car carried him to and fro when the railways were practically impossible. We used to go in silence, listening to the distant thunder of the guns beyond Dunkerque. “Do you realize,” he once put it to me, “that every one of those reports may mean a man or a dozen men killed?”

Happily when peace came, the shadow passed and the old delight of travel returned. He no longer drove himself, and patronized for the most part a car of the landaulette type. But he could take pleasure in the most trifling incident of the wayside, pull up in some quaint village and try to ferret out its history, give lifts to wayfarers, and question the peasants. A man who had fought for us always delighted him and was made to talk. He had a liking for very old people, and would bestow charity beyond all expectation upon them. Sometimes when he desired to conceal his identity, he did so with the humour of a boy. Well do I remember the astonishment of a party at a golf club, who saw the great Rolls-Royce drive up with Pine and Lord Northcliffe on the box and inside “Sandy” Thomson, the golf expert, clad in Lord Northcliffe’s own coat and



smoking a huge cigar. They had passed through a district where it was necessary for somebody to do the blushing, and "Sandy" Thomson did it with an aplomb worthy of his race.

Oddly enough, almost the last article in which Lord Northcliffe took an interest to my knowledge was that upon a famous engineer—that very Mr. Henry Royce to whom I have referred. He met Mr. Claude Johnson in Paris but a few weeks before his death, and said that he thought no recognition of any kind had yet been shown Mr. Royce. He had heard, however, that a statue of the great engineer was to be exhibited in the Royal Academy and subsequently erected at Derby, and he thought the occasion was one for a special article in *The Times*. Upon his return to London he rang me up on the telephone and asked me to prepare some notes, laying down himself very carefully the points which he thought I should dwell upon in trying to estimate Mr. Royce's genius. Unfortunately, he died before he himself could rewrite this contribution, and upon his death Mr. Wickham Steed returned it to me as having been found upon the desk at Printing House Square.

Apropos this great admiration for Mr. Royce, I cannot do better than append here the tribute paid to him by his old friend Mr. Claude Johnson, who wrote thus in *The Times* the day after Lord Northcliffe's death :

"In trying to realize to-day's bad news a whole series of recollections present themselves to one's mind : of hours spent with Lord Northcliffe motoring on a tiny Renault at the end of the last century ;

on a 6-h.p. Panhard; a 6-h.p. Daimler; a Serpollet Steam landaulette; a 12-h.p. Panhard; a 20-h.p. Panhard; a 40-h.p. Mercédès; a 20-h.p. Rolls-Royce; and many 40-50-h.p. Rolls-Royce cars. Motoring in all weathers and in all types of country, in Italy, France, Belgium, Scotland, Ireland, and the United States of America, and golfing and fishing in all these countries.

“ One always found in him the rare combination of charms which made every moment spent with him a sheer delight. At one moment he would be absorbing with avidity information as to the activities which one might be specially associated with, and the next moment he would be giving forth prophecies as to the developments of such activities, which at the time appeared to be fantastic, but ultimately proved to be uncannily accurate. Witty, courteous to all classes, bubbling with enjoyment like a schoolboy, loving to and adored by children, sympathetic, thoughtful, and beautifully simple, he was an ideal travelling companion.

“ His appreciation and eagerness in connection with novelties which held great promise in the future are well known. When in 1899 I prepared a scheme for the One Thousand Miles Trial of motor vehicles from London through the big centres to Edinburgh and back to London, I put the scheme before him. He at once put his purse at the disposal of the Royal Automobile Club for carrying out the scheme, and he gave it the utmost possible support in his papers at a time when other journals were scoffing at the automobile as being a disagreeable and unnecessary plaything of a few cranks. Later, when I proposed to him that he should institute a trophy to be raced for by motor-boats, he at once took up the matter warmly, and I well recollect his signing the trust deed whilst we were seated on a bench in the courtyard of a hotel in

Provence. His support of and enthusiasm in connection with the early days of the aeroplane are too well known to need remark.

“It will be impossible for me ever to forget an occasion on which, in 1899, he saw in front of him, and explained to me a vision of the future of the motor-car movement. He saw coming the increasing hatred of the motor-car by all classes, except by a few enthusiasts, then the recognition of the facilities of transport which the motor-car could afford, and, consequently, the inevitable purchase of motor-cars by the rich. Then a consequential increase in the dislike of the motor-car by the poor, until the opposition of all classes would be swept away by the institution of the poor man’s motor-car—namely, the motor-’bus.”

## CHAPTER XVII

### LORD NORTHCLIFFE AS A GOLFER

LORD NORTHCLIFFE struck his first ball upon a golf-links in the year 1903, at Kingsgate. The course was new and very small, and it was thus opened by the man who subsequently did so much to make it famous. "A dreadful shot," he said to Mr. Oak-Rhind when telling the story of that famous stroke. But he made a great many good shots afterwards, and there is no doubt that for some years he could play to a handicap of ten and play with credit.

My first game with him was played upon the Braid Hills links above Edinburgh, in the year 1910. I took him there, as I have told, when I had just recovered from an operation and he was really ill. He had previously taken lessons from "Sandy" Thomson, of North Berwick, but he knew practically nothing about the game. And as I, owing to the injury to my side, had then a swing like the wriggling of a distressed eel, we made a well-matched pair. Later on, when both had recovered, we played "anybody's game"—winning in turn but always fighting dourly.

Be it said, that when the doctors told him in that year, 1910, that he must take some regular exercise or abandon all hope of health, he set to work upon the business with his accustomed thoroughness.



“Sandy” Thomson went down to Sutton Place and began by making him drive two hundred balls straight away. He determined that his own private course should be as good as money could make it, and he set out in his car to see as many other courses as opportunity could show him.

“I have played on more than a hundred and fifty links,” he said to me two years ago. And of all the courses he had ever played upon, Fontainebleau remained his favourite to the end. His affection for the place was remarkable, and rarely did he go to France that he did not manage to revisit that incomparable scene.

This is not to underestimate in any way his abiding affection for Scotland. He believed that country to contain the finest playing-fields in the world, and wherever he was he would often speak of Stanley Pools upon the Tay, of Loughness and Kilspindie and Gullane—and latterly of Gleneagles, Nairn and the Moray Firth. The Scottish caddie always delighted him, and one of his great humours was to lead on “Sandy” Thomson to tell of the iniquity of North Berwick caddies forty years ago.

“They used to carry green-headed pins,” he said one day when we were driving to Loughness; “they would take out the flag, stooping down to do so, and then they inserted a pin in the turf in the direct line of the opponents’ shot. This pin they removed when they replaced the flag.”

“Sandy” Thomson, perhaps, knew and knows as much about the psychology of golf as any man who ever played that Royal and Ancient game. He

believed greatly in verbal suggestion. If an opponent was driving far and well, Thomson would suddenly say, just as that opponent was teeing up, "He's going to drive a great ball here," and ten to one the man would fluff it altogether. He was the author of the maxim—"Always hurry when playing with a fat man," and he never believed in giving up a match, since, as he said, he had known a man "drop down deadit on the green."

Thomson, of course, was a permanent figure upon the front seat of the Rolls-Royce during Lord Northcliffe's holidays. He carried every essential to the game—great bags of clubs, immense supplies of a particular ball manufactured especially for Lord Northcliffe, a giant umbrella and a "sportsman's seat." If he did not ride with us to the links, we found him upon the first tee upon our arrival, and never, except in the case of illness, did he fail the Chief. "'Sandy' is coming," Lord Northcliffe would say to me, and sure enough a day or two after at St. Andrews, at Nairn, or wherever it might be, the well-known figure would emerge from the professionals' shop exactly as we stepped out of the car, and a moment later "Sandy" would be leading the way to the tee, duly furnished with as good a pair of caddies as his discretion could select, and with a starting time which always appeared to me to be magically elastic.

When we had played the round he would ask, "Will your lordship be wanting me again?" and if the answer were in the negative, he disappeared into the nearest billiard saloon for the rest of the day. So great, indeed, was the passion of Lord Northcliffe's three

personal servants—Paul and “Sandy” and Pine—for this particular game of ball that a billiard-room was built specially for them at Elmwood, and was the last work completed at that delightful house.

