



Henri

WITH
NORTHCLIFFE
IN FLEET STREET

Other Works by the same Author

THE ARGENTINE THROUGH ENGLISH EYES

GEORGE MEREDITH: HIS LIFE & ART

BARRIE: THE STORY OF A GENIUS

MEMORIES OF BOOKS & PLACES

STEVENSONIANA

BARRIELAND



A Personal Record by
J. A. HAMMERTON

WITH
NORTHCLIFFE
IN FLEET STREET

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NINE AUTHORS IN SEARCH OF A CHARACTER

THIS book has been written without notes or memoranda. It represents the antithesis of the diarial method. Where I have been in doubt about a date, or a statement of fact, which I could verify, I have done so. But, as a whole, it is essentially an effort of memory.

And yet, of all those who have written about Lord Northcliffe, there is none who could have offered a work so documented as mine might have been had I been ambitious of becoming his biographer. This, for a reason which will presently appear.

I cannot have greatly desired to be his biographer, else I should have made full and proper use of the unique opportunity with which he provided me. And in writing, ten years after his death, of my own intercourse and editorial adventures with him, my desire is mainly to offer an individual and entirely original contribution to the growing mass of Northcliffiana; a contribution that may help to the fuller understanding of a man of genius, a great man in many ways, and not so great in others, a complex, elusive, headstrong, irritating, charming, unreasonable, gentle, rude, lovable, unforgettable personality.

Four men who knew him in not greatly varying degrees of intimacy were at different times appointed his biographers. To No. 1 he wrote from his villa at Valescure so long ago as April 28th, 1910, inviting him to put together "such matter as I have", so that, in the event of "too much Carmelite House or Printing House Square" finishing him

off rapidly, No. 1 would be able to retaliate against two persons who were then preparing books about him: a "horrible fact that has been revealed to me in the last two years". The outcome of this invitation will be told later. But be it said at once that No. 1 never wrote a line of that proposed biography.

No. 2, who was a friend of Northcliffe's youth and remained an intimate to the end, was encouraged to write his biography some five years later. He wrote it. Northcliffe read it, but its immediate publication was not approved.

No. 3, I should suppose, was asked to write his about 1916. He wrote it, but it is still unpublished. Why Northcliffe did not agree to its printing I do not know, as I am certain it is a brilliant and sympathetic biography.

No. 4 was, I suspect, invited to try his hand in the autumn of 1917. And his life of Northcliffe must also have been as competent a work of biography as No. 3's. Yet again permission to print it was withheld!

At Northcliffe's death, therefore, three unpublished lives of him existed. He had at least taken measures against the two unnamed persons who, anterior to 1910, were alleged to be engaged upon books about him. Who these persons were I cannot guess, as no Northcliffe biographies appeared earlier than W. E. Carson's *Northcliffe: Britain's Man of Power*, published in America only, in 1918.

When "too much Carmelite House and Printing House Square" (and too much, alas, of many other more distressful things) culminated in his death on August 14th, 1922, authors Nos. 2, 3 and 4 were at liberty to recast and print their several works. No. 2's appeared in 1922 as *Lord Northcliffe: a Memoir*, by Max Pemberton. Its author had turned most of his present tenses into the past, but had

Apr. 28th VILLA DE SAUVE,
VALEDCURE,
DE RAPHAËL,
NOR-FRANCE.

My dear Hamerton

It was most kind of you to send me your Meredith Book. I have now finished both that & your Dickens' Companion. You do not pretend that they are finished biographies - such as Barry's 'Parnell'. In my opinion however they are vastly more useful than many more pretentious works.

The horrible fact has been revealed to me in the last two years, that two people are preparing books about me: In case too much Carmelite House or Punting House Square should finish us !!

LORD NORTHCLIFFE'S LETTER TO THE AUTHOR SUGGESTING THE PREPARATION OF A BIOGRAPHY

Rapidly they will produce these
books, & I shan't be able to hit 'em
back! Sutton suggested that you
might perhaps put together for
me such matter as I have the
said that he knew you could be
relied upon not to mention the
fact of any living individual
whatever. Think it over & I will
see you when my doctor's let me
return. The correspondence you
send me gave me vast entertainment
Kind regards

Yours sincerely
Kathleen

overlooked some which read curiously. He recapitulated most of the well-known and often-printed facts. He also mentioned that Northcliffe had "enjoyed bad health" and that he spent "delightful days" with Haig at the War.

No. 3 may some day amplify and print his book, and none will read it more eagerly than I, for of all who were ever close to Northcliffe, who has a better right to be heard than H. W. Wilson?

No. 4's appeared in 1930 as *Northcliffe: An Intimate Biography*, by Hamilton Fyfe, and one of the reasons that I am attempting my present task is that I may have the pleasure of reading Fyfe's work, which I am sure is worthy of its subject and its writer. At the time of its appearance I decided not to read it until I had put on record my own recollections of our fascinating Chief.

For it happened that of the four authors invited by Northcliffe to try their hands at writing his life I was No. 1 and the only one of the four who never wrote a line of it. Thereby (as I have often hinted) showing an appreciation of the man that almost gives me a special title to describe and interpret his character. Perhaps I took him less seriously than the others. Just as one should never take a woman at her word, so with a genius who has something of the feminine in him. I do not doubt that had I compiled his life, as he had asked me to do, it would merely have been the first of the four to be "turned down".

Vain, indeed, was the hope that anyone could have written the life of the Chief in such a way that it would have received his complete approval.

At the time when Northcliffe wrote me that letter from Valescure, broaching the question of my preparing and giving shape to the biographical material he offered to put at my disposal, his mind was seething with the daily

problems which the reorganization of *The Times* presented; and as I read the letter again I can see that he must have had moments then when he seriously contemplated the possibility of falling an early victim to the herculean labours he had so light-heartedly undertaken just two years before. He knew, as all men do who attempt it, that he was living on the very edge of his vitality: using up his reserves of physical power, taxing his nervous system to cracking point. No doubt he was quite sincere when he wrote of the possibility of being "finished off rapidly", his schemes and ambitions incomplete.

But was there ever a stranger way of "feeding" a future biographer than that which Northcliffe chose for providing me with the most astonishing medley of personal confession and recollection of all the vital and trivial events of his extraordinary career? For months hardly a week passed without at least one afternoon, often a whole day, and sometimes the greater part of two consecutive days being devoted to this new whim of his. At no time were any documents given to me. I was never asked to sit down and make notes of anything that I was told. But for hours on end I would be talked to and taken about, now in his Rolls, again in a taxi, sometimes afoot, to scenes associated with his private life and journalistic career.

Or again, for hours on end I would be walked in the Green Park, or Regent's Park, and made to listen to the liveliest descriptions of his nearest relatives, his friends, his acquaintances. He would begin a talk with: "Let me see, last Wednesday I told you all about my fat brother ——. And now I am going to tell you about ——" And, with much comic detail and a good deal of frilling, I would get a succession of stories about the particular relative he had chosen for the opening subject of that

afternoon's talk. In this way I was put in possession of most of the intimate details of the origin of *Answers*, of the acquiring of the *Evening News*, and something of the starting of the *Daily Mail*, with numerous brightly coloured vignettes of the various editors and others associated with him in these enterprises.

It may seem strange that, having come to an understanding that I was to regard myself as his Boswell, and his so fruitily discharging the Johnsonian rôle, I was so supine about the task that I never began it. While it would be foolish to pretend that I am without regret at having made no single note of all that wonderfully interesting and amusing talk, I confess that at no time have I developed any tendency towards the habit of note-making, and at most have never exceeded the jotting down of a few "heads" for subsequent expansion.

Moreover, at the time when Northcliffe was so lavishly furnishing me with personalia for note-making, I was extremely busy throughout all the working hours of each day and often grudged some of the many hours I had to devote to listening to him. It happened, therefore, that even had I greatly wished each day to record or elaborate my new Northcliffiana, there was little or no time for the task. But for several reasons I felt no urge to set about the undertaking. These will be found implicit in my story.

It is not easy to explain why a proposal which would have attracted so many hundreds of journalists left me somewhat cold. Not, indeed, that I ever had the faintest sense of coldness towards any personal talk to which the Chief treated me, as he was invariably engaging and nearly always amusing. But I felt that I should merely be wasting my time so far as preparing the material for an official

“life” of Northcliffe was concerned, and, as I have already indicated, later events abundantly justified my opinion.

As I have always had an exceptionally retentive memory—a gift that is not unconditionally to be envied—which now seems more distinct and clearly defined when looking back upon the long past years than on the happenings of recent days, my many talks and walks with Northcliffe remain vividly present in my mind. And I will readily vouch for the accuracy of what I have written down here for the first time after the lapse, in some instances, of as many as twenty-seven years. There is a sense of detachment, too, that comes in thus reviewing from a distant perspective things on which one may once have felt hotly: “all passion spent”.

That is why I feel that the plan of telling a bit of my own story in its relationship to the man who influenced so large a tract of my life has a peculiar value in helping to reveal the character of that man, in whose perplexing personality interest is more likely to increase than to diminish with the passing of the years. It is also my excuse for the egotism of my frank and truthful narrative.

While I have arranged these memories and impressions in two sections, there is frequent overlapping, since Northcliffe is obviously, in relation to me as one of his editors, as dominant a figure in the narrative of my editorial adventures as in the section headed “The Man I Knew”. But my recollections, jotted down as they have come readiest to my mind, have been allowed to follow a haphazard course until I have finally shaped them into such order as they here present.

Books about Northcliffe are already numerous. In addition to those above named there exist at least four others of a biographical nature, none of which, save Hannen

Swaffer's curious medley of spiritualism and graphic portraiture in *Northcliffe's Return*, have I read. With *My Northcliffe Diary*, by Tom Clarke, I shall now feel free to acquaint myself, having refrained from even looking into it while engaged upon my present work.

Other books about Northcliffe will surely be written. For not even to all his intimate friends could he have appeared the one same man. The facts of his life are easy to ascertain and to record. These have not concerned me greatly. His many-sided character needs to be studied in its reactions upon those who knew him and passed crowded years of their lives with him. So that if we see Northcliffe at one time as a character in search of a biographer, there would now appear to be no end of biographers in search of him.

PART ONE

THE MAN I KNEW

MEMORIES AND IMPRESSIONS

THE MAN I KNEW

MEMORIES AND IMPRESSIONS

I

WHEN his last detractor has had his say, the name of Alfred Harmsworth, Viscount Northcliffe, will remain a great one among those of the men of genius who were rising to fame in the eighteen nineties and attained to world-wide renown in the first quarter of the present century.

• He was not a great man in the sense that David Livingstone, or General Gordon, or W. E. Gladstone was a great man. In each of these there existed a certain quality of supreme distinction which can be described only by the word "goodness". They were all—never mind the lying tongues that have traduced Gladstone—"good men". Men who at no time were actuated by mere ambition. Men who never deliberately planned to become "great". Men imbued from first to last with a signal sense of service, aspiring to ideals in which they sincerely believed.

Alfred Harmsworth was not without his ideals, though not until the end was the passion for power and personal distinction, which biased so much of his life, entirely extinguished. There were periods in his extraordinary career, however, and especially during the War, when something of that goodness which makes all selfish aims look mean and paltry rose up in him and led him to

achievements that may appear greater to future generations than to his own.

Concerning Northcliffe's patriotism, there is no danger of overstatement. I am persuaded that no one who took a prominent part in the public life of the country during the War years was at heart a greater patriot than he. It would be a long story to recapitulate even the bare details of the various *Daily Mail* campaigns in which he engaged at certain critical stages of the War, but the historian will attribute to him a very large measure of the credit for the energetic measures eventually taken by Lloyd George to support our soldiers on the battlefields of France with the necessary high explosives, which the limited vision and the localized experience of Kitchener had failed to provide. At no time in history has the power of the Press been more patriotically used than it was by Northcliffe in the munitions campaign, and when Stock Exchange numskulls publicly burned the *Daily Mail* in their pitiful ignorance of the true state of affairs, the valiance of its proprietor and sole director stood at its highest.

Some time after this event I happened to be walking down Farringdon Street with the Chief on our way, I think, to lunch in his private room at *The Times* office. We had been discussing the latest turn of things before we left Fleetway House, and we were still talking of the War as we came to the corner of Ludgate Circus. Without any careful choice of words, which has always seemed to me pedantic in ordinary conversation, I had happened to remark that it looked as though, after so much abuse and blackguarding, he was "going to come out on top". I can see him now, instantly reacting to this piece of casual slang, stopping for a moment or two on the thronging pavement and saying in his gravest manner: "Never say that again. I don't

want to come out on top. I want Britain to come out on top. Where I come out doesn't matter. Never suggest such an idea to anybody. I don't like to hear it." I can hardly think that he was posing, although there were many times when he showed an inclination to attitudinize. He was so swift in his rebuke, which I felt the slackness of my phrasing deserved, and so earnest in his manner that he impressed me with the conviction of truth. I did not doubt then, nor do I now, that what he said he felt.

All through the War he was actuated by no desire other than that Britain should win; no effort he made, no leader in the *Daily Mail*, in *The Times*, or in any of the journals which he controlled, had anything whatever to do with the spirit of mere newspaper sensationalism. Throughout the War, when his newspapers were most sensational, they were most sincere. He was prepared to see himself brought to financial ruin during that great trial of our country's strength rather than to support any measure which he believed to be ineffective or to approve of any of our statesmen for whom he had a personal liking if in his judgement that statesman lacked the energy which the terrific strain of the times exacted from our leaders.

Northcliffe's service to British journalism was simply inestimable. It is sheer affectation to lament the disappearance of the ponderous old journals which in the days of my youth seemed to be indestructible institutions of our social life. Such as survive—and these chiefly in the provinces—do so by virtue of having had some injections of the Northcliffe serum. Newer blood runs in their old arteries. The dynamic vitality of the man affected the whole Press. The superman of British journalism. Every old journal in our country that is brighter and livelier to-day than it was forty years ago is so because of Northcliffe. He

made his opponents, his rivals, those who hated him, better journalists. He believed in competition. If he had a very successful periodical to which no competing firm had produced a rival, he brought one out himself.

He despised all who were content to continue in the old ruts. His restless ambition to add new territories to the empire of journalism made him pre-eminently the man of his age, for his was the newspaper age and he its dominant figure. Had he lived he might have been our Mussolini. He would assuredly have liked to fill the rôle, and no Englishman is alive to-day who could have filled it better. The one danger from which we may have been saved in his disappearance was government by newspaper, towards which he seemed to be tending in the direction he ultimately gave to the policy of his Press. In his hands, however, and so long as his mental health endured, it would have been a lesser danger than in certain other hands, for he deeply felt that the power which his journalistic success had brought to him was something he had to control for the public good.

While one hesitates to claim a place for him among the good as well as among the great, there should be no hesitation in saying that never was any sinister element present in the manifestations of his genius. Which is more than might be claimed for some names pre-eminent in contemporary history: more than his jealous critics will allow to Northcliffe.

Nothing can diminish the magnitude of his achievement. No criticism can lessen his stature among the great men of his time. He was big enough to stand the scrutiny of the investigator of character as opposed to the panegyric of the admiring biographer. And in these memories and impressions of the man I seek to reveal his character as

frankly as the decencies allow and with that approximation to truth which impressions received in close contact with my subject, vividly remembered and honestly recorded, may be supposed to possess.

I am not attempting an orderly "character study". I am not trying to create a complete literary likeness of the man: only to record while they still endure in my memory some of the innumerable incidents, actions, confessions, gestures, oddities of behaviour, which crowd into my mind at thought of Lord Northcliffe. Out of these and the narrative of my personal experiences with him some sort of portrait of the man must emerge. It may differ radically from the reader's preconceived ideas of his character, but it will be truthful even if the outline is sketchy.

II

IN writing of great men, it is common to attribute to them qualities of vision and foresight which in the ultimate analysis one finds they did not really possess. If we recognize in Northcliffe a man of genius, we have perhaps admitted all. All things are possible to men of genius. We need not be surprised at anything they do or cannot do. They make their own laws. In the most ordinary affairs of life they may take rank with the half-wits. In matters of honour their actions often compare badly with those of commoner clay. "Great wits are sure to madness near allied." In my haphazard recollections of Northcliffe, I think I have noted most of his peculiarities, and it will be conceded that they better fit a genius than an ordinary person. If he had no great depth of mind, if he was (as I have illustrated in some detail) a sort of intellectual vampire,

if his appreciation of character was defective, as I have had the temerity to assert, and his judgement often deficient, wherein then lay his power? As well ask why could William Shakespeare write his plays? To mention the lesser with the great, the American actor, Raymond Hitchcock, was once asked to what he attributed his success on the stage. He answered: "Well, I can't act, I can't sing, and I can't dance, but I just go on and somehow put it across them." Anybody who saw Hitchcock will agree that this estimate of his powers was absolutely accurate. It is easy to specify things that Northcliffe could not do, but there is no sort of doubt about his ability "to put it across" his generation. On the positive side, however, there is this that can be said of him: he had vision in a time of confusion, he was daring where others were timid, he could make up his mind while others were debating. Above all, in practical journalism he was a man inspired. And, like Napoleon, he believed in his star.

With the growth of the Northcliffe legend came the notion that whatever he put his hands to turned to gold, and that his unnumbered successes were the results of astute preliminary calculation and a supernormal clearness of vision. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. Elsewhere in these pages I endeavour to show as occasion arises that failure was by no means unknown to him and that some of his greatest successes were due less to accuracy of judgement than to agility in accommodating himself to unforeseen conditions. Why, *Answers* itself, the first frail barque of all that splendid argosy he subsequently launched, would have gone to the bottom within a year had young Alfred Harmsworth been content to cling to his first idea without trimming his sails when the wind blew from unexpected quarters.

It is no part of my present task to trace the development of Northcliffe's career, since in its essentials that has already been done sufficiently well by others. But I do feel that it is desirable to recall such a fact as this when considering, however sketchily, the qualities of his greatness. We can be sure that he would have listened to no critic who doubted the wisdom of the scheme which he had conceived for floating *Answers to Correspondents* on June 2nd, 1888. It was a reasonably good idea, such as might have occurred to any bright young journalist, noting the supposed popularity of columns headed "Answers to Correspondents" in the daily and weekly newspapers of that time. Here, he thought, was a ready-made circulation awaiting him. Inquiring persons all over the country were writing every day to their local newspapers asking the editor to answer this question and that, and those inquiries provided an inexhaustible source of general interest in their answering.

But what may be a success as a feature in a newspaper will not necessarily be a success as a separate publication. This was the first of the important discoveries that young Alfred had to make. These "Answers to Correspondents" columns, less noticeable in the Press now than formerly, concerned only the most casual sort of reader, and a large proportion of the inquiries which editors toiled to answer were really to decide public-house bets. But, based upon the false idea that persons who wrote to newspapers asking all sorts of silly and sensible questions formed a potential public for a weekly periodical, *Answers to Correspondents* was a failure from the moment it went to press.

Fortunately, however, the young editor had associated with the numerous "dummy" inquiries which he answered in his first number a collection of brightly written miscellaneous matter somewhat on the lines already made popular

by *Tit-Bits*, and it was very easy, when he quickly awakened to the fact that he had made a mistake in the main idea of his paper, to develop what may be called its tit-bits side. From the first these articles were written in a livelier manner than had been characteristic of those in the pioneer weekly of the popular Press. "Human interest" was more noticeable in them. "A Living Clock", "Silk Stockings", "Right and Left Boots", "Living on Nothing a Year", "A Terrible Time with a Tiger", and so on—all these titles from the first number sufficiently indicate this. Emphatically, *Answers* was not "a success from the first", and its eventual and record-breaking circulation, attained in less than two years, was due less to the attractiveness of its contents than to the adventitious aid of an ingenious prize scheme.

Again, as all the world knows, one of the richest gold reefs that Northcliffe ever struck still flourishes as the *Daily Mirror*, which was conceived on lines totally different from those that eventually brought it to success.

Rather than preternatural clearness of vision, soundness of judgement, or abnormal ingenuity in gauging the public taste, what Alfred Harmsworth did possess in greatest measure was a high-hearted optimism, derived from his readiness to abandon preconceived ideas which had proved wrong and to profit by their failure in trying out others that seemed to have a gambling chance of succeeding.

Mention of the founding of *Answers* suggests a note on the fallibility of some memories. I am sure Northcliffe, at his fiftieth birthday celebration, must have winced inwardly when Thomas Marlowe, the editor of the *Daily Mail*, who presided over that notable function, in recalling the dramatic rise of our guest, spoke of the historic appearance of the first number of *Answers* "brightly clad in its

golden covers". At the time I wondered how many of the company had as clear a recollection as I have of buying the first number of *Answers* and occasional subsequent numbers which appeared naked and unashamed, rather crudely printed on cheap white paper, with no cover at all! Its twenty-third number was the first to appear in an orange wrapper, and it had run for about sixteen months before the success of its prize scheme—a pound a week for life for guessing the value of the gold in the Bank of England on a given day—sent its circulation suddenly up to unheard-of figures. By then advertisers were clamouring for the valuable publicity provided by that orange-coloured wrapper. Even so close a friend and associate in Harmsworth's early enterprises as Max Pemberton states in his memoir of him that the success which attended the early numbers of *Answers* was due to some extent to the effect of its orange wrapper attracting attention in the streets and on the book-stalls.

III

MOST of Northcliffe's mental concepts were grandiose rather than grand. The great things he achieved first flashed into his mind in grandiose proportions and had later to be scaled down in contact with realities. Various indications appear in my narrative. He was much less "the master of the event" than the agent of some imponderable outside force—something "not himself".

But he had his visions of great achievements, such as the creation of a truly national newspaper in the form of the much-abused but ever-progressing *Daily Mail*. Yet it is improbable that in his lifetime that had attained to anything like the largeness of its original conception. The

immense undertaking in Newfoundland, where thousands of acres of forest were acquired, townships built, and armies of workers settled to the task of producing wood-pulp for the ever-expanding Harmsworth publications, was an entirely rational conception, yet what a grandiose affair it must have been in the energetic mind that first conceived it! Some element of luck or good fortune, as well as sound common sense, entered into the vast project and led on to others almost as great, such as the acquiring of Clarke City in Labrador and the immense wood-pulp industry associated therewith.

Small wonder, as each of these visions of great things eventually came to be realized like dreams that stayed, if the man in whose mind they originated should have come to regard himself as a darling of the gods. There was here, and indeed in almost all his undertakings, a set of circumstances—friendly winds, favourable factors beyond his control—which sometimes in great measure and other times in less, but always to some extent, influenced and expanded many of the successes associated with his name. No man ever strove more earnestly after great things, or was more determined that they should be achieved; but no man was more wondrously favoured by times and events. And if, where he had done no more than “struck it lucky” with some bold and speculative venture, he still regarded himself as the master of the event, he certainly had the material proof that his achievement was no dream.

I have noted his largeness of mind in business affairs. No one need have gone to him with a small project, however attractive in its way. He was bent only upon “big things”. An idea that would have earned a mere thousand or two was of no use to him. “Butterfly-chasing” was his term for it. I had often to be warned against that seductive

pastime. This attitude of mind explained why he never bothered about the inevitable waste which his loosely organized businesses involved. He realized that those in command of great concerns who begin to fritter away their time on small economies and to apply Victorian precepts of thriftiness never achieve anything enduring, are indeed more likely to let their businesses slide downhill than to keep them on the heights. The waste that went on in many departments of the Harmsworth concerns was horrifying to a person brought up, as I had been, in the offices of provincial journals, where the heads of the firms investigated even the petty cash accounts.