Moderate relatively as was “the Chief’s” golf, he played many interesting matches in many parts of the world. When he was quite a beginner, I remember a foursome at Kilspindie in which the Duke of Connaught took part—a game watched by the venerable Lord Wemyss, who showed us afterwards what was said to be the finest collection of Philp clubs then in Scotland. During his last great world tour—that disastrous undertaking which undoubtedly killed him—he played golf in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and indeed wherever golf was to be played, with governors and statesmen and great soldiers, many of whom, I am told, found it exceedingly difficult to beat him. He was a dogged and persistent fighter, never beaten, and always doing the best when he was a few holes down; and his secret, I think, was that wonderful power of concentration which served him as surely upon the golf links as it did in Carmelite House or in Printing House Square.

One day, I remember, he astonished me at Wimereux, near Boulogne, by turning round to me in the middle of a game and asking the embarrassing question, “Why haven’t you done as well as I have?” Before I could answer him, he said, “Because you have not concentrated.” This, I felt, was hardly true, and I thought of the young man who once met Douglas Jerrold and said: “We row in the same boat,” to which the answer was: “Yes, but not with the same skulls.”



As an instance of his quite abnormal powers of observation, I remember a morning at the North Middlesex Golf Club, when, having played but three or four holes, he stopped suddenly to ask me, "What has this caddy of mine been: where has he come from?" I could not tell him. The man appeared to me just an ordinary loafer, round-shouldered, peak-capped, perky and impudent. Certainly, I was unable to place him, but my friend did so without an instant's hesitation. "That fellow is a Covent Garden porter!" he said, and challenging the man, he put the question: "Where do you work, my lad?" "At Covent Garden, Sir." "When did you leave there?" "Yesterday," was the surprising answer.

During these years of more or less strenuous golf Lord Northcliffe certainly concentrated upon one thing, and that was the establishment of the North Foreland and Kingsgate Golf Course. Having found an indefatigable adjutant in Mr. Oak-Rhind, he set to work to create, as he said, a course out of most unpromising material, whereby thousands could enjoy the game whilst on holiday. Upon this course he spent nearly fifty thousand pounds, and in my hearing he told a prominent member of the Committee that if he ever got five per cent. for his money, it was all he would look for, though I could quite see that he did not expect to get that.

The delightful situation of these links has had probably a great deal to do with the success of the venture; for nobody would claim that the golf itself is first-rate or can be named in the same breath as that we get at Sandwich or at Deal. But the view



from the Foreland is magnificent, the air matchless, and the whole scene one that invigorates both the body and the spirit. Looking down from the 10th tee, one sees the beautiful bay of Kingsgate, with the castle which Charles James Fox made famous, and by it the house wherein Mr. Luke Fildes lived so many years. It was to that house that Cecil Rhodes went when Mr. Fildes painted his portrait, and I remember hearing at the table at Elmwood an amusing story of their first meeting. Persuaded to sit with difficulty, Cecil Rhodes lurched one day into the studio, and throwing himself into a chair, he asked, "Are you a famous painter, Mr. Fill-dez?"

Upon this beautiful terrain, then, the North Foreland Golf Course was duly founded in the year 1903, and came to its maturity about the time of the War. It has not attracted the old ring of first-class amateurs, but it has made a wonderful appeal to many thousands who have enjoyed its splendid air and have cared little whether Mr. Fowler's greens are all that he himself says of them, or all that is said of them by the indifferent players. The course flourishes to-day exceedingly and has been a godsend to Thanet. I am very glad to hear that a memorial to its chief benefactor is shortly to be erected there.

During the War, Lord Northcliffe used occasionally to play over the then almost derelict Foreland, and he often questioned whether he should not close it for good and all. If he kept it open, it was because he thought that it might serve still to bring a few people to that Thanet from which absolutely all but he had fled. "When the War is over," he said, "I will, so

far as I am able, give back to the people here the prosperity they have lost owing to their exposed position, and this course will be one of my instruments." We all know how wonderfully he kept that promise.

In running this Club, I may note, a certain purpose was carried out with his usual pertinacity. His policy was always unchanged. "One man," he said, "is to control the whole of the affairs of the Club, for, although he will make mistakes, he will make far fewer mistakes than will any committee. When he is wrong, I will tell him so," and, as Mr. Oak-Rhind added with conviction, he never failed to do so.

I would observe here, that while he believed in this one-man control, he would not suffer a secretary's interference where the actual structure of the course was concerned. "Each new secretary," he said, "spoils one hole, and when a course has had eighteen secretaries, it is ruined."

It is true that he required the society to be run in a strictly businesslike manner, but throughout he never received one penny in return in any shape or form—any surplus immediately went to improvements. When complaints as to green fees or subscriptions reached him, he had a sharp answer to them. To one complainant he wrote: "I have no intention of running a charity golf course; the sacrifices I have made are in the interests of Thanet people and the hard-working Londoners who want relaxation. The selfish and cringing spirit that desires to play golf at another man's expense is one that I do not understand."

This rebuke, be it observed, was addressed to the rich : but when it came to the poor man's golf, the answer was far otherwise. One day he stopped Mr. Oak-Rhind and asked : " When are the caddies allowed to play ? " " On Saturday and Sunday up to 9 a.m.," was the answer. " They must play every day," replied Lord Northcliffe : " how otherwise are we to produce more Abe Mitchells and stop the American invasion ? " In vain Mr. Oak-Rhind argued with him. " You are quite right," he admitted, " from the secretary's point of view, but the boys are going to play all the same," and play they did, as they are playing now.

Often it was thought and said that Lord Northcliffe's advent into golf meant that he would be an antagonistic influence to the old traditions that have governed the game for so long. Such prophets did not know him. He played golf for peace and relaxation ; he revered its great traditions, and nothing would have induced him for one moment to challenge the authority of those who govern the game.

As I have said, at North Foreland his handicap was established at 10, and a curious characteristic was that he would never receive strokes from an opponent, thus creating a position which was sometimes embarrassing for a really great player.

Playing in Scotland—I think at North Berwick—he was greatly struck with these words printed on a scoring card :—

" Golf is a science, the study of a lifetime, in which you may exhaust yourself, but never your subject. It is a contest, a duel, or a *mêlée*, calling for courage,



skill, strategy and self-control. It is a test of temper, a trial of honour, a revealer of character. It affords a chance to play the man and act the gentleman. It means going into God's out-of-doors, getting close to nature, fresh air, exercise, a sweeping away of mental cobwebs, genuine recreation of the tired tissues. It is a cure for care, an antidote to worry. It includes companionship with friends, social intercourse, opportunities for courtesy, kindness and generosity to an opponent. It promotes not only physical health but moral force."

"That," Lord Northcliffe said, "is my idea of golf." Unquestionably he did enjoy the game, and derived remarkable benefit from it. The contrast between the peaceful round and the labours he had left was often remarkable. I have known him to wake at half-past five in the morning and after a cup of coffee, to work upon his papers until nine. Half an hour of that time, perhaps, would be spent at the telephone, where the man in charge would have told him the late news of the night and would receive his instructions for the news of the day. At nine he would have a bath and his breakfast, and at ten o'clock I would hear from his dressing-room the cheery cry, "Come on, Max," and down we would go to the waiting car together. How often as we drove away he would say: "It's good to be on the move again." Movement, indeed, was the very breath of life to him. I often thought that he visited a place sometimes merely for the pleasure of leaving it. To settle in a particular spot and there to sojourn for a determined period was purgatory to him. The restlessness of his



own mind could not brook permanence. Yet he did concentrate upon his golf until the round was over, and the instant the last putt was struck upon the last green, his mind flew back to the affairs he had left. A pile of telegrams invariably awaited him upon our return to Elmwood. Few minutes would not have passed before one of his secretaries was at the telephone. The great machine once more had begun to move, and the chief engineer stood again in control.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### SOME OLD FRIENDS

I RECEIVED recently a letter from Mr. Fred Thompson, the dramatist, in which he spoke of one of the earliest friendships Lord Northcliffe must have formed. Criticizing some foolish stories of the Chief's youthful days, he reminded me that the very first school to which the Chief was sent was Wykeham House School, Kilburn. Mr. Thompson, I may note, received some part of his education at Henley House; but he knew Miss Budd of Wykeham House very well, and he reminded me that a prize of one guinea was given annually by "Mr. Alfred Harmsworth" to the most popular boy in the school. This prize, I remark, had a curious history, for when Lord Northcliffe himself was at Miss Budd's school as a very small boy indeed, he himself received a prize upon this very count, being declared "the most popular boy" by the unanimous votes of the little scholars.