We were walking in the West-End one day when Alfred whispered to me to observe a man who was approaching and who was evidently anxious not to meet the eyes of the Chief. "That fellow," he said, "is living on the interest of what he has stolen from me!" When he went on to explain exactly what this meant, I found it a picturesque way of stating that the person in question had acquired something like £7,000 of money belonging to the Harmsworth companies. His method had the charm of simplicity. He happened to be in a position to accept large quantities of manuscripts and to pass the payments for them without burdensome investigations from those who might have been able to detect the frauds. The manuscripts so accepted were eventually found to be dummies. The money paid for them had gone to numerous fictitious names and addresses where, in due course, it was collected by the ingenious gentleman himself. It seemed to me that Alfred did not bear him the least malice. He had not even been prosecuted, but allowed to get away with his swag. Nor was he the only one of his kind. But as each of the delinquents was discovered the office system for preventing

fraud was tightened up. Sir Harold Harmsworth saw to that. Eventually attractive openings for enterprises of this kind were reduced to a minimum.

I remember a particularly amusing instance of petty thieving in the commercial department at Carmelite House. A bright young man managed to steal about a dozen of our typewriters. His method, too, was delightfully simple. He worked it mainly in the luncheon hour. It consisted merely of bringing a cab to the door and carrying down to it two or three typewriters collected from different rooms in the building. Then off to a second-hand dealer with them! He settled the hall porter by telling him the machines were going away to be repaired. Alfred thought this amusing and, indeed, it was, but it had the economic value of producing a system which in the future made it difficult for even one typewriter to be purloined.

My reason for narrating such matters as these, which could be multiplied indefinitely, is that they show a man of creative genius concentrated upon the achievement of large successes and utterly indifferent to leakages which, however considerable in themselves, were of small account in the sum total of profit accruing to his creative energy. Had he stopped to concern himself with the multitude of petty details that must be examined in order to eliminate possibilities of waste, honest or dishonest, in the development of a great business, either he would never have built up that business or he would have been unable to maintain its continuous expansion.

Illustrative of his capacity for interesting himself in his minor publications and giving their editors an impression of personal contact with the Chief, I recall a luncheon at Carlton Gardens where the editor responsible for a group of papers and especially for one new and not very important

addition to the list, *Boy's Cinema*, was present. It was amusing to notice how dexterously our Chief had mugged up the terminology of the cinema world, in which he was but slightly interested, just to discuss this new publication with the editor responsible for it. He hadn't seen its layout, and knew of it only by name. Personally I have never seen a printed copy of it to this day, which indicates the limitation of my own interests in the Harmsworth productions. But there was the Chief with boyish eagerness discussing the possibilities of *Boy's Cinema* and suggesting titles for regular features, such as "Close-Ups", and how they might be written and illustrated, with as intent an expression on his face as though the whole future of the business depended upon the success of this minor addition to its immense list of weekly publications.

This capacity for entering into the interests of others, even in the most temporary and superficial way, accounted for a high degree of the charm which most of those who had dealings with him experienced and which, to those of his old colleagues who survive and carry on, still remains in memory fresh and alluring, despite the knowledge that it was both ephemeral and superficial.

IV

MUCH of the criticism to which one has had to listen from wandering stars of journalism who have come for a time within the Harmsworth orbit and afterwards found themselves either drawn into other systems or revolving solitarily in outer spaces, may be attributed to the inevitable faults of the Harmsworth methods. At all times throughout the great organizations that grew up around

him there has been a noticeable absence of that routine equanimity which before the coming of Alfred had characterized British journalism and had been responsible for the decrepitude and decay of once flourishing concerns, and notably *The Times*.

Himself he was a man of extremes. When it pleased him to please others, none ever succeeded better or created such an atmosphere of personal charm, and when it pleased him to displease others, the malicious intensity with which he could do so must have given him a satisfaction that was sadistic. I doubt if he was afterwards troubled with remorse where he had given pain, and quite as likely he did not continue to flatter himself on his own kind-heartedness after he had been exercising his better nature to the pleasing of others. Hardly anything that he ever took up but he "ran it to death". So with the human element in his newspaper work.

Fortunately those of us who were associated with the magazine and periodical publications had less occasion to experience the uncertainties resulting from these methods of intensity. I can best illustrate what I am driving at by taking a case which is typical of many: that of Bart Kennedy. Bart was an extraordinary fellow, who had been a tramp, a pugilist, an actor, and had filled a variety of other casual rôles in life before he took to journalism. He had no difficulty at first in making something of a success owing to the richness of his own picaresque life and a curiously individual style of writing, which derived its effects from repetition, somewhat in the style of Rodenbach and the Belgian symbolists, although Bart had never the slightest notion of their existence. He had very little use for verbs. But he achieved an undeniable effect that had a welcome freshness by contrast with the staleness of the conventional

journalism of the day. It was a thin vein, however, and likely soon to be exhausted. He had the misfortune to win the approval of Northcliffe for his work and to be used as a star turn in the *Daily Mail* for a year or two. He was well paid; his articles were always prominently placed in the paper. Poor Bart imagined that his fortune was made.

What actually happened was that eventually the continued appearance of his work not only became wearisome to readers, but ceased to amuse the Chief, and the fiat went forth: No more Bart until further notice! Here, indeed, was a blow for Bart's vanity and a severe shock to his financial system. Northcliffe's decision was quite wisely dictated by editorial policy, but no amount of argument could ever convince a writer who had become prominently identified with one daily paper that that paper could continue to be the same without him.

I am able to state that there was no sort of personal malice in this particular case, as it happened curiously enough that the Chief and I were walking along the south side of the Strand one day, a little east of Villiers Street, when we noticed the bulky figure of Bart bearing westward and on his espying the Chief we saw him strike across to the north side to avoid contact. This was just a week or two after the stoppage of his articles, and knowing that I was personally friendly with Bart, Northcliffe asked me to tell him when he next turned up at the Savage Club that he must not be foolish in harbouring resentments, as all that was required of him was that, so far as the *Mail* was concerned, he should "go into the wilderness for a little while": the time would come when he could return to the vineyard.

But Bart's pride was wounded in the discovery that the *Daily Mail* could continue to exist without his contributions, and if he was going into the b— wilderness he was b—

well going into the b— wilderness and he would see Northcliffe b— and d— before he would ever b— well kow-tow to him. So what he did was to involve himself in interminable difficulties by starting a scurrilous weekly, whose sole purpose was to attack his late benefactor to whom and to whose publishing firm Bart was still owing considerable sums of money advanced against contributions which he never wrote. The end for poor Bart, who remained utterly unreasonable and ungracious in his attitude, was miserable and sordid.

There were others like him, who enjoyed a brief period of success on the *Daily Mail* or some of the other Harmsworth publications, and failed to realize that they could not continue until the end of their days writing for the same public in the same papers. When the inevitable arrived they never forgave the Chief who had been the creator of their brief prosperity. Perhaps Northcliffe more than any newspaper proprietor of his time suffered thus from "benefits forgot". And it was thus that the legend arose about the Harmsworths getting hold of bright young journalists, whose brains they sucked dry as a well-squeezed orange and then as lightly threw them aside. Some oranges have more juice in them than others and most of those that were thrown aside were never very succulent fruit.

I am tempted to another paragraph or two about Bart Kennedy: they will also serve as sidelights on the character of Northcliffe. Bart was rather a rough diamond, if indeed he was any sort of diamond. But Northcliffe, always drawn by oddities of character, took to Bart warmly for a time, and even invited him as one of his party on a trip to America and Newfoundland. Such show of friendliness from the Chief often had a bad result on its object. Bart was not the only one who afterwards sought to presume upon some

such temporary display of kindness—or rather by so presuming made temporary what might else have been sustained.

I think it would be unfair to say that Northcliffe unduly cherished resentments, but where he felt that somebody to whom he had shown kindness had presumed thereon, he would ever afterwards be withdrawn and cold. As I was one of a number relatively small—when one thinks of the incalculable swarm of his friends and acquaintance—that remained to the end over a long stretch of years as friendly as at the beginning, it is just possible this was due to the fact that at no time did I ever seek to take the least advantage of the friendship which the Chief had shown for me.

But reverting to Bart and that American trip, here are two anecdotes. I doubt if Bart had ever possessed a dress suit before this event, and he had instructions to bring one with him in his kit. On the first night out from Southampton, as all travellers are aware, it is a convention that one does not dress for dinner, just as on the night before arrival at New York the same absurd convention applies. The Chief had given instructions to warn Bart of this. He was at all times anxious that his guests should observe the social conventions, and he had need to be anxious in the case of Bart, whose language was notoriously lurid and whose table manners had not been acquired in Mayfair. But Bart having bought an evening suit, and failing to see why any difference should be made between the first night and the second night of a voyage, insisted that as he had bought the bloody suit he was bloody well going to wear it. And he did, having the distinction of being the only one so garbed. This he repeated on the night before arrival. I entirely approved of Bart's independence in this sartorial matter. The Chief, I was told, pretended to be somewhat

put out of countenance by his guest, but I suspect that inwardly he felt Bart had common sense on his side.

The other little anecdote of this particular American trip illustrates Northcliffe's ready wit. He was even then beginning to take on that "full habit of body" which, unhappily, in his later years so developed that his once lithe and handsome figure assumed an unhealthy stoutness. Bart Kennedy had always been a somewhat bulky person, and from the back view it was easy to mistake the Chief for Bart, although Northcliffe might have resented such a mistake. Some other passenger on the boat who knew Bart, came into the smoking-room, went up and gave a seated figure a smack on the back saying "Hullo, Bart!" The person seated was the Chief, who instantly turned round and said: "Not Bart, if you please, but Baron."

Apropos of this confusion between Northcliffe and Bart Kennedy, another amusing incident occurs to me. During my days in Temple Chambers, whither, with Arthur Mee and our joint and several staffs, I was temporarily driven from Carmelite House in the great days of expansion, Northcliffe was coming along the corridor from the lift and one of my assistants had preceded him at a distance of fifty paces or so, opening our main door and letting it swing back against the slowly advancing Chief. What a row this led to! Northcliffe came at once to me, reporting the fact that some member of the staff who had seen him coming lacked the courtesy to wait for a moment and hold the door open for him, but in the most casual way left it to close in his face.

"Not that I care a button about myself," he went on. "But I will have manners in my office. Who this fellow is I don't know. He must be some school-board person. (He had recently developed a strong prejudice against school-

board manners.) Find him at once. Send him over to me at Carmelite House and make him bring a written apology. Tell him that it was not me he was insulting, but anybody who was calling upon Arthur or you. I will have nobody in my employment who has not learnt the first thing of courtesy. Heaven knows what these school-board boys are taught."

As well as I could I tried to smooth him down and to excuse the thoughtlessness of which he complained, feeling, I confess, entirely sympathetic to the unknown offender. It was some time before I discovered the guilty one. His name was Caradoc Evans, and out of the entire Harmsworth pay-roll at that time it would have been impossible to have named one less willing to behave in an offhand manner to the Chief. He confessed to me that he had seen a figure following him along the passage, but in the shadow had assumed it to be that of Bart Kennedy! To have offered this explanation to Northcliffe would have made matters worse, so the incident was closed by Evans conforming to all that had been asked of him, and retaining his job.

V

THE devices which he adopted for appearing to keep a super-human eye upon his multifarious publications were many and ingenious. Heads of producing departments, in a natural desire to give him the best impression of his journalistic wares, would usually, in sending him specimens of the numerous products of the Amalgamated Press, take care that he got "perfect" copies. Nobody knew better than he that this was to be suspected, and in the case of any publication in which he was temporarily taking a

closer interest on account of falling circulation or complaints that had reached him, he would make it his business to secure some copies which were in circulation in distant parts of the country. "The proper place to find out what our printing is like is in the north of Scotland or the Shetland Islands," he used to say, his eyes atwinkle. And, of course, he was right. The earlier and indifferent copies were more likely to be shipped to distant points than to be circulated in the home counties.

His social life often brought him in contact with persons who would mention that they had picked up casually one of his periodicals to the contents of which they took exception. Usually on the superabundant use of slang in the comic journals. He was very sensitive to such criticisms, even when they were of the most finicking kind.

Thus came into being a sort of office censor whose duty it was to examine with a vigilant and hypercritical eye the contents of all the periodicals, searching especially for "vulgarieties". There was never any need to search for anything that bordered on the indecent. The unswerving recognition of the conventions had been maintained in all Harmsworth publications from the start. Indeed, many of the so-called vulgarities were no more than innocuous jokes in the vernacular of the public among whom the comic publications circulated.

Slang entered very largely into their comic effects, and nothing more completely cramped the style of their editors than to receive, as they did from time to time, sharp notes from the head of the firm advising them to be more careful in the sort of language they allowed their contributors to use. A marked copy with the offending passages would accompany the note. These marked copies had been supplied to the Chief by the office censor, as there was no

probability that he would ever have detected the passages himself. His passion for suppressing the use of slang even in periodicals where it was quite admissible, became at one time so intense that it could not long continue at such heat.

Still not content with what was being done in the office, quite efficiently no doubt, it was then that, by a secret arrangement, he designated me as his private super-censor of journalistic manners throughout his periodicals. "The arrangement must be secret, or you'll find yourself the best hated man in the office," he warned me. This, I think, was in 1911, and the whole scheme was arranged with great elaboration by himself; advance proofs of every publication issued from the Amalgamated Press were sent privately to his home in St. James's Place, and thence delivered by one of his chauffeurs to my own home at Highgate.

I was supposed in the leisure of an extremely busy editorial life to wade through all these publications, most of which interested me not at all, with a single eye upon good literary style! None of the readers bought them for literary style, which was about the last thing they expected of them. He even fixed a special salary which was to be paid to me privately by Mr. Reginald Nicholson for this specific job. I was to get an extra £600 a year for it. But I knew from the first that the whole thing was impracticable and I had no sort of enthusiasm for it myself even if I had had the time. Exactly how it was allowed by both of us to lapse I cannot remember, but I do know that I never handled an instalment of the salary and never expected to! I felt from the start that there was nothing more substantial behind it than the whim of a moment.

The way in which he could use to advantage the most meagre information on any subject was so remarkable that

those who were familiar with this trick of his often derived amusement and some instruction from watching it in action. He would ask me about some new book that I had just been reading and in the most adroit way extract from me a sort of summary of its salient features. A few days later I would have the satisfaction of hearing this book being discussed by him and my information being utilized with such effect that it was difficult even for me to believe he had not read the book himself. Certainly none who heard him talking about it would have suspected that his knowledge was second-hand. Once we were talking about magazine "make-up", and as I favoured displaying the best pictures on right-hand pages I criticized one of our magazines in which the editor often put his choicest items on the left. Not long after I heard Northcliffe admonishing that editor and stating that he had "always insisted" on right-hand pages carrying the most attractive matter.

Perhaps the most opulent minded literary man of his acquaintance was Charles Whibley, between whom and Northcliffe there was a long-standing friendship. I often felt that this practice of brain-picking had something to do with their friendship, as from Whibley more than from any other man of his time he could thus secure brilliant and surprising glimpses of the literature of the day. But Whibley also had violent prejudices which the Chief would have to allow for. I remember him, when the three of us were travelling together, delivering the most intemperate eulogy of Tolstoi as "the greatest human being treading the earth to-day." The Chief was very reticent in his criticisms of Tolstoi and contented himself with listening to Whibley tomahawking me for daring to differ from him.

On one of Northcliffe's many visits to New York he made a speech at a public luncheon given in his honour.

The speech disclosed a knowledge of New York life astonishing in one who could not be supposed to have studied it so closely as a resident. Some of the other speakers at the luncheon expressed their surprise at the extent and accuracy of his information and his observation. The secret of this knowledge I had from Joseph Gleason, the American representative of the Amalgamated Press. On the afternoon before the speech was to be delivered the Chief took Gleason for a stroll "downtown". For an hour or more he plied him with questions relating to every peculiar phase of New York life that came before his vigilant eye as they walked the streets. And only those who knew him can imagine the machine-gun rapidity of his questioning. Unlike most persons who ask strings of questions, however, he asked none that he did not expect to be answered, and he remembered the answers. At the end of that hour's saunter downtown there was little of picturesque value in the manifold life of New York that he had failed to note, and, with Gleason's information, to understand. This rapidly acquired knowledge was used next day with all the point and slickness of an "old journalistic hand".

VI

ABOUT the time of my joining the Harmsworth organization what I may call the drift to Carmelite House was rapidly increasing. The continuing evidences of the magic that attached to the name of Harmsworth, as materialized in success upon success, and the unheard-of salaries paid to journalists as a part of the policy whereby Alfred was drawing to him the most alert brains in the newspaper world, had now largely discounted the earlier stories of

high-handed ruthlessness. All over the country it was the ambition of young journalists with ideas somehow to attach themselves to the wizard of Carmelite House and to trust to their own abilities in finding favour with him.

A common experience of mine was to discover at odd times a former colleague of the provinces in one of the Carmelite corridors and to find that he had just come up from Glasgow or Birmingham or Nottingham full of hope and enthusiasm for the London adventure. One of these was S., who had his first lessons in sub-editing from me on the *Glasgow Echo* in 1894. I bumped into him one day coming out of a room in Carmelite House and, after exchanging greetings, discovered that he had joined the *Evening News* as its dramatic critic. I had known S. since my boyhood in Glasgow and I knew that he held a high opinion of his own abilities, an opinion which I had been unable to share when he was associated with me as a junior colleague. But with the pertinacity of his race, and after sundry ups and downs, he eventually became news editor of *The Times*, which post he held in the early days of the War. In the end, however, I am afraid he failed to stand up to the demands made upon him by the Chief, and the last of poor S. was a tragedy in the river Kelvin, Glasgow, following a breakdown induced, very probably, by the exacting nature of his work at *The Times*.

Another of my provincial acquaintances was B., who had been a brilliant acting editor and leader-writer of the *Birmingham Daily Mail* when I was editing the *Birmingham Weekly Post*. The lure of Carmelite House had brought him south, and he had been put in charge of the news page of the *Daily Mail*, at that time page 3. My first knowledge of his change from Birmingham to London came from a similar chance meeting in Carmelite House,

and I can remember very clearly, as we went to lunch somewhere and walked through the quiet courts of the Temple, his telling me how satisfied he was and how appreciative the Chief had been about his work. I think I am right in saying that it was within less than two months of this meeting, during which I had not come across B. again, that I heard of his end. By his own hand. The reaction from the joy of Northcliffe's smile, when a frown displaced it, may have proved too much for him.

Yet another of my numerous provincial acquaintances to turn up in Carmelite House was Alfred Turner, who was on the *Blackpool Gazette* when I edited the *Herald* there. Turner proved an extremely efficient and very successful member of the *Evening News* staff. He was something of a poet and a dreamer and quite the last man I would have associated with the sort of metallic character necessary to make a success on a Northcliffe daily, but this he did, even to becoming the editor of the *Evening News*, and might have continued to fill that exacting post for many years had not his physique proved unequal to the task, resulting in his early death. In his case there was no tragedy, save in so far as all untimely death is tragic: he had immense ability and the nervous energy which is inseparable therefrom, but just lacked the physical resistance to continuous editorial strain.

I have heard it suggested that such examples as I have given, which could be extended almost indefinitely, if similar experiences of other Harmsworth editors were pooled with mine, go to confirm the legends, which I seek to discredit, of the effect of Harmsworth methods. But that is not my own belief. In the cases of S. and B., where my knowledge was more intimate than it was concerning the circumstances of Turner's death, I cannot help thinking—

although it is undeniable that the strenuous nature of their tasks, together with their mental disturbance when the Chief's displeasure was expressed, must have tended to lower their resisting powers—that neither of them had to contend with conditions in any measure worse than those successfully met by others who had preceded them and many who followed. Their fault was not in the attitude of the Chief but in themselves, and in common with innumerable colleagues it was they who sought their opportunities under Northcliffe, not he who had drawn them to their doom.

At the same time it is not easy to escape the feeling that a certain indifference to the fate of men whom he had once praised, even flattered, was shown by him on many occasions when, quite possibly as a result of his previous praise, they had too confidently assumed they were continuing to please while in his judgement or in his mood of the moment, he considered they were showing a decrease of ability. A nature more truly sympathetic, less ready, perhaps, to praise where to praise was dangerous, and a little more tolerant when some deficiency merited reprimand, would have preserved at a reasonable level of satisfaction and self-respect the mind of an employee who, thrown rudely between flattery and abuse, collapsed in the process with disastrous results. But, as I say elsewhere, I doubt if any spectres of these weaker individuals who broke under his criticisms ever haunted his memory. The standard by which he judged his employees eventually was their efficiency in his service, and as soon as he was convinced—it may have been quite wrongly—that their efficiency was not maintained at his standard, his personal interest in them fell rapidly towards zero.

Very characteristic was Northcliffe's comment to me after asking my opinion about a man who had joined the

staff. This individual was not a journalist and I had taken an incurable dislike to him, which was continued through many years, renewed and confirmed at every subsequent meeting with him. If the lying stories which used to be circulated in Fleet Street about Harmsworth employees being ruthlessly ejected at the whim of the Chief—cast as rubbish to the void—had been in any measure true, this particular person had not endured a month.

N: What do you think of ——?

H: Not much. They picked a lemon when they took him on. He is quite incompetent at the job he claims to know best. I at least have found him no good.

N: Tell me, is he a “yes-butter”?

H: That gets him exactly. His stock reply to any request I make of him begins with “yes” and continues with “but”.

N: Then I have no use for him. I’ve never known a yes-butter do any good in the firm.

As a matter of fact he was still drawing his salary and yessing and butting when I last heard of him.

Whether the Chief believed it himself or merely wished to have others believe it, he was very fond of describing the whole Harmsworth community of workers as “one big happy family”. Possibly every “happy family”, if it is only big enough, has room for happiness even though it numbers amongst its members some who are actuated by malice, envy and uncharitableness. At the very time when Northcliffe most often repeated this observation of his, I should have had no difficulty in proving to him that if he really believed what he said he was imagining a vain thing. Not that the family spirit did not exist, for indeed it did and to an extent that was surprising in such a large and continually

increasing assortment of ambitious and competitive men and women.

After twenty-seven years I am happy to say that there still remain a number whom I first met on entering the Carmelite circle, and the feelings that exist between us are as cordial and free from envy as at the outset of our acquaintance. But there were others. And I fear that no great thanks were due to the Chief for such mutual friendliness as existed between the members of his staff, as it used to be his deliberate policy to set man against man. The streak of mischief in his nature had probably more to do with this than any conviction that he was thus getting the best out of his employees. Himself he has told me of the delight he had in watching the jealousies and rivalries of two of his early office boys, both of whom grew up with the business eventually to share inordinately in its profits. The memory of them when they came to him, the one having just taken to long trousers, the other still in breeches, squabbling and scheming against each other for their young employer's favour, seemed to fill Alfred with delight when describing the circumstances to me some twenty years on.

In his more tender and feminine moods he may have wished to believe that the thousands of employees who looked towards him as their Chief composed "one big happy family", but I cannot truthfully bear witness that it was his continual effort to act towards them as a kind, considerate, and loving parent. For many years, however, they were united and almost unanimous in their combined efforts to help forward the success of the Harmsworth enterprises, and if some were more watchful than others to help themselves forward at the same time I do not think the Old Man (as in later years we occasionally spoke of him) thought any the less of them. Nay, I am not sure that he did not rather

admire their cleverness in never allowing their own personal interests to be lost sight of in that *esprit de corps* which, on the editorial side at least, led those of us, whose first concern was to express ourselves editorially, to neglect opportunities of fortune-making which shrewder members on the commercial side were swift to grab.