Of these early days, naturally he had but dim memories, but the friends he made in his teens he never forgot, and for them he retained an abiding affection. They were few, but their association with him was intimate and, indeed, we lived together almost as brothers. Of such, I would name first

the late Herbert Ward, who had charge of Stanley's rearguard upon the Congo and who died in Paris but three years ago. I was with Lord Northcliffe at Nairn when he told me of this, and never have I seen him more moved. For days together he would talk of nothing else; and often as we settled down in the car for a long day's journey, he would say, "Let us talk about Herbert."

It was not difficult to do so, for Herbert Ward was indeed a remarkable personality. At sixteen years of age he was strong as a bull, a remarkable athlete, yet endowed with an artistic temperament quite unmistakable. Living as he did in the Avenue Road, St. John's Wood, we saw him every day for many years, and then, in the Scriptural term, we did not see him. He had run away from home in the best spirit of the adventurer of old time, and was even then a common seaman upon a sailing ship bound for Australia. At Melbourne, Herbert Ward went ashore in the mate's dress-clothes to dine with the Mayor, to whom he carried a letter of introduction—obtained heaven knew whence. He enjoyed the dinner, returned to the ship, and next day was sent to paint the funnels. Engaged in this occupation, he was dismayed to see a carriage and pair driven to the quay side and the pompous and puritanical old Mayor descend with his daughters. They, of course, thought that their guest was an officer of the ship; but as Ward had signed on in a false name, the Captain repudiated all knowledge of such a man, and the baffled party retired, sheltering themselves from the very drops that fell from the painter's brush.

Deserting this ship at Sydney, our young sailor made his way up to the gum country; amassed a hundred and fifty pounds by prodigious labour, and returned to Sydney to spend it. At a theatre there he made friends with a charming lady, and came to know her very well—but after a fortnight she suddenly said to him, “You mustn’t call for a few days, for a great friend of mine from Melbourne is coming.” The friend proved to be the identical Mayor whose hospitality the adventurer had enjoyed already.

Herbert Ward returned to England subsequently, and Lord Northcliffe and he were billeted together in a pretty cottage at Hampstead. Ward worked as an artist without much success. The Chief was busy in Fleet Street, and afterwards went off to make the “grand tour” with Mr. Powys. Subsequently, however, the Wanderlust prevailed, and once more the traveller returned to the wilds, choosing the Upper Congo, with all its supposed horrors. There Stanley found him, and entrusted him with the charge of his sick at a post fifteen hundred miles from the Congo’s mouth. When the critical hour came, Herbert Ward, alone in a canoe, paddled that immense distance to get succour for his camp. For miles, he told me, natives followed him upon the river’s bank, crying as they pointed him out to each other, “Meat, meat.”

Upon his return to civilization, Herbert Ward married a charming lady from South America and took a beautiful house in Berkshire. Subsequently, however, he went to live in Paris, and then, having provided the only British ambulance which actually



worked with the French Army, he was wounded during the Great War, and from that wound he died. Yet before his death, he had convinced the French people that he was a sculptor of unusual gifts, and twice, I believe, he obtained the gold medal of the Salon for his African studies.

For him, Lord Northcliffe had the truest affection, and always when he was in Paris, Herbert Ward would be the first friend of whom he would think. "After thirty," he once said to me, "we make many acquaintances, but few friends." His school days had been shared with Herbert Ward, my brother and myself, and with one John Browning, the country house of whose people at Little Brickhill upon the Great Holyhead Road was a welcome haven ever. To this number should be added the names of Andrew Stoddart, the cricketer, and George Jeffery, the international footballer, but for many years Herbert Ward and I alone had remained in close association with him.

In later life, defying his own dictum, I am quite sure that he formed friendships most precious to him. The late Bertie Fletcher Robinson, the editor of the *World* and subsequently in the service of Sir Arthur Pearson, was a brilliant young man who won many hearts and whose premature death, caused by drinking from a water-bottle in a French hotel, was widely mourned. Lord Northcliffe was greatly attached to him, as he was also to Mr. Charles Whibley, the accomplished writer and critic, who accompanied him upon so many of his journeys—especially in pursuit of salmon and of trout. In his own business, it is right to say that all the heads were his friends: and for

such great journalists as Mr. Thomas Marlowe, Mr. W. J. Evans, and Mr. Wickham Steed he had no words but those of affection. In a wider world, and especially among Americans and Frenchmen, there were friendships of which history ultimately must write—his devotion, for instance, to Cecil Rhodes, to Sir James Barrie, to Colonel Harvey, to Lord Roberts, and to many another great man in whose company he marched to that dominating height where death ultimately found him.

There was but one picture on the wall of Lord Northcliffe's dining-room in St. James's Place, and that was a portrait of Lord Roberts, one of two painted by Charles Furze. It was the daily reminder of a great friendship. During the years that Lord Roberts was making his splendid speeches to half-empty halls, the *Daily Mail* was almost alone among the newspapers in calling attention to them. As the War went on, the figure of Lord Roberts, to use my friend's own words, "arose above its gigantic background and the public began to realize what a different war it would have been had Lord Roberts been heeded."

These two great men—journalist and soldier—met frequently in the years before Armageddon, either at Ascot in a house built, oddly enough, by Delane, a former editor of *The Times*, or at Sutton Place. Upon the night before he left England for France to make his last journey, Lord Roberts asked Lord Northcliffe to come to an hotel and meet a French journalist of distinction who was anxious to obtain Lord Roberts' opinion as to the way war was being conducted. The French Staff at that time envisaged a great

citizen army, and spoke strongly in favour of more publicity. It was wholly averse from the policy of secrecy then being observed in this country.

Upon the following morning, Lord Roberts left for France, never to return. Lord Northcliffe's last recollection of him was a cheery letter, written at the moment of departure and enclosing a pair of spectacles, left at the hotel. Thus even at such a time, he could remember little things.

For his really intimate friends, Lord Northcliffe had a charm of word and deed which was unforgettable. He did not at all believe in the old-fashioned friendship of the Jane Austen type. There was nothing of the "squire and parson who had been at Oxford together" in these relationships. He valued the independence of friends too much to suffer any thought of their dependability upon his own great influence. Yet he was ever ready to help them in ways that they themselves did not perceive. Often one heard months afterwards of some great kindness he had done without a word spoken. If he knew that friends were engaged in this or that enterprise, he would often help it secretly and always ardently desired its success. Years ago, hearing that I was about to produce a revue at the London Hippodrome, he insisted on coming there on the first night, though revues were anathema to him, and perceiving that the entertainment was a success, he helped it with all his wonderful resources. Had it been a failure, I am sure he would never have devoted a line to it, so great was his sense of duty towards the public. Never have I known him to support book or play



of which either he had not the best accounts or himself had read or witnessed. "Newspapers are not philanthropic agencies," he said again and again, and any idea of devoting the power of his Press to the help of incapacity was alien to him. Yet one always felt that had there been a real trouble, he would have been the first to come upon the scene, and there are stories of his kindnesses to sick members of his staff which would surpass in generosity, it may be, any in history of the newspaper.

Of his letters to these oldest friends, many are far too intimate for publication. I have a batch by me as I write, but I realize the impossibility of printing any but the merest extracts from them. In one in the year 1903 he says to me: "When we are both less immersed in the rapidity of twentieth-century existence we shall, I know, be able to resume old-time meetings. As it is, one is so buffeted about by the cross-currents of business acquaintances, that the two or three people in the world one is really fond of are unattainable."

And later on in another letter he observed: "It is on my mind, dear Max, that you write me much oftener than I respond, whereas it is I, who have no writing to do, who should place you in my debt. It is not that you are not often in my thoughts. My circle is so small a one that my few 'affectionates' are always with me in spirit.

"But my octopus grows so imperative, its tentacles so embracing, that it is but rarely I get the pleasure of writing to friends. I was greatly rejoiced at the many good things said of the book here and beyond



the seas, and I hear you project another already. Truly, dear Max, I am honoured by so many greetings from your pen. If I were you, my friends would never hear of my existence by post. Sometimes I get a fleeting glimpse of your boy, and it reminds me of many years ago when you and I went planning great futures together, only to find to-day that the best thing is the knowledge and the love of old friends."

Or again, when he was created a peer in the year 1904, he wrote from Sutton Place, by Guildford: "Midst the dozens of cables and telegrams we are getting, none is more treasured than yours, dear Max."

And so it was ever—wholly heart-felt and intimate letters which for the most part must remain but a secret treasure, a perpetual reminder of a great friendship and an enduring affection.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE DAILY ROUND

LORD NORTHCLIFFE'S latest scheme of daily life implied an attempt, generally successful, to accomplish the work of forty-eight hours in twenty-four. As he himself put it, it was the utilization to the full extent of an always delicate constitution, and the division, if possible, of every day into two days.

At six in the morning he began the perusal of the many newspapers he controlled.

Between the hours of ten and eleven he took exercise; while from eleven to one, he dealt with as varied a correspondence as afflicts any public man. His American mail alone was a task requiring the whole-time services of one of his secretaries.

From France, where at least he was as well known as in England, came a daily tide of demands for autographs, coupled with suggestions for making the British idea known amongst French people, and for thus ensuring the future of the Entente. To these letters were added in war-time those from the Armies, reaching Lord Northcliffe by circuitous routes—an immense correspondence which was influenced, no doubt, by the fact that the editions of the *Daily Mail* published in Paris had a sale of

300,000 copies each morning among the British, American and French troops.

After a sociable lunch, Lord Northcliffe usually obtained an hour's sleep, and then he began his second day. This was largely devoted to interviews on every conceivable subject connected with the life of the hour. The afternoon was devoted to them, and at seven o'clock the laborious day was concluded, and with the exception of one message from his newspapers, he was free to devote himself to reading and to music.

In the days when I remember him as a young writer, he rarely went to bed until four o'clock in the morning and rose at noon. Latterly he was asleep by ten o'clock and at work by six. This colossal labour, I may note, was tempered as far as possible by the employment of every time-saving device. Lord Northcliffe owned the first typewriter I ever saw in this country—a crude machine worked by a pedal. He caused to be installed the first long-distance telephone between Elmwood, his house in Kent, and London, and I remember his delight on bringing back from America the first safety razor that was practicable. The one alleged time-saving device that he would not employ was the dictaphone, in general use in the United States and largely used here. He tried it carefully and patiently both in America and this country, but after each failure he quoted the old Yankee saying that "you cannot teach old dogs to do new tricks."

During all the years I have known him, I have never seen him in a hurry. To meet him at one of

his levées at Carmelite House or Printing House Square before the War suggested an interview with a man of leisure, who had nothing to do but to chat pleasantly with all and sundry who called upon him. Sometimes he would disappear for whole days to entertain American or other visitors. The real explanation was that he had done a day's work before most men are about in the morning. In this he was greatly aided by an admirably efficient staff, especially by his secretaries and the rapid and accomplished telephonists who put him quickly in touch with the various departments. "A skilled telephonist," he said, "with a previously prepared list of callers before her, more especially one who knows the *personnel* of a man's affairs, is as valuable as a trained private secretary." One of his most able telephonists—Miss L. Rudge—accompanied him to America in 1917.

As with his work, so with his games. The pneumatic tyre was laughed at upon its first appearance in Ireland. Lord Northcliffe asked his friend, Mr. R. J. Macready, to send him such a tyre, and finding it good, he used it and let the discussion proceed. So with the Mallock casting rolls, and with the now universally popular but once much abused employment of paraffin for keeping the fly floating in dry-fly fishing. In writing, he considered the best instrument was the pen, and he regretted that its employment was largely forbidden by the great pressure of modern correspondence. Dictation was a bad substitute, he thought, but was essential to modern life.

Then, of course, there was his habit of reading.



How did he find so much time to read? To begin with, he laid the habit upon an excellent foundation when he was quite young. He had eclectic tastes even as a lad. Fielding, Smollett, Defoe, Johnson—these and books about travel were the preparation for a life two-thirds of which was spent on the road. When he was but seven years old, Mrs. Jealous tells me he would come into her house, curl himself up in a big arm-chair, and read magazines and newspapers of a kind which usually fail to interest children. As he grew older, he read modern books extensively and made that close study of Dickens and Thackeray to which I have referred. But he told me that an attempt to revive an interest in the author of *Vanity Fair* failed. His affection for Hardy I have noticed; and to this I would add an abiding faith in Tennyson, to whom justice has not been done, he thought, these later days. Generally speaking, he was of the opinion that very few modern writers would survive the upheaval caused by the War and the reconstruction of the world, which must place history in an entirely different perspective. To-day Waterloo and Crimea are mere incidents: the story of the American Revolution incidentally is being re-written that Hun children should see it in a new light.

## CHAPTER XX

### A PERSONAL NOTE

“To foresee is to rule,” says Pascal. Were I asked to name the outstanding characteristic which led to Lord Northcliffe’s material, political and national achievements, I would speak chiefly of foresight. This enabled him to perceive that the public wanted a national newspaper. It also compelled him to recognize the consistent nature of Germany’s preparations for war, and to warn the public of them.

I asked him one day during the course of the campaign which he and Lord Roberts waged so consistently together, why he was so very certain that Armageddon must come to be. He told me that during his early visits to Germany he did not believe in the probability of the War, but that for the last fifteen years he had been very anxious.

“It was not,” he said, “that the threats of German newspapers disturbed me; rather it was the war fever among the people. Let me give you an instance: I was taking my midday meal one day at Kaiserslautern, so successfully bombed afterwards by the R.A.F. It was during the period of the Zeppelin mania, when subscription lists were opened everywhere in Germany, and marks and even pfennigs poured in to help the Count. A girl came round the tables

with a collection-box, and an illustrated card showing the Zeppelins bombarding England. Naturally I declined very firmly to contribute, but I was the only person in that room who did so.

“During the whole of that visit I found people crazy about these new monsters. The newspapers were full of them, and almost every shop-window had some article made in the fashion of a Zeppelin. Added to this prophetic frenzy, there was, at that time, a veritable mania concerning the growth of the German Navy and the prosperity of the German Navy League. The latter was a most active propagandists’ body. At Leipsic I saw a sham sea-fight carried out by some wonderful models; while the comments of the audience were all about England and its hatred of the English people. While this was going on in Germany, the authorities were cajoling foolish English newspapers to send English editors, English mayors, and even parsons to see how friendly they were. For myself, I feared the Greeks and their gifts. Their cringing civility to me every time I went to Germany, I think, accentuated my growing incredulity; while the letters from German friends told me very plainly that they did not like what was going forward, and gave me most disturbing information.”

Lord Northcliffe’s foresight was thus shown concerning facts which were invisible to visitors to Germany; certainly ignored by a Foreign Office with all its sources of information, and by many of our newspaper editors who were successfully befooled.

In a lesser matter this quality was equally remarkable in the days before the War. Take the motor-car and

the aeroplane, to which I have already referred. The earliest motor-cars I remember seeing in Paris a quarter of a century ago were noisy and evil-smelling, notably inefficient, and fantastically shaped in the manner of the old horse-carriage. They could not climb hills, and they were dangerous coming down. Their explosive qualities frightened the horses, and generally it may be said that they excited more anger than interest. Lord Northcliffe was one of those who took motoring under his wing, and by persistent advocacy in the Press, helped to get it something like a show in England, where the people were then prejudiced against all new-fangled ideas. Or again, witness the submarine campaign. The submarine, Lord Northcliffe was assured, could never be other than a weapon of defence. He refused to believe in these limitations and consistently warned us of their ultimate danger.

His work for aeroplanes I have dealt with very fully; but how many who first saw an aeroplane feebly hopping over the fair fields of France had the foresight to look into the future? Lord Northcliffe's prophecy concerning it brought him abuse from one end of the country to the other, and especially in the columns of certain newspapers. It would be unkind to reprint these words of the blind.

It was impossible to spend many hours with Lord Northcliffe and not to discover the fertility of his ideas upon a wide range of subjects—views very different from those of other people and always interesting. I do not think he was greatly concerned with those whom we may call celebrities. He had few heroes,



though he thought that Mr. Cecil Rhodes' early death was a great blow to the country, and he was a fervent admirer of President Wilson, of his character and his methods of work. Of our own writers, he believed profoundly in the genius of Mr. Thomas Hardy, and considered that he was the greatest English novelist.