It was not perhaps inconsistent with the notion of a happy family that when in 1910 the Chief seriously took up golf as a much needed recreation the idiom of the game soon began to colour his references to our "family" affairs. "I'm going to see ——— to-day and let him feel the weight of my niblick." "I 'ca'd the feet frae' — — with my mashie yesterday." Such phrases were typical of his references to staff transactions in the earlier period of his golf fever. The second one was based upon an instruction of his professional, Sandy Thomson, as to how to play the mashie, but the niblick remained his favourite picture word for describing frequent chastisements among his happy family.

Perhaps the best image of his attitude to his big family of workers was that of the old woman who lived in a shoe, and possibly the family was not the less happy on that account.

VII

A TYPICAL day in the life of Northcliffe is not easy to describe. Although there must have been a certain rhythm in each of his amazing days, they differed so much in adventure and excitement that probably no one resembled another, save in so far as they usually began at an absurdly early hour of the morning and ended at an absurdly early hour in the evening, judged at least by my own more orderly days, which are rarely closed by midnight.

In his later years at least, it was a common thing for important members of his various staffs to hear his familiar voice on the phone as early as eight o'clock in the morning. Many a time have I been called from bed at that hour to be urged by him to hop into my car and come along to St. James's Place as soon as I could.

N: I suppose you've just got up. Still sleepy? Not half-way through your breakfast? And here am I with a day's work done. At it since six!

H: Yes, you've just got me out of bed. But I didn't retire at nine or ten last night. I'll be with you as quickly as I can.

It was a common thing for him to be asleep by the ungodly hour of ten. Indeed, in Paris he would go to bed as early as nine o'clock, which always seemed to me a sinful waste of the Parisian ambient.

But after I had taken my breakfast at a reasonable pace and motored from Highgate to St. James's, I would go up to his bedroom to find him still between the sheets discussing with his valet what would be his sartorial equipment for the day. This was a joke that was often repeated and never failed to amuse its perpetrator, although at the second time of repetition it had lost its efficacy so far as its victim was concerned. Indeed, I soon came to accept it as a boyish expression of the Chief's high spirits, and to hear him on the phone at eight o'clock in the morning no more disturbed me than at four in the afternoon.

He had probably been awake from six, as the early copies of *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*, the *Mirror* and the other daily papers were delivered at his home still damp from the presses, and there in his bed he began the adventure of the day. Editors, assistant editors, sub-editors, managers, assistant managers, advertising directors and secretaries

would all be hearing from him as soon as they arrived at their desks, or, if the matter seemed important to him, before they had got down to their breakfasts. Orders, criticisms, queries, complaints, congratulations sparked from him in these early hours with a continuity that suggested a piece of radium giving off its particles.

A very frugal meal would have been brought to his bedside while he was still snowed under the newspaper sheets thrown in disorder over the coverlet, so that once he had got up and bathed and been dressed by his adroit and amusing valet—an Austrian youth I remember best among the succession—he was ready for taking the air. The earlier hours of the forenoon would be spent in walking through the parks or at times on Hampstead Heath for which his sentimental affection lasted to the end, and many a morning he might have been found there with one or two of his lieutenants discussing office affairs while they walked up and down the Spaniards Road.

No one, either at Carmelite House or later on at Fleetway House, in both of which buildings he had magnificent apartments, or at *The Times* office where also he contrived to house himself nobly, though the somewhat dismal milieu of Printing House Square lent itself but slightly to luxurious display, nobody at any of these offices knew when precisely to expect him; neither his chief secretary Price at Carmelite House nor Humphrey Davy at *The Times* could have guessed within an hour when he would appear.

There was a calculated dramatic effect in this uncertainty. I always felt that he had never quite got over the dreams of power that must have come to him when he read *Monte Cristo*, undoubtedly putting himself in the place of the hero. An appointment having been made he would have been as precise in keeping it as Monte Cristo himself,

who chose, if noon were the appointed hour, to walk in as the clock had reached the sixth stroke of twelve. Himself impatient of delays he was punctilious in his engagements with others and it was seldom his fault if anyone had to await him much beyond an agreed time.

Arrived at whichever of his offices he chose first to visit in the course of the day, he would find numerous matters awaiting his consideration, and if he did not, he would instantly create them. The idea of being at rest even for a little time with nothing at all to occupy his mind, no person to give a talking to, or none to whom a bouquet might be handed, was repugnant to him. It left him with a sense of inactivity. And this above all things he detested.

His numerous telephone messages of the early morning, however, usually bore fruit some time before lunch and he would himself become the harassed victim of the machine he so much admired. For, as soon as the word had gone round from the telephone exchange to the various anxious enquirers at *The Times*, or Fleetway House, or Carmelite House, that the Chief was in, there would be immediate calls to reassure him of this, to relieve his mind of that, and to express regret for the other thing.

While I have been waiting with him in his room at Carmelite House I have seen him so driven from room to room by these telephone calls which his superabundant energies of the morning had brought upon him, that once I remarked in my casual and not too tactful manner "It seems to me, Chief, you are letting yourself become the slave of the telephone." My reason for saying this was that his telephone bell had rung at least twice in his own room as we sat there, interrupting our conversation, and no sooner had he finished and lit a cigarette to resume our talk, than one of his secretaries, Mr. Butes, who had a room to the

east of the Chief's, came in to announce that So-and-So was on his phone waiting to have a word with him, and out went the Chief to have the word in Butes's room instead of getting the caller switched through to his own desk. When he came back Miss Louise Owen, his lady secretary, came in from her room on the west with a similar message, and again he went out to answer the call. This all seemed to me so irksome to one who commanded such legions and was so desirous of economizing effort, that I was prompted to the remark just quoted. Whereupon Northcliffe turned upon me almost angrily and snapped:

"I am not the slave of the telephone. I'm the master of the telephone."

"It's hard to tell the difference," I retorted, which evidently pleased him, as he immediately assented, saying he supposed I was right, but that the telephone was essential to his existence.

"It multiplies the man." A favourite phrase of his when discussing this subject.

His afternoons would be even more irregular and uncertain than his forenoons; but he was usually to be found at one or other of his offices, where the atmosphere became electrical as soon as he had arrived in his room. His correspondence was enormous—probably no public man of his time in England received a greater number of letters every day, and although his various secretaries could cope with the most of these, there was always a residuum that required his personal attention and never failed to receive it. He was particularly attentive to all titled people and persons holding important public positions who wrote, as one or other did almost every day of his life, to ask some favour—usually for a friend. The care with which he would consider some quite futile piece of criticism from a

member of the House of Lords who drew his attention to a trumpery mistake in the *Daily Mail*—let us say the omission of “The” before Lady Blankington’s name in the report of the Charity Ball—verged on the comic. It might even lead to an instruction to the sub-editors of *The Times* and the *Mail* and the *Evening News* that in future all peeresses had to be described as “The Lady ——” in formal lists of names.

Nothing seemed too trivial just as nothing seemed too gigantic upon which to exercise his mind. His forenoon might, indeed, have been employed at *The Times* in discussing some very important questions of foreign policy or perhaps the reduction of the price of *The Times* from 3d. to 2d., or some such important matter of politics or business, but in the afternoons you would find him at Fleetway House critically examining the proofs of the next issue of *Answers* and carefully studying the first number of some new weekly paper for women or children, perhaps discussing how to improve *The Funny Wonder*, or some equally modest enterprise whose success or failure was negligible in the sum total of his vast interests. Possibly some wretched man had written to complain that he had been unjustly sacked by one of the editors. The Chief would ring that editor up and demand an explanation, although he had heard of the man for the first time and had no sort of personal interest in him. His anxiety that those who acted in his name should never do anything for which he might be called in question was continuous and went indeed beyond the bounds of common sense.

Once I was the person complained of and my nearest approach to a serious dispute, which might have been difficult to settle had I been less sure of my ground, arose from one of these trying persons whose only hope to vent

a bit of spite upon a Harmsworth editor was to write a letter to Northcliffe presenting their alleged grievances. Like most of the bother I have encountered in Fleet Street, it arose from an effort to do another a good turn. I had sought to encourage a former junior employee, whose literary capacity was slight, to write for one of my publications after I had read some work of his elsewhere. It read so much better than anything he had done for me, that I feared I had misjudged him. When he responded to my invitation and sent in his contribution, it compared rather badly with the article that had made me revise my first estimate of him as a writer.

I then suspected that the published article had been subjected to rigorous sub-editing which had probably given it the quality that I had found conspicuously absent in his other work. I hinted at this in a letter explaining why I could not use his article, and the disgruntled contributor at once sent to Northcliffe a violently worded attack upon me as one of his editors whose names were notorious in Fleet Street for arrogance and harsh treatment of their staffs. I had no difficulty whatever in presenting the facts to Northcliffe, and all was well. This sensitiveness to outside and hostile critics may be accounted to his credit, but I think he would have done better, having once satisfied himself that an editor was a person to be relied upon, to ignore all such ill-natured and venomous correspondents.

I do not seem to remember that Northcliffe's dinners were so important as his luncheons. At St. James's Place particularly, one was constantly meeting all sorts of interesting people in the political and diplomatic world at the midday meal, and there was perhaps a certain mingling of his journalistic interests in these social meetings. I think that his dinners were less often designed to that end, but

of this I cannot speak as I do not suppose that I dined with him either at St. James's Place or later at Carlton Gardens more than six or eight times in all, and on each of these occasions I was either alone or had brought some members of my staff to whom he wished to show attention in a purely social way. And no great employer could ever have been more genial or more at ease with members of his staff, whose names he had probably learnt only a day or two before he met them thus. Sometimes I wondered whether it was all to the good, such kindness on his part. I can remember more than one of the scores of assistants who worked under me, having been chosen and trained by me, coming away from one of these little intimate dinners with a quite unwarrantable sense of his own importance in the Harmsworth outfit.

VIII

THE Chief seldom weighed his words. What came to his mind slipped quickly from his tongue. In the presence of others, on the telephone, in letters, he made the most ill-considered and often insulting remarks even about those for whom he had genuine regard. If I were to write down the things he said to me about many of his intimate friends, there would be some shocks for certain gentlemen who rightly cherish the memory of his friendship. At certain of these things I occasionally hint. This was the way of them. Of a trusted friend: "Does his job very well. Not much education. Father a cab-driver." Of another not less intimate, an author: "His stuff is tosh. Don't use it." Of a third: "No brains there, have you noticed how close together his eyes are?" Yet he had chosen him as a brilliant journalist (which indeed he was and is) and should

have noted the closeness of his eyes at first, though both statement and inference were grotesquely wrong.

When I was editing *Everybody's Weekly*, one of our numerous differences of opinion related to Harold Owen whose writing I admired and often used. One day on the phone the Chief said "I see you're still running Harold Owen's stuff. Stop it. He can't write. He's too fat. For years I've watched him growing fatter and fatter and his work getting thinner and thinner." I wish he had seen Owen when I told him. He was for bursting into Carmelite House and trying his straight right on Northcliffe! But we adjusted the matter by Owen continuing to write for me under an assumed name, the Chief none the wiser.

His code of honour was somewhat lacking, judged at least by ordinary standards. Without compunction he would ask one editor to give his private opinion of a periodical run by another and straightway tell the other what had been said and who had said it, without premising that he himself had asked for it. He hardly ever "played the game" when he wished to stir up an editor.

One of my successors in the editorship of the *London Magazine* was Comyns Beaumont, with whom as man and editor I have enjoyed a long and unclouded friendship. Despite my differences with the Chief about the control of the *London*, narrated elsewhere in these pages, he badgered me a few years afterwards to take it over again. The phone bell rings. The familiar voice: "Hammerton, I want you to take over the *London* again. At once. Beaumont simply won't do what I want with it." I tell him I'm up to the eyes and unable to take it on again. Besides I was done with it when I gave it up years before. "Be a good chap and take it on. Just for a bit. Until I get somebody to do it as I want." I was not a good chap and did nothing

of the kind. Merely reported to my most amiable friend Beaumont what had happened.