There is a popular myth that he was an ardent admirer of Napoleon and his genius, but this is in a sense untrue. What I may call the Napoleonic cult, as it was supposed to be followed by Lord Northcliffe, was wholly the creation of clever Mr. E. V. Lucas; and it arose from that most amusing book *Wisdom while you Wait*. Its immediate result was the offer of countless Napoleonic relics and the troublesome attentions of antiquaries who had something to sell and much to talk about.

Lord Northcliffe had an uncanny memory for the many details of affairs, and it helped him greatly in the ruling of his little kingdom. Thus, he could remember almost every article that ever appeared in one of his papers, and not only remember it, but the page and the column in which it was printed. In his younger days he had an astonishing memory for music; but he diverted that particular faculty to organization, though for some years he planned most of his schemes while improvising at the piano.

He had a habit of almost irritating punctuality. He had been forced to divide his day scientifically, and neither kept people waiting, nor would allow them to keep him waiting. His Irish qualities, or his defects, as he sometimes put it humorously, led

to a firm resentment of injustice and a great and a lasting gratitude for kindness. For the journalistic profession, as we all know, he did much. His generous payments to journalists increased generally the emoluments of the profession to a degree not usually remembered. This I attribute in some measure to his remembrance of the miserable pittances eked out formerly to young journalists such as he and I in our earliest days in Fleet Street. Frequently we received but seven shillings and sixpence a column from popular magazines of standing; while now the *Daily Mail* pays nine guineas for a similar article. So also, Lord Northcliffe greatly increased the emoluments of *The Times* staff after his succession.

Patience, pertinacity and tenacity, these distinctly were amongst his attributes. During various illnesses doctors expressed profound surprise that one who was so virile should be content to remain comparatively inactive. Especially was this marked during the long period of the eye trouble, averted happily in the long run. He saw the sunny side of all things, and the fact that German doctors enabled him to do this, and particularly to arouse our own country to its dangers, is happily remembered at this time.

He was full of fun, and greatly amused at the attacks upon him made by his competitors. Latterly he read Ayde and Leacock, and the humours of both were greatly appreciated. One thing that Lord Northcliffe disliked very much was personal tittle-tattle. At Lady Northcliffe's delightful luncheon-table one met several times a week a number of interesting people; but never did one hear any gossip

or personal conversation there. When war came, the domestic curriculum was simply adapted to it. Lady Northcliffe established her hospital at Sutton Place, and though subsequently she transferred it to London, it occupied the main part of her energies during these fateful years.

In the very first weeks of the War they cleared their houses of all the fighting men and established women servants both indoors and out. The big London house in St. James's Place was shut up and the scale of living reduced to the measure of the rations even before rationing was in force.

"So I hear you have turned Socialist," said a great dame to Lady Northcliffe one day. It was hardly a correct surmise, but it did imply with justice that these people had long ago realized, as had others, the kind of thing we were in for and the problem which would confront us for the rest of our lives.

No doubt it must have been a great wrench for Lady Northcliffe to give up Sutton Place, the grounds of which were the most beautiful in England—a sad parting from her roses, her blue garden and her water garden; and for Lord Northcliffe equally, a sacrifice to quit the private golf course which had meant so much to him during the strenuous days. But all this had to be done for example's sake, and in the end only Elmwood, a little house in London, and a delightful cottage at Crowborough were maintained.

Lord Northcliffe's mother says that as a child his silence almost alarmed her. He was so delicate



upon his first arrival in England that the relatives, who saw him leave Ireland, believed that he would never return. His extreme quietness was believed by some to be evidence of delicacy; but it was not so. He grew to be a robust child, though always a silent one. Mrs. Jealous, to whose husband I have referred, tells me that Alfred was the quietest child she ever remembers: one who moved silently and expected silence from his brothers and sisters, when absorbed—as he always was—in books which should have been far beyond his years.

I do not think he changed in that respect in all his fifty-seven years. Though he was intensely devoted to his friends, he had no large circle of acquaintances, not more than a dozen or so of menfolk whom he had always known. Dana, himself a great newspaper controller, held that independence could not be maintained if newspaper editors or proprietors were perpetually gadding about in society, and he determined that the masterman of the newspaper must be more or less a hermit. Lord Northcliffe was no hermit, but never “went out.” Lately, I remember, he even abandoned the Carlton Club, because he discovered that most of its members were of the same way of thinking and that he could not derive any new ideas from them. Ultimately, he belonged to one club only, and that the Beefsteak, the smallest in London.

He was very fond of the company of recognized authorities. The late Professor Metchnikoff was a frequent companion of his in Paris. His interest



in the Polish question was aroused by Paderewski, among the best of modern scholars as well as a master of the pianoforte. He knew Edison very well and had a great friendship for Sir James Barrie.

Travelling greatly as he did, naturally he met all sorts and conditions of men. But I do not think he was very much interested in meeting people for any merely social distraction.

In illness he invariably consulted a specialist, but would not listen to argument, persuasion or abuse. Having determined upon a course and slept upon his plan, he would not be turned aside from it.

He admitted to having made many mistakes; but he preferred the mistakes of individuals to the perpetual compromise of a committee.

To all who worked with him he was accessible, whether it were at Crewe House or in his newspaper offices. He could be seen at a moment's notice, and the humbler the worker, the greater the care taken in understanding his grievance. Both Lord Rothermere and he always adopted this policy, with the result that their relations with their staffs had always been free from friction. It is quite impossible to get every employee personally to know his employer, but the appeal to Cæsar renders it easy to avoid the under-payment or bullying of the humbler members of the staff. Any disgruntled person could, in fact, address a postcard to Printing House Square, which would be seen by only two people—an old and confidential secretary and Lord Northcliffe himself. The knowledge that this could be done had a whole-

some effect throughout the business, and, as a matter of fact, not half a dozen such letters were received in the course of six months.

My friend reminded me with particular pleasure that more than five thousand of those formerly in his service went to the War; that they wrote to him constantly, and that from them he learned a great deal of news from the Front.

\* \* \* \* \*

He was very fond of being alone, of the solitary walk, the lonely ride in the car, or the quiet hour in the library. For this enjoyment he got few opportunities in the later days. The work he did for the Government made it essential that many of his working hours should be spent in consultation with specialists on Germany, Austria, Bulgaria and the Balkan States. As a director of propaganda in enemy countries, his success was due in no small measure to the fact that he had been able to gather round him men of the highest authority upon the nations concerned.

Many think that because he was, above all things, militant in the national interest, he must therefore have been of a quarrelsome disposition; but this was far from being the case, and I doubt if any series of newspapers was ever carried on with so little disputation. Previous to his going to America the scattered members of the British War Mission in the United States frequently quarrelled among themselves, and it is said humorously that they dreaded Lord Northcliffe's coming because they feared that

he would prove a man of violence. In effect, they were surprised by his gentleness. The relations of Crewe House with the Foreign Office and the War Office might easily have been of a very different nature from what they were, especially when we remember that Crewe House was under the direction of one who had often criticized the departments in question. Such a difficulty, however, never arose.

Consideration for others was ever a marked feature of Lord Northcliffe's administration. "The Chief," as he was called in all his offices, was known to take the deepest interest in the work of every member of the staff. His praise was as direct as his blame. He did not suffer fools gladly, but some friendly critics in his *entourage* said that he suffered them too long.

To his hobbies I have already referred. He killed salmon in Scotland, Ireland, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and in the rarely fished River Minho, which divides Portugal from Spain. He caught marsea and carnatic carp in India, trout in France, Germany, Belgium and the United States; tarpon in Florida. Very early in life he taught himself dry-fly fishing, and he showed with pride a fine brace of trout weighing  $5\frac{3}{4}$  and  $5\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. which he caught in a single morning on the Test. Upon another occasion, when he was engaged in friendly rivalry with Lord Selborne, the contest ended almost in a dead heat. Finally, however, Lord Selborne captured a monster weighing 6 lbs. and was declared the winner.

His chief concern was with new things. For the

best of the past he had a profound reverence, as witnessed in the spirit with which he effected the improvements at Sutton Place. There were few better authorities on Pepys, Evelyn and Audrey; while he considered *Captain Singleton* as good a book as *Robinson Crusoe*.