Next day Beaumont came to my room and told me that the Chief had commanded him to St. James's Place with the make-up of the next month's *London* and had said "bring Hammerton with you!" To which Hammerton: "But I'm not going," and Beaumont: "And I'm not taking you." We both laughed at the comic situation and Beaumont went on editing the *London* for some considerable time thereafter, edited it as well as I ever could, and possibly a good deal better. But consider the Chief's lack of regard for the personal feelings of his colleagues and assistants disclosed by such an episode! The only charitable explanation is that such things happened at a time when Northcliffe was "mentally unwell". That was ten or eleven years before his death. But at no time, well or ill, was one ever quite sure of him, on account of the instability of his opinions. It could not be said of him as one can say of many a lesser man, yes of many a less human and far less lovable personality, that his word was his bond.

Thus, I am afraid that the final test of loyalty to his friends and colleagues finds the Chief something lacking. It would pain two well-known journalists were I to mention names, so blanks will appear where names that would be familiar to all my readers could be printed. One day during my editorship of the *London Magazine* we were discussing the rates of pay for short stories and particularly the prices being demanded by literary agents intent on forcing up these rates.

H: I'm offered half-a-dozen short stories by ———, (mentioning a writer very friendly with the Chief). Watt is asking seven guineas a thousand for them (a substantial rate of pay at that time but now quite ordinary).

N: He's well enough paid at five guineas a thousand. Don't pay him more.

Ten years later, discussing another writer intimately known to the Chief and to myself:

H: Do you think six guineas a thousand for all his contributions is too much?

N: I do. Five's enough.

If the two unnamed writers could know that it was thus and not otherwise that the Chief referred to them in his estimate of their journalistic value, they would have a new sidelight on his mentality, as in both cases, of my certain knowledge he had assured them that they were being underpaid by me!

But contrary to a common impression Northcliffe was in some ways a most tolerant man. Although usually impatient, headstrong, often entirely unreasonable, he was often the soul of helpfulness. My first recollection of this goes back to my earliest association with him, but the circumstances elude my memory. One of those direful errors that occur in publications after editors have taken the extremest care to prevent them had somehow got into the *Self-Educator*, whose editor, Arthur Mee, was thrown into a state of not unnatural perturbation. At the time it seemed a momentous error, but, when it was brought to the notice of the Chief, he merely quoted the axiom "to err is human", and advised Arthur not to be in the least degree worried about it. He added: "I have made so many errors myself that I now have ceased to bother about them."

Some fourteen years later one of the absurdest mistakes that an editor's evil genius could invent for his bedevilment got into *Harmsworth's Universal Encyclopedia*. Among all the seventy thousand articles it had to occur in a very short one on the Harmsworth family! I had asked one of

my assistants to write the little article himself, suggesting that the reference to Northcliffe's father be limited to the merest statement of his professional position, quite possibly saying "solicitor" or "Recorder of the city of Dublin" as loosely suggesting the extent of the reference, but with the understanding that the assistant editor would look up the proper description before writing it down. What he did was to incorporate in his article the absurd phrase as he thought I had spoken it and send it to the printers intending to verify it later on. As each of the successive assistants who were employed to check the literary contents of the work happened, unfortunately, to know that the paragraph in question had been written by their senior, who had had it direct from the editor-in-chief, they all passed it by assuming it would be checked by the writer. By some mischance I never read the paragraph, and thus a completely erroneous description of Alfred's father got into print in an Encyclopedia bearing the family name. His father was not a solicitor, nor was he ever recorder of Dublin. Indeed, the writer of the paragraph, himself a scholar of Gray's Inn, ought to have known that no solicitor could become a recorder. The printed error was only possible as the result of a lapse from the routine I had laid down for all writing in the Encyclopedia, namely, that no statement which the writer had not previously verified was ever to be written down, far less allowed to get into type.

Alfred was abroad at the time it appeared, but when he saw it he immediately sent me a telegram to have it corrected as soon as possible, adding "do not worry, have often done worse myself." Lord Rothermere, on the other hand, was excusably nettled about the stupidity and telegraphed me from Cap Martin to have the edition suppressed at once, which was patently impossible. His reason was that his

mother would be extremely annoyed at his father being so described, she having always had a dislike for solicitors. Alfred Harmsworth senior, who was a barrister of the Middle Temple, practised for some years in Dublin and afterwards acted as counsel to the Great Northern Railway Company in London. I was able to have the alteration made in many thousands of copies of the edition, but the larger part of it, containing the wrong statement, got into circulation.

The readiness with which Northcliffe could abandon a position he had once strongly held or allow a passion to cool and extinguish, I would illustrate by mentioning that any visitor to the North Foreland Golf Club who cares to look at the paintings displayed in the long and featureless passage leading to the dressing-rooms will find the original portrait of George Warrington Steevens, by the Hon. John Collier, and also a portrait of Cecil Rhodes, by Edwin Ward.

Now, of all his journalistic associates I doubt if Northcliffe ever held any in such affection as he did G. W. Steevens. The work that Steevens did for the *Daily Mail* has never been surpassed in vividness or in poise, and his death from enteric at Ladysmith during the South African war was a great loss to British journalism. No praise that Northcliffe could give to an individual journalist seemed to him too extravagant for Steevens, and Collier's familiar portrait for many years occupied a place of honour in the drawing-room at Elmwood. The Rhodes portrait was also painted at Northcliffe's suggestion and he greatly admired it as a life-like presentment of the statesman who was his beau ideal of an empire-builder. It too had adorned the walls at Elmwood for some years. There came a day when Mr. Oak-Rhind, the secretary of the golf club, asked the Chief if he had any old pictures which he could lend for

hanging in that glaringly empty corridor in the club house. "Go up to the loft and you will find lots of stuff there. Take what you like." That is where Collier's portrait of Steevens and Ward's Cecil Rhodes were found.

IX

IN my early days with Northcliffe I believe that his two chief heroes were Cecil Rhodes and Joseph Chamberlain. He never tired of quoting to me in our conversation from the *obiter dicta* of one or other of these great statesmen, or of giving some example from their lives which, even at my advanced age of thirty-five to forty, might still have a lesson for me. Above all he admired Chamberlain as "the man who gets things done." His achievements in South Africa had so impressed the natives that their name for him (according to this oft-repeated story of the Chief's), whether in Zulu or Bantu I know not, signified "the man who gets things done". And above all other qualities of the mind or heart Northcliffe admired, and sought himself to exert, the capacity for making others bend their energies to the achievement of ends which one had predetermined.

Prominent among his characteristics was the power of making decisions. Possibly in this more than in any other of his traits of character we ought to look for the secret of his success. In his best years at least, his decisions were made on the instant he came into possession of any set of facts demanding an action. It was not of the slightest consequence in the long run that many of his decisions were wrong, that his opinions were often ill-formed: what mattered was that he could say "yes" or "no". Even the fact that it was by no means an unheard-of thing for him

one day to deny having said "yes", or another having said "no", did not in the sum of his immense activities, which involved innumerable decisions, greatly matter. Those who come to failure are they who will neither say yes or no, but flounder about in the shallows of indecision. No one ever witnessed Northcliffe in that state.

At the same time, for those who had to work in close association with him the ability to measure the affirmative value of his yes and the negation of his no was often essential to save them from subsequent discomfort. His own desire was ever "to get a move on". Where things were not going as he would have liked them to go, on the instant he discovered this there would be a change. How that change was to be effected did not bother him much. An instance. It was, I think, soon after the War that I remarked to him one day about a very noticeable improvement which had recently taken place in the production of the picture page of the *Daily Mail*.

N: Oh, you've noticed that have you? And do you know how I did it?

H: Haven't the slightest idea. All I know is that it's much better than it was a few weeks ago.

N: Well I'll tell you. I was so dissatisfied with the way it was being done that I was set on an improvement. I had tried two or three different men on the job, the only ones I knew, so I decided on an experiment. I ordered to my room everyone connected with the production of the picture page: block makers, photographers, cutline writers, sub-editors. They filed in: a motley gang, all sizes. 'Form into line,' I said. 'Tallest to the left, shortest to the right. Stand at attention.' Then I gave them a little lecture on the rottenness of the picture page and said that I was determined to have it improved and if necessary I should go

through the whole line of them from the tallest to the shortest making each of them in turn responsible for the job. "You do it to-day", I said to a tall chap over six feet who was the first on the left. And he is doing it *now*!

H: And the moral?

N: Oh, I suppose any change is better than none.

I can so clearly remember the Chief telling me this that I would almost put my remembrance of his words against a shorthand note. The whole thing appealed to me at the time as so deliciously funny, that I made inquiries soon afterwards, although I was not then nor since in personal touch with the course of affairs in the *Daily Mail* office. What he had told me proved to be substantially true, and the tall man to whom he had delegated the production of the picture page in his comic scheme of selection turned out to be a process worker who had very sound judgement in the choice of good pictures and excellent knowledge of how they would reproduce, so that, being placed in authority, he instantly effected a very marked change in the appearance of the page. But as he also became responsible for the inscriptions appearing under the pictures, I heard that amusing episodes occurred for a time in his efforts to get those over whom he had been suddenly placed in authority to supply him with the effective cutlines which he himself was unable to provide.

One has seen it often stated that Northcliffe's powers of observation were phenomenal: that nothing escaped his vigilant eye. Broadly speaking, like all men of exceptional ability, he was a keen observer of every manifestation of the life around him. He had, however, an occasional blind spot. I once discovered one of these and in connexion, for a wonder, with motoring. For he was one of our pioneer motorists, and it might have been thought that no

little detail of motoring had ever escaped his observation. We were driving from the Gare du Nord in Paris, when I remarked to him that I supposed the left-hand drive of the taxi in which we were riding had been adopted in France because of the opposite rule of the road prevailing there. To my surprise he confessed he had never noticed that many, if not most, of the Paris taxis at that time—probably 1910—were fitted with left-hand drives. Some of the earlier types, I believe, had right-hand controls, the same as the English system, and when it was found that the left-hand drive was preferable there would naturally be a transition period when the two methods existed side by side. But I have often thought it remarkable that one so alive as he to such matters should have failed to notice this small but interesting detail.

It would be wrong to imagine that even in his historic help towards the development of flying, Northcliffe from the first had a vision of the things that would be. I remember particularly well discussing with him, on his return from Pau in 1909, the opinion he had formed of the future of flying. To me, who ten years before had written (under a pseudonym) a popular history of what I was pleased to call *The Conquest of the Air*, as exemplified mainly in the achievements of Santos Dumont, it was a surprise to learn that the Chief did not foresee any world-surprising development for the aeroplane, in which I had put my faith as against the airship, having always been a "heavier-than-air" partisan. So far as he could judge from what he had witnessed of the Wright brothers' experiments, he considered that its future would be limited to the great adventure of individual flying, possibly long distances, but not transporting any considerable weight. He saw for it at that time—and I make this assertion with the full knowledge of its

gravity judged by the later development of his mind—nothing more than the ability of the aeronaut to enjoy the exhilaration of travelling through the air—a glorious sport—and possibly its use as a war-time method of spotting enemy positions.

The interest of this—shall I call it revelation?—lies in the fact that with each little forward move in aeroplane development his mind leapt onward to new possibilities he had not at first envisaged, and when he began to offer through the *Daily Mail* the large money prizes that did more than anything else to bring about the pre-war development of flying, he was not too hopeful that any of them would be won, although he intensely desired to see that happen. For all practical purposes it may be of no consequence how his mind developed in this direction, but it is at least interesting in endeavouring to arrive at some just estimate of his genius and his extraordinary qualities of mind to have this fact recorded.

X

EMOTIONALLY, Northcliffe was more feminine than masculine. He conformed in this respect to Meredith's judgement that in the best of men there is always something feminine. I remember in particular an episode in which there figured with him my colleague and friend Laurence Clarke, editor of *Forget-Me-Not*, one of the earlier periodicals of the *Answers* group. Clarke in those days seemed doomed to T.B., so that I rejoice to know he is still happily alive somewhere in Germany and has the laugh on the lugubrious medicos of a generation ago who are probably dead themselves. He had an attack of his illness and was

visited by Alfred, who sat by his bedside and (so Clarke assured me) actually shed some sympathetic tears. Not many years later he exhibited no more interest in Clarke than in the snows of yester-year.

His emotions lay close to his epidermis. Anyone who thought they lay deeper was certain some day to be disappointed in the realization of the truth. And yet, however shallow these emotions may have been, they were at least significant of the better nature of the man.

After a particularly bitter—or apparently bitter—discussion in which one's alleged shortcomings were grossly exaggerated, his sense of humour and the innate kindness of his nature would suddenly assert themselves and he would end an entirely derogatory sentence by giving its worthless object a gentle little hug, and saying "come along now and let's forget all that."

Especially do I recall two episodes, both of which would have been extraordinary with anyone else but were entirely characteristic of Alfred Harmsworth.

While I have no desire to represent myself as a particularly disputatious colleague, I do assert that whatever the Chief's experience with other members of his staff may have been—matters of mere hearsay where direct evidence is lacking—in my own case I determined from the first that he should get as good as he gave in all our interminable arguments and disputes. I never regretted this attitude. Nay, I am confident that such respect as he had for me was due to the fact that I was usually ready with a back-hander. There were times, however, when his swiftness of attack left me without riposte. On these occasions his justification was invariably at its lowest.

Arriving one morning at my office somewhat later than usual, the excited voice of Mrs. Holland, then in charge of

our telephone exchange, greeted me when I answered the furious ringing of my phone.

Mrs. H: Oh, Mr. Hammerton, do for heaven's sake hurry off at once to St. James's Place. The Chief has been on the phone half a dozen times this morning and I have been ringing all over town for you. His last words to me were "Get that fellow Hammerton, put him in a taxicab, and send him out to me at once."

H: Well here I am and I can leave in five minutes if you'll ring for a taxi at once.

On my way to St. James's Place I occupied myself with my morning's correspondence, which I had snatched from my desk, and I fear that for once I became what Arthur Mee has called a "litter lout", as crumpled envelopes and torn letters went out of the cab-window along Fleet Street and the Strand. I was still engaged in examining my letters as the taxi swung from Pall Mall into St. James's Street and, happening to look out, to my amazement I saw Northcliffe, silk-hatted and frock-coated, standing in front of the Thatched House Club peering eagerly at the passing cabs. Waving to him gaily, I stopped and discharged my taxi a few yards on, and proceeded to meet what turned out to be a very irate Chief. There on the pavement he opened upon me in the most violent manner:

N: Never let such a thing as this occur again. Never again. Never! What would the shareholders of the Amalgamated Press say if they were to know that their Chairman had been standing at the corner of St. James's Street for half-an-hour looking for a taxi to come along with one of his editors? What would they say? Think of it!

H: But . . .

N: No explanations. Let this be a lesson to you. Never forget that this sort of thing can only happen once.

Anything more ludicrous than that I should have been kept here for half an hour by one of my editors is not to be imagined.

H: But my dear Chief . . .

N: Don't talk! Think of the situation. I'd be the laughing-stock of the shareholders if it were known. Nothing like it can ever occur again between us. Or it will be final. Come along now and let's go for a walk.

He takes my arm and off we go walking for the remainder of the forenoon through St. James's Park and Hyde Park and eventually, by taxi, to Regent's Park, where about one o'clock we suddenly stop in a by-street, and there, in the most magical manner, stands his big Rolls, which takes us, on this particular occasion, to Sweetings in Fleet Street, where his appearance created something like a sensation, as he had not lunched there for several years.

The immediate point is that, after the ridiculous encounter on the pavement of St. James's Street, there was not a moment's resentment, not a shadow of ill-feeling, not another word about the fact that I was in any way employed by the Amalgamated Press, or that I produced publications for this most trying and most charming of men who took my arm as we walked and told me unforgotten things that lit up the secret places of his heart for me.

The other occasion I have in mind illustrating how suddenly the spring of tenderness in his nature would be touched in the midst of what seemed an absolutely irrational and preposterous display of bad temper occurred in my own office at Temple Chambers. He had looked in one day and found me, as I remember, smoking one of those picturesque calabash pipes which enjoyed a vogue for some years before the War.

His first greeting referred to this pipe, which he took from me and examined appreciatively, saying that it was exactly like one he had himself, expatiating meanwhile on their advantages in coolness and lightness. But presently the atmosphere changed. He had come deliberately to criticize adversely something I had done, the nature of which I have long since forgotten.

I followed my incurable habit of stating my own opinions, no matter how widely they differed from his, and we were soon engaged in a very brisk give-and-take. Suddenly, in a moment when he might have seemed to an onlooker about to throw me out of the office and wash his hands of me for ever, he said (with a complete change of voice and demeanour):

N: By the way, Hammerton, what sort of engagement have you got with the firm?

H: None, and I don't need any. I'm an editor and you can fire me any moment you like with a year's money in lieu of notice. That's good enough for me.

N: You go to-day and see Colburn and tell him that I have said you are to have a two years' agreement at once. We are going to have a lot of rows. A *two years'* agreement, remember!

And the particular row in which we were engaged continued after this interpolation, with what effect on my editorial policy I retain not the faintest recollection. The episode, however, is surely worth remembering. I have related it to many persons, and none will dispute that it reveals a particularly pleasing characteristic of the man. He had a most vivid imagination. A pictorial imagination. As he talked there was a film of connected events passing before his mind's eye, originating in the immediate subject of his talk, no matter what that might have been.

In this particular dispute with me, as I was not taking it lying down he had a moving picture of other disputes to come, and suddenly a sort of "throw-back" that here was a man he might be unjust to—a man, moreover, he happened to like—and in the thought of this possibility his natural impulse was to protect that man in some material way from any action of his which in his vivid mental picture he saw himself committing and afterwards regretting.

Typical of innumerable kindly actions which could be recorded of the Chief, I shall mention one. There was a certain short-story writer who had promised to be one of the most successful contributors of fiction to the popular magazines. His earlier work appeared alongside of Conan Doyle's in the *Strand* and also in the old *Harmsworth*. This man, intimately known to me in my pre-Harmsworth days, somehow fell from grace. He ceased to write well. In time he ceased to write at all, and became a furtive figure in Fleet Street, eluding those journalists who had lent him money and the editors from whom he had received advance payments for work never supplied. A man of distinguished appearance originally, with the rapid decline of his literary ability—to whatever cause that might be ascribed—and his precarious method of living, he soon became a pale-faced, unhealthy-looking Fleet Street wreck. Such at least he was in 1912 when I last saw him before I went away to South America. Nearly two years later, after my return, I was astonished to meet him looking his old self, restored in health, well-dressed, prosperous. Instead of slinking away, he greeted me effusively, and on noting my surprise at his changed condition volunteered: "The Chief has made a man of me!"

It was news to me that Northcliffe knew anything of him, other than his name, but it seemed from his story

that on one wintry day when Northcliffe was walking towards Fleet Street, he encountered him sheltering in threadbare clothes at the entrance to the old *Mirror* building in Whitefriars Street. Although the Chief had met him only two or three times, and these many years earlier, he recognized him and stopped to inquire why he was in so poor a state. After listening to the recital of his woes, Northcliffe told him to come round to Carmelite House later in the afternoon and he would make arrangements for giving him a new start. And thus it happened that L., after having been provided with an ample outfit, was sent to a sanatorium in Switzerland, where he had the very best attention at Northcliffe's expense. Six weeks or two months had restored him to decent health, and some further funds from the Chief were given to enable him to tide over until he could get going again as a story writer. In this new state I found him, excitedly anxious to sing the praises of his benefactor. But I fear he never "made good" again as a short-story writer, although he was lucky enough to find remunerative employment during the War, and is, I believe, still alive.

This typical action of kindness—involving a good deal of personal attention and direction—is eloquent of the genuine affection felt by Northcliffe for the poor and unfortunate among his brethren of the pen. He had not the slightest call to help this particular man. "A generous impulse", his hostile critics will admit. I have heard it said that he was, on the whole, hard-hearted, selfish and self-centred, with occasional generous impulses; not a man of generous disposition who occasionally proved hard-hearted and unreasonable. He came, I think, between these two extremes. The instances of his generous impulses which one could put in as evidence would be so many that

"impulse" would soon appear an altogether absurd definition. In his extraordinarily complex nature there was really an immense amount of kind-heartedness deriving, it is true, from the emotional and sentimental side of him. But it was kindness of heart nevertheless.

XI

ALWAYS solicitous for the comfort and pleasure of his guests, he would make a mental note of any preference shown by someone, either for a particular dish, a wine, or a cigar, and when he was next entertaining that person he would be sure to remember his personal taste in this particular.

Himself, he was noticeably sparing at table, although I remember none of his preferences in food or drink. Always one had the feeling, when taking food with him, that he was afraid to "let himself go". If at times he seemed fastidious, it was less from being difficult to please than from the desire to avoid eating anything that might tend to increase weight or induce one of the numerous complaints with which, from time to time, he imagined himself to be threatened. I should say that he was not a *gourmet*, and he was remote indeed from a *gourmand*. But at meals he was always keenly desirous to please his guests and ready with suggestions for their pleasure. My own recollection is that the simplest dishes satisfied him.

For many years he was threatened with throat trouble. On the whole I do not think that the throat trouble was very serious. It could scarcely have been so, considering the long period of years in which he complained of it, without its developing into something more grave than was

implied in the operation for adenoma of the thyroid gland to which he submitted a few years before his death. But it made him always especially sensitive to tobaccos of any uncommon strength. His cigarettes were of the mildest; the cigars which he habitually smoked were imported from Germany.

German cigars, as smokers know, are much milder than any that come direct from Havana, and being manufactured from good Havana tobacco by a process which greatly reduces the amount of nicotine, they provide all the pleasures of a real Havana without the ill effects which nicotine may have upon the throat or the action of the heart. Of these German cigars he smoked heavily. Rarely he offered them to his friends. Either he thought they were an acquired taste or he was so fond of them himself that he never wished to run short. Often he took the trouble to bring some Havanas for my smoking, and these he liked to remind me were "the same as King Edward smoked". He never touched them himself, and I confess that I was surprised at King Edward's taste, as I found them nothing wonderful, my own preference being for the Germans.

Was there any snobbery in that phrase—"the same as King Edward smoked"? Quite likely. Of course he was a snob. He was not one of those noble men absurdly known as Nature's gentlemen. Nature has no gentlemen. The gorilla is the unspoilt product of nature. Occasionally among the old English nobility we do find those rare and unnatural persons who are really the fine fruit of long generations of snobbery, and have acquired the supreme art of being gracious without condescension, familiar without derogation, and of putting all who come in contact with them instantly at their ease without the least indication of

effort or art. Northcliffe could not be catalogued as one of them.

Nor was he one of those snobs who delight in the denunciation of snobbishness. Having risen from a very ordinary station in life, he had in his early manhood so quickly acquired fame, fortune and rank that something of the marvel of his own achievement stayed continually in his thoughts, and certain of his sentiments which might commonly have been attributed to snobbishness were really a sort of thinking aloud about his own social progress.

At the very height of his success he achieved one of his great ambitions in the occupancy of the historic Sutton Place. This was the realization of a splendid dream: to see his wife, who had been the devoted working companion of his early years of struggle, the *grande dame* of one of the noblest houses in England. And no lady of her time was worthier of that distinction. Here, at Elmwood, and at St. James's Place, he was fond of pointing out to me, and, I assume, to many others, the absence of servants. All his houses were abundantly staffed, but he made a virtue of avoiding the ostentation which leads the *nouveaux riches* to display the abundance of their menials, and only the servant essential to the need of the moment was ever in evidence. I should have appreciated his success in avoiding ostentation the more had he not drawn my attention to it.