## CHAPTER XXI

### SOME STORIES ABOUT LORD NORTHCLIFFE

AMONG the many tributes paid to Lord Northcliffe after his death, one of the most eloquent was that offered by his old editor and colleague, Mr. Hannen Swaffer.

Mr. Swaffer was at one time the editor of the *Daily Mirror* and afterwards of the *Weekly Dispatch*—a post he occupied with much distinction.

Later on, as we all know, he became a great figure upon the staff of the *Daily Graphic* and *Weekly Graphic*. Mr. Swaffer tells many stories of his old chief, but does not fail to point out that some of his humour was a little sardonic, while undoubtedly he indulged in plausible exaggeration when telling a story for the benefit of the credulous. Once Lord Northcliffe got me into very serious trouble with the Catholic Truth Society—my own fault in a great measure, but in some part attributable to his playful ways as a storyteller.

We were down at Elmwood at the time and alone at the dinner-table. He had been dwelling upon the abominations of the Spanish roads as he then found them, and of how upon his old 35 h.p. Mercédès he had occupied some twenty-three hours upon a journey which should have taken him five. Every tyre had

burst in turn, and he finally drove into Seville with the wheels bound up in hay. From which narration, he went on to speak of the great cathedral, and he assured me very solemnly that he had heard a story there of the truth of which he had no doubt whatever. Indeed, he went so far as to allege that he had it himself from the lips of the American Consul.

It was a wild and fearful yarn the truth of which, had it come to me from anybody else, I should instantly have suspected.

A great painter was supposed to have been locked by mistake at night in one of the side chapels of the wonderful cathedral. He went to sleep, but woke at midnight to see a body of hooded men removing a stone from one of the vast pillars. Into the orifice thus revealed they thrust a woman whose shrieks resounded through the building. Next day, this painter, who was an American, was said to have reported the matter to the American authorities in the city, but was told to hold his tongue if he did not wish something very unpleasant to happen to him.

Of course the whole story was as venerable as the Tower of London. If Lord Northcliffe had used the word "nun" instead of woman, I think I should have smelt a rat at the beginning, but he was clever enough to imply that the unfortunate lady might have been anybody, and I confess that I did not detect the old Protestant canard in the narration.

It turned out that this piece of antiquity had been roving round the town almost since the early days of the ritualistic hullabaloo which disgraced the 'sixties. Sir Rider Haggard had been caught by it and other

unsuspecting people, and here was I, quite innocent in the matter, branded by an admirable society as a purveyor of base fiction. When I called Lord Northcliffe's attention to it, he merely smiled. "I invented that story upon the spot," he said—a terminological inexactitude of such magnitude as to leave me gasping.

To be sure, he would never hear a real word against the Catholic or any faith. His own bias was ever towards the High Church party in the Established Church, and he had a very real veneration for such men as Father Stanton and Father Dolling. Moreover, he was a great benefactor to several of their churches, and in particular he gave large sums to that very beautiful building at Kilburn, the Church of St. Augustine.

\* \* \* \* \*

I say that his humour was sardonic. But a few years ago, I was walking round the beautiful rose garden at Elmwood with him and heard that he had got a new Scotch gardener. He believed greatly in the brand, but his chief joy about this particular importation was the hatred which the other gardeners had for him.

"He had been here a week," said Lord Northcliffe, "when he sent to Aberdeen for spades double the size of those the men had used all their lives. Next morning he set them to work with them. If you wish to hear their opinion of him, you had better get one of them into a corner."

This kind of humour always appealed to him, and the fact of somebody doing something which he

particularly disliked to do never failed to please him. I remember a somewhat priggish painter, who had been boring a house party at Elmwood for some days, being routed by the simplest of expedients. Lord Northcliffe heard that the man detested fishing, and so he set him next morning to fish in the small pond there for the roach and Prussian carp with which the waters abounded. The rest of us spent pleasant moments watching the painter's head over the top of the bushes and speculating as to his thoughts. As he was a great pusher and had entertained an ardent hope that Lord Northcliffe would sit for him, he suffered even this purgatory for the sake of a possible commission.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sometimes, of course, the joke was against the Chief. Mr. Hannen Swaffer reminds me of a capital story of a famous member of the *Daily Mail* staff who was, in Lord Northcliffe's absence, discharged by Mr. Kennedy Jones, I think. A few days later, the man arrived at the office accompanied by four beautiful but weeping children. He obtained an interview with the Chief, and addressing him pathetically, he said, "You can't let these want for bread!" As Lord Northcliffe ever had a warm heart for children, the result was instantaneous. "You are not discharged," he said; "your salary is raised."

A few days afterwards, meeting Mr. Kennedy Jones, the Chief said to him: "I didn't know that X. had four beautiful children." "No more has he," was the answer, "he hired them."

\* \* \* \* \*



Once in Birmingham I met Mr. Charles Hands, the great correspondent, in the billiard-room of the Grand Hotel. He eyed me, I thought, a little furtively, and when I asked him what he was doing in the town, he told me in a whisper. "Hush!" he said; "the Chief sent me here three months ago, and he has forgotten where I am."

Of a similar order and concerning Carmelite House is the story of one of the great periods of our strikes. Lord Northcliffe did not know very much of the commercial side of his business, at that time, the genius of Lord Rothermere being responsible for it. He had always prided himself upon the fact that his relations with his workmen were ever amicable; so he had little patience with other firms which were embroiled frequently in labour disputes.

One evening, some strike in the neighbourhood moved him to angry eloquence. He called his staff and addressed them in magnificent periods. "This sort of thing must end," he said; "we never have any strikes—my men are amenable enough! What does it all mean? Put an end to it." Mr. Hannen Swaffer, as it chanced, was one of those who listened to this harangue: but hardly had he left the Chief's presence, when one of the managers seized him by the arm. "For heaven's sake come along," he cried, "our packers are out!"

\* \* \* \* \*

I have told in another place of Lord Northcliffe's evasions of publicity: but the story of "Sandy" Thomson sitting in his lordship's fur coat and smoking a huge cigar while he bowed to an admiring multitude

is not the only one of the kind. Sometimes when he was bothered, Lord Northcliffe would name his valet as his confidential private secretary and would set the unhappy man to discuss questions of European politics with some trying interloper. Not that he refused the Press audiences—a more accessible man in reasonable circumstances was not to be named—but he most strongly objected to being followed upon his holidays, and followed he was in the most amazing manner. I remember two women journalists who chased us to Paris, from Paris to Bordeaux, and Bordeaux to Pau, where finally they came up with us. They were the victims of the valet, who received them in Lord Northcliffe's room, entertained them superbly, and sent them away with a story which must very much have astonished the editorial staff which received it. This interview I do not think appeared, but an editor from the same paper did write later on to the Chief asking him for his opinions upon certain matters. The answer was characteristic: "Dog does not eat dog," said Lord Northcliffe—and the man did not write again.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of his favourite sayings was that no man was a master of his own newspaper: he never knew what they were going to do. Once, I recollect, he tried to help a worthy musical publisher who had been of some service to him in his early days, but had turned to invention. The man had contrived a machine of the penny-in-the-slot variety. There were two figures, I think, which tried to kick a ball into a hole, and having put your penny in the slot, you wit-

nessed this miniature game of football for your money. Two thousand pounds were needed to start the venture upon its way, and, desiring to help an old colleague, Lord Northcliffe put up the money. This episode he forgot until a year later, when, opening the *Daily Mail* one morning, he read a violent diatribe against the encouragement of gambling. The article roundly denounced a wicked fellow who had invented a machine by which youth could be seduced to the vice of gambling, and this machine, it added, was already very popular in public bars and other places where loafers congregated. Acting upon information received, the police immediately seized every one of these machines upon which they could lay hands. The plant for making them was, I think, destroyed and the whole enterprise swiftly ended. Needless to say that it was the invention for which Lord Northcliffe had subscribed his two thousand pounds.

\* \* \* \* \*

He was not the man to be taken often for anybody but himself, yet this happened more than once in his earlier days. He told me of meeting in the corridors of Carmelite House upon one occasion a pompous merchant who had been affronted by the financial article. The stranger caught him by the arm and said, "Young man, if you can get an interview for me with Lord Northcliffe I will give you five pounds, and here is one to begin with." Lord Northcliffe pocketed the money and told him to call again on the following afternoon. We can imagine the amusing interview which followed—one in which the financier was not only told some very plain truths, but warned that any

repetition of his original offence might well put him in the hands of the police.

The truth was, of course, that he never in all his life feared bluntness of speech, and did not care twopence to whom it was addressed. I remember well a would-be Cabinet Minister coming down to lunch with us at Elmwood one day, and saying, "I want your influence with the Government, Lord Northcliffe." The answer came without a moment's hesitation: "You won't get it. I think if you were in the Cabinet it would be a scandal." Needless to say, the man did not stay with us long to enjoy the scenery of Thanet.

\* \* \* \* \*

He never responded to attacks in other newspapers, however venomous. Even when during the War they put about the amazing fiction that he was a German, he did not take the slightest step to refute it. To me, however, he told the story of that laughable episode.

An enemy American newspaper had sent to London a man who was instructed to get such backstairs gossip concerning Lord Northcliffe as he could—the idea being, of course, to do him an injury. This ambassador of hate seems to have been an exceedingly foolish fellow, who had never been to London before and knew absolutely nothing either of our aristocracy or our city. By some odd mischance, he mixed up the name of Wandsworth with Harmsworth, and having looked up the peerage, he came to the sapient conclusion that Stern of Frankfurt was no other than Alfred Harmsworth's forebear. As a matter of fact,



of course, Lord Wandsworth was descended from the Sterns of Frankfurt; but this ridiculous fiction was made much of in certain yellow papers across the water, and even shrewd people here were tempted for a moment to believe it. Indeed, so remarkable was their credulity that a famous actor stopped me in a West End Club and actually said: "I have had the shock of my life to-day—Northcliffe is a German." My answer was a question. "Is he?" I asked, and added: "Well, he wasn't yesterday, so something must have happened."

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            \*

On the South Coast on one occasion during the War we met an obvious Hun, who waited upon us very badly at dinner. Somebody in the party called him Bismarck, which outraged his feelings beyond bearing, and addressing Lord Northcliffe with vigour, he exclaimed: "Anybody dot call me Bismarck I go mit him to the policeman und die witness." Happily the journey was never made and the dreadful consequences were evaded.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            \*

He disliked stories on the border-line, but was very fond of some ancient humours which most of us had long forgotten. Well do I remember one Christmas Week at Elmwood being reminded by him of the Waits who complained bitterly that they had been singing for two whole hours "Christians Awake" outside the house of Moses Levy. This was just the story to appeal to him, as were all stories of Scotchmen, for whom he had the greatest admiration, but whose supposed lack of humour he would sometimes deplore.

“A dull paper this morning,” I had heard him say over the telephone, and then: “These d——d Scotsmen, I suppose.” Yet Scots were ever his trusted confidants, and he attributed much of his fortune to their genius.

\* \* \* \* \*

With men who told many stories he was sometimes pleasantly impatient. That brilliant raconteur, Sir J. B. Percy, the delightful editor of the *Irish Cyclist*, went down to stay at Sutton Place one week-end, and was told that the chef had prepared a special dish for him. Upon being served and the cover removed, a fine pile of roast chestnuts was discovered. I do not think Sir James told many stories upon that occasion.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE END

THE passing of Lord Northcliffe was for many Englishmen a real tragedy, and not a few felt that they had lost a personal friend.

He had not enjoyed really good health since his boyhood, and his physician—Dr. Seymour Price—told me that one of the valves of his heart had been diseased for some years. Against this handicap he battled with a courage which was noteworthy, and it was not until the year 1910 that he was persuaded to take a real holiday.

Happily, during the early years of the War, he seemed to his friends to be in unusually good health, and his energy at that time could only be described as phenomenal. The immensity of his effort, however, must have sorely tried an enfeebled system, and in the year 1919 he underwent an operation for a non-malignant adenoma of the thyroid gland at the hands of Mr. James Berry. From this he made a speedy recovery, and some few weeks later, after he was convalescent, I went to Scotland with him and found him in an unusually cheery mood.

We discussed for the first time at Perth the memoirs that I proposed to write of him, and often he would sit down for an hour before dinner in a half-darkened

room, and dictate to me some of his earlier memories. Oddly enough, they were often inaccurate, and perhaps I should then have remarked a certain failing of that great intellect. One statement he made that quite amazed me. He declared that he had been at school at Stamford after leaving the Henley House School at Hampstead. This I knew to be quite inaccurate, for when I first met him as a little boy, he told me stories of the Stamford School, and was then actually a scholar at Henley House.

Apart from this, he was mentally alert enough, and much interested in the prospect of a book. There had recently been published in America several reputed stories of his early youth which were wholly inaccurate and caused him some annoyance, and he was very anxious that a plain, straightforward story of his career should be set down. We worked at this day by day after play on the links, or one of our many excursions to Stanley Pools in quest of salmon. But there was more of the book than the fish, I remember, and there is something pathetic now for me to look at these tattered notes, partly mine and partly his, and to recall how our memories wrangled over certain details, and with what precision he could tell me of the means by which he had achieved success.

This was in the year 1915. In 1921 I visited the Moray Forth with him, and stayed for a while at Nairn to golf. Before we had left Perth, however, Mr. Hughes, the Australian Premier, came all the way from London to see us, and already Lord Northcliffe had discussed with him the question of emigra-



tion to Australia. As most people know, Mr. Hughes is stone deaf and can only hear by the aid of an instrument which he places on the table before him when you are speaking to him. He told me incidentally that if politicians said unpleasing things to him in Australia, this machine had a habit of getting out of order and leaving the distressed politician entirely unable to make him hear anything at all.

Lord Northcliffe was very well here and played uncommonly good golf. The Australian cricketers, I remember, came to Inverness during our stay and we went over and saw them, although he knew little about cricket and had forgotten almost what he ever did know. I recollect him being greatly impressed by the fact that the Scottish bowlers got the Australians out for some two hundred runs, and he was inclined to scoff when we suggested to him that bonnie Scotland would not make many in reply. As a matter of fact, the team was skittled out headlong in the approved Australian fashion, and as Britishers we returned to Nairn with our tail between our legs. This journey, however, was not without incident, for in Inverness a charming young man asked us to give him a lift back to Nairn, and we discovered that our wayfarer was no other than "Sapper," that delightful writer of adventure stories.

There were many excursions these days and pleasant adventures. Lord Northcliffe's nephew, the Hon. Esmond Harmsworth, had been in Cromarty Harbour during the War and had made a most hazardous journey one day across the Firth to visit his uncle. The waves ran high and the young sailor was in a very

small motor-boat, and for quite a long time Lord Northcliffe sat at the door of his hotel wondering if the transit would or would not end in tragedy.

Another visit we paid was to the famous Culbin Sands, lying some miles to the east of Nairn, and possibly as remarkable a waste as any in the kingdom. These sands were blown up in a night during a great storm of the year 1694. As an old writer said, "It came suddenly and without warning. A man ploughing had to desert his plough in the middle of the furrow. The reapers in a field of late barley had to leave without finishing their work. In a few hours the plough and the barley were buried beneath the sand. The drift, like a mighty river, came on steadily and ruthlessly, grasping field after field, and enshrouding every object in a mantle of sand. Everything, which obstructed its progress, speedily became the nucleus of a sand mound. And to add to the horrors of the scene, the sand had choked the mouth of the river Findhorn, which now poured its flooded waters among the fields and homesteads, accumulating in lakes and pools till it rose to a height by which it was able to burst the barrier to the north, and find a new outlet to the sea, in its course sweeping to destruction the old village of Findhorn, which had but a short time before been abandoned by the villagers. On returning, the people of Culbin were spellbound. Not a vestige, not a trace of their houses was to be seen. Everything had disappeared beneath the sand. The weird scene which met their anxious gaze that morning is the scene we now behold—desolate and depressing enough to us, but how

terribly painful and harrowing must it have been to them !

\* \* \* \* \*

This pleasant holiday we repeated in part in the year 1921—going to Perth and thence to St. Andrews for the golf championship. Lord Northcliffe was always keenly anxious to see our great golfers, but even more interested, I think, in those from America. He had warned us at an early date that golf had become the national game of America, and that sooner or later we should have to surrender our supremacy, for the time being, at any rate, to some American player. As it happened, Jock Hutchinson, who was really beaten this year by Mr. Roger Wethered, actually obtained the championship through the accident of his English rival stepping upon his ball; but he, of course, was a born and bred St. Andrews man, and only by a wild stretch of the imagination could have been called an American player. It is a different story to-day, since Mr. Hagen has established for the first time the supremacy of the Americans.

For myself, I regard the year 1921 as a most unlucky one for my friend. He was, as I say, away with me on a holiday, cheery and well in health, full of schemes for his papers, greatly obsessed by his task of remodelling *The Times*, full, one might say, of honours, if not of years, when lo and behold! Mr. Murdoch, coming from Australia, appeared one day at Perth and changed in a few hours what was truly the happy course of his life. For Mr. Murdoch persuaded him, I think, to go to Australia and there to receive the magnificent welcome which was ultimately accorded



to him. My own appeals fell upon deaf ears. When he talked to me of a voyage round the world, of a visit to Australia, to New Zealand, to Japan, to China and to India, I told him very frankly that by undertaking such a journey he might be signing his death warrant. But it was ever vain to reason with him when his mind was set upon a purpose.

“I must go to Australia, my dear Max,” he said; “I am thinking of the future of our race.” And go he did to his death, as now we know.

The voyage began with a malchance in his beloved America. There was some stupid misunderstanding about an interview which he had never given, and we had the tiresome spectacle of old enemies once more raising their heads at the great Englishman who had helped to save them from the peril. They even contrived to have some slight put upon him in Washington—an unpardonable offence; but, having done their worst, they left their victim in peace to sail to the South Sea Islands and thence to Australia. The records of the voyage, of course, are in recent memory and need not be recapitulated here. For myself, I had a postcard from him whenever he went ashore—always merry and light-hearted and not infrequently humorous at the expense of the ladies. One such card I remember depicting a dozen far from attractive damsels upon a sea-beach in the South Pacific, and all the words upon the card were: “We can do much better than this at home.”

From Australia he wrote little save greetings, but I knew that he had told the politicians there some very straight truths, as he meant to do when he set out.



How could they hold that great continent with so few white men, when Eastern minds were already set upon it? Why were they closing their gates to desirable immigrants? He asked them the question plainly, as we know; met with some opposition, as was to be expected; and quitted Australia finally with a splendid work well done and a nation told frankly of the position in which it stood.

It was the same when he entered Japan. Surely it needed some courage to tell the Japanese frankly that the usefulness of the British alliance was past and that a new era had dawned! Perhaps he knew the Oriental mind better than most of us. It was ever his belief that such nations as the Japanese and the Germans pay the greatest respect to the man who is the least afraid of them. Certainly in Germany, before the War, he was as greatly honoured as any Englishman who ever went there—and this in contrast to the treatment they meted out to a certain great nobleman who had entertained their Kaiser with splendour, and who was treated little better than a footman when he visited Berlin in return.

The real mischief of this World Tour was not, perhaps, the fact that the Chief was working, as he put it himself, "like a steam engine," all the time, but that he adopted a dietary which weakened his constitution to a deplorable extent. As Dr. Seymour Price said to me: "Instead of half starving himself as he did, he should have taken as much food as possible. Instead of denying himself all drink he should have drunk consistently." As a matter of fact, he lived like a monk in Lent, and actually lost

two stone upon the journey. When I saw him at Carlton Gardens upon his return, I could hardly believe that I was looking upon the friend who had left me eight months before. The robust figure, the upright bearing, the buoyant manner were gone. I saw a stooping, wizened, shrunken old man and the first glance at him told me that he was doomed. For all that, the end came more swiftly than any of us had imagined. We did not know that he was already suffering from the most deadly and rare disease, endocarditis. The old valvular trouble had conquered at last. A germ had settled there, and from that moment every heart-beat pumped deadly poison into his arterial system. Naturally it affected every organ, and the earliest to go was the brain. The friends who worked with him, not knowing what was the matter, stood amazed and helpless. He had become excited beyond reason, attacked most fiercely those for whom he had had the greatest affection, and finally, in this mood almost of delirium, he went off to the Rhine Provinces to write those amazing articles, which nothing but ignorance of his condition permitted to appear in the columns of *The Times*. But a few weeks more, and we were all to know the dreadful truth. Mr. Wickham Steed visited him in Switzerland and instantly discovered that the poison had temporarily deprived him of his reason. He was exactly in that kind of delirium which afflicts many men at the crisis of disease—that and nothing more, despite the fables with which the town was filled.

Of course he had to come home without loss of time, and Sir Leicester Harmsworth and Dr. Seymour

Price went immediately to Switzerland to bring him back. They were helped most generously by M. Poincaré himself, who lent his carriage for the journey home, and expressed, as indeed the French people did so eloquently afterwards, the greatest solicitude for his condition. Back at Carlton Gardens, we find him in the hands of some of the greatest physicians in the world—Sir Thomas Horder, Sir James Mackenzie, Dr. Seymour Price himself. Indeed, experts in many diseases came to the house to see what they could do to save a life so precious. The most indefatigable exertions were made. Actually three storeys above his bedroom were robbed of their ceilings, girders taken out and a kind of bungalow with telephone and electric light erected upon the very roof of the mansion. It was all in vain. No man, I understand, has ever recovered from infective endocarditis, and Lord Northcliffe, unhappily, was not to be the exception. For a brief period he became calmer, in mind absolutely normal, and knew that he was to die. Upon his birthday, the 15th July, he sent telegrams to many of his old friends, in which he intimated pathetically that that was the last message they would ever get from him, and gradually he sank into unconsciousness, and one of the greatest of all Englishmen was no more.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following account of Lord Northcliffe's last illness was given by the *British Medical Journal*:—

#### LORD NORTHCLIFFE'S DEATH

The death of Lord Northcliffe from a typical attack of infective endocarditis, while in the prime of his life and activity, is all the more deplorable because if he had realized the signi-



There can have been few scenes surpassing that witnessed at his funeral, few memorial services so superbly simple and beautiful as that in Westminster Abbey, upon this momentous occasion. Vast crowds of people thronged the streets of London. There were weeping women and men who suffered a true emotion. All felt that his last words to us might have been those of William Pitt, the great Earl of

---

ficance of the early symptoms from which he must have suffered it is practically certain that treatment could have been adopted which might perhaps have prevented the development of the complication from which he died. The acute disease to which he was a victim was due to an infection of the heart by a streptococcus, and was therefore of the severest type of this intractable form of disease of the heart, which on that account is frequently called malignant endocarditis. What seems probable is that he had, in fact, suffered from streptococcal infection for at least a year. The origin of the infection in these cases is often very obscure, but not uncommonly it can be traced to a septic infection around the roots of teeth, and it may be that this is how it began in Lord Northcliffe's case. However this may be, there can be no doubt that he had a general streptococcal infection and that eventually the blood was invaded. Very often the history of this extremely fatal form of endocarditis suggests that the infection, having reached the blood, attacks one of the valves of the heart which may have been damaged, perhaps by rheumatism, many years before. It is known that Lord Northcliffe had a cardiac murmur at least fifteen years ago; how long it had been present before that is not known. It is one of those incidental discoveries which are not of very much significance unless, as in his case, the damaged valve of the heart becomes infected. Although, as has been said, it is possible that he may have had symptoms of septic poisoning which could have been recognized a year or so ago had he then sought medical advice, the fact remains that until the heart was attacked by the infection he was not himself aware that anything was wrong. Remittent fever, with all its well-known accompaniments, exhausting the physical and mental powers of the patient, is one of the usual manifestations of the disease, which, in this instance, followed its almost invariable course, for it is one little amenable to treatment. The symptoms, as already said, were typical, and that sums up the case.



Chatham : " How I have loved my country." Truly did it seem as though, for a brief moment, that great Abbey was alive with the soul of the dead, and that his spirit breathed upon the worshippers. And we who mourned him could but seek our consolation in the thought that his life's work was nobly done, and that it would stand for all time, an imperishable achievement in the national cause.

So King and country honoured him. So he went to his rest—the golden-haired boy had become the leader of men and of peoples, the figure of The National Purpose, a true son of Empire and of the land he loved. History shall tell truly of his greatness. For the moment we remember but the passing of a great man and the loss of a dear friend.

THE END









DA566.9  
N67P45

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**A** 000 650 489 8