Somewhere I have seen it stated that he cared little for his titles, and that titles in general had no attraction for him. Sheer nonsense. More than once he discussed his titles with me, and he never made any pretence that they had been thrust upon him by a grateful government and a king who delighted to do him honour. He wanted all the honours and titles that he acquired. There were none too

magnificent for him to accept. He respected rank and breeding with all the respect which the essential Tory in him had for these artificial distinctions, and he delighted in being "My Lord" to those who felt they must so address him, just as when he received his baronetcy at the age of thirty-nine, I am certain that "Sir Alfred" sounded splendid in his ears.

Just why he should have repeated to me at different times that it was in Scotland, and especially from Scotsmen, his title produced the greatest number of genuflexions, I cannot say. On no occasion from the first day of his becoming a peer did I ever address him as "My Lord", though numerous employees and even men of relative importance on his staff did, in my hearing, use that menial form of address. There was among these a certain Scotsman who, with the pertinacity of Sir Pertinax successfully sought to ingratiate himself with the Chief, and I remember this compatriot, when recounting to me an episode in which he had figured with Northcliffe, using "My Lord" with superfluous frequency in his reported dialogue. "But, surely," I said to him, "you do not address the Chief as if you were a door-opener, or his head cook?" "Good Goad, no, I always call him Chief." A day or two later in Northcliffe's presence I heard the same Scotsman rolling "My Lorrdd" off his tongue a dozen times and more, and seeming to derive much personal satisfaction from it.

I incline to think Northcliffe was right in saying that his title had more homage paid to it in Scotland and by Scots than it had in England. The Scots, for some reason which has never been quite clear to me, unless it may be traced to the old clan servitude of the Highlands, do show more deference to a title than the English. But I am confident that among his intimate associates of his great business

enterprises he liked best to be addressed as Chief. Lady Northcliffe herself was in the habit of speaking of him to those of us who had the privilege to come in contact with her as "the Chief". In all the years I knew him and worked with him this was my invariable form of address, and although occasionally in his letters and notes to me he signed himself Northcliffe, far more often his signature was simply Chief.

It is curious how little matters of this kind may create prejudice and lead to misjudgement. My friend of many years, Clement Shorter, founder of *The Sphere* and the real maker of high-class modern pictorial journalism, used to fulminate against the "damned impertinence" of any man calling himself Chief. He even went so far as to say that those of us who worked with Northcliffe and allowed him to sign a letter to us as Chief were lacking in spirit. As a matter of fact, Shorter himself would very much have liked to work for the Chief and made more than one effort to become a member of his staff, as Northcliffe himself related to me. In Shorter's attitude there may have been some resentment towards Northcliffe for not joining with him in the founding of *The Sphere*, but I would attribute to Shorter too good a sense of humour really to believe that he was serious in his frequent sneers at this use of a title which was the most natural, the most expressive, and the most honourable that Northcliffe ever acquired.

To all who knew him well and served him loyally he was ever "The Chief". Nay, I shall say that, although it is now a decade since his death, and the great publishing enterprise which he founded and which grew to tremendous proportions around the personality of his genius—often in its growth and development without any conscious effort from him—still flourishes abundantly under other owner-

ship, there are many still associated with it, myself included, who give of their best to it mainly from the illusion that they are still working for "the Chief".

Northcliffe had actually become a legend and a tradition while he still lived. Thousands of men who never saw him worked for him and helped to build his fortune, and the still vaster fortunes that were developed by financial dexterity from his enterprises soon after his death. Hundreds of journalists who may have met him for no more than twenty minutes or half an hour on their first being engaged have worked for him, and in their work had a sense that they were doing something not for a limited liability company and a board of directors, but for an individual who might like or dislike what they did. "What would the Chief think of it?" That was a question ever present in the minds of editors and writers and artists and all who worked with their hands and brains in his newspaper and periodical publishing offices. He was the queen bee in an almost incredible hive, and there were immense numbers of his workers about whom he knew as little in particular as the queen bee herself about the personalities of her workers or her drones.

XII

IN his youth he may have been an assiduous reader. His fondness for mentioning Dickens's characters left me with the impression that Dickens had been his favourite author, but as I do not remember discussing this with him, my impression may be wrong. What I do know is that, in his later life at least, his pretensions to having read this book or that had little more behind them than the system

of vicarious reading which I have described. I am sure that in most of the years that I knew him the pressure of his directorial obligations put such a heavy and constant strain upon his mind that the sense of leisure, so needful to the proper enjoyment of a book, was seldom known to him in those days of ceaseless excitement.

At best his reading had become a mere dipping and sampling of current literature. But, indeed, among his closest associates on the directorial side of his business there were few—except Lord Rothermere I cannot think of one—who knew anything about books. I could mention more than one, well known in Fleet Street, who probably never read a book since their boyhood, and it often seemed to me one of life's little ironies that certain of them who were just sufficiently literate for the requirements of their respective jobs were permitted to drive substantial profits from the sale not only of popular journalism, but of educational works whose literary value was admittedly high, works of which not one of those I have in mind ever read more than the title page!

In this matter of book lore Lord Rothermere, in my opinion, is a much better read man than Northcliffe was. He, too, is a lover of Dickens, and I have never forgotten the impression made upon me some twenty-five years ago when I went into his room at Carmelite House to talk about some matter of the moment and found him, in the midst of that great factory of journalism, with the hum of the rotary presses for ever in one's ears, quietly seated in his easy chair deep in *Dombey and Son*. This discloses a capacity for detachment which I am sure was not possessed by his older brother. Since the death of Alfred, Lord Rothermere has given evidence of an immense range of reading and a literary capacity which have surprised many

who in the lifetime of Northcliffe assumed that the sole interests of his brother Harold were bound up in the finances of the various Harmsworth businesses. I have mentioned Dickens, which reminds me that one of Rothermere's achievements in reading was to re-read the whole of Dickens during an illness, using the set which I had edited for the Educational Book Company.

Northcliffe's mind was too active, too lively, for the staid ways of scholarship. It was crammed with information, the raw material of knowledge: unco-ordinated. His information was prodigious, but it had not undergone that subtle process of assimilation which turns it into knowledge, into wisdom. He wrote with no real literary distinction. He wrote pithily, pointedly, and with admirable clearness, but I can recall no paragraph of his actual composition that had noteworthy distinction of style such as Thomas Marlowe or H. W. Wilson could put into a *Daily Mail* leader: any noble use of words. (For let me tell the highbrow who may sneer at the *Daily Mail* that some of the finest English of our time has had expression in its always vigorous and usually scholarly editorials.) But Northcliffe had a keen appreciation of good writing. Hence his admiration for G. W. Steevens, for Charles Whibley. He had as keen a dislike for writers whose sole merit lay in being "literary". "Art for art's sake" he detested. In his early years he had little esteem for men of university training. In later years he went to the other extreme. "Have my article read by an Oxford man," he would say in returning the proof of an article I had written up from his information! This later phase was really an expression of futile regret that he himself was not a university man. Had he been at Oxford until he was twenty-four should we ever have heard of him? I wonder.

If I am correct in thinking that Northcliffe was not, in the full acceptance of the word, a thinker, it follows that such religious views as he possessed derived less from any process of ratiocination than from emotion. I incline to this opinion. Not that I recall any discussion of religious subjects upon which to base it. But it is impossible to know any person over a considerable stretch of years—especially to be admitted to his confidence—without gaining some notion of his religious outlook.

It has been written: "Northcliffe was entirely fearless." A stupid statement. There is no sort of doubt that he constantly feared death and had a horror of illness. This fear clouded much of his life; the last ten years especially. And as the end proved, he had some cause to be afraid. Possibly his attitude was that of the French wit: *hélas, pour être mort il faut mourir*. He may have shuddered less at the prospect of being no more than at the pain of passing out. But shudder he did.

I do not know whether any of the numerous writers upon Lord Northcliffe has drawn attention to the fact that the tincture of Celtic blood in him was discernible in his respect for certain superstitions which few hard-headed business men and fewer great journalists would have cared to exhibit. He had a peculiar horror of an empty chair at a luncheon- or a dinner-party. I have seen him so ill at ease all through a meal because one of the chairs set aside for the expected company had not been occupied that he was unable to enjoy his food. Indeed, when he had finally convinced himself that the chair was not to be occupied, as the absent guest was no longer likely to turn up, he would have it taken away and the place cleared, even if the meal was half-way through.

I cannot recall anything which he said on the subject

of religion that led me to suppose he had approached it with a rational mind or sought to establish for himself convictions that had their roots in independent reasoning. He was apt to be influenced by the more flamboyant type of religionist. In saying which I am not forgetting the warm friendship he developed with Father Dolling and the sincere interest he took in the work of that good priest. This, however, was not affected by his religious convictions so much as by a desire to be of some social service, arising, doubtless, out of admiration for the character and devotion of Father Dolling. Emotion as distinct from reason. Outwardly he conformed to the conventions of organized Christianity. On the whole, it would not be unjust to say that his religion was of that somewhat amorphous kind which passes current in England to-day as Christianity.

A few years before the final decline of his powers he developed an interest in the fantastic spiritualism which the Rev. Vale Owen was allowed to exploit so foolishly in the *Sunday Dispatch*, and although he did not hesitate to use as a newspaper "stunt" the wild visions and inchoate descriptions of the unseen world produced by Vale Owen week by week, I had it on good authority that he actually did believe that he had found a genuine prophet in that typical visionary of the half-Christian, half-spiritualist sort. If that were so—and although without direct admission I am open to believe it—there is hardly any doubt that we must write down his religion as something without form and void. Emphatically it was not the religion of a great man, an independent thinker, but one would have to say the same of the pitifully thoughtless conformity of the author of *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, so that we can have a great man, it would seem, even a good man, whose religious beliefs are devoid of any element of greatness.

In Northcliffe there was always lacking that power of steadily sustained thought along lines that might be calculated to lead to a rational conclusion. I mean a thought process entirely different from that of concentration, which he had in so marked a measure. To be able to concentrate for a short period upon any given subject is characteristic of all men who have achieved any sort of greatness, especially commercial success. But to have one's thoughts so well ordered that they can be sustained with gathering force over a long period of years, enriched and confirmed by experience, and bring the thinker eventually to a conclusion from which he will not be dislodged however he is assailed, this implies a largeness, a cool vigour of mind, a quietness of mind, which Northcliffe did not possess.

I am reminded of the words of Spirit Séguier, when the soldiers of His Most Christian Majesty had maimed and were about to burn him: "My soul is a garden full of fountains." One cannot imagine Northcliffe's mind, or the soul of him, at any time comparable to a garden full of fountains. I can imagine it, however, as one of those arid, sandblown, sunbeaten places of a Moorish town where there is little grateful shade, no cool resting spots. At least—and here one speaks only from one's own experience—I never derived from him any impression of mental rest or quiet of mind.

His achievements were largely accomplished by the incessant expenditure of nervous energy, by a mind continually on the stretch to the very limit of awareness, with no reserves in it for the retirement and solace of its possessor. He was, in truth, too active mentally about the thrilling panorama of life and the part he wished to play in it to ensure the leisure of thought essential for contemplation. When the curtain fell on each of his crowded days, it fell

on a mind not ready for contemplation but worn out with excessive activity, demanding only temporary oblivion and the awakening to another day of mental strife. Not in that way can the garden of the mind be cultivated.

I do not think it was possible for Northcliffe, having regard to the norm of his wellnigh abnormal days, ever to have retired sufficiently into himself to discover the true depth of his religious convictions. Whatever may be urged to the contrary, I shall retain the opinion that in matters of religion his mind did not soar above the conventional thinking of his day and that, to the end, he was influenced by the shallow views and shifting opinions of others rather than by any well-reasoned convictions of his own.

At the Olympia banquet on the twenty-fifth birthday of the *Daily Mail*, amplifiers were used throughout the building to reproduce the few speeches made at the chief table, and especially the prayer offered up by the Rev. Basil Bourchier. It may be assumed that Alfred had carefully scrutinized the draft of this prayer in arranging the details of that somewhat ostentatious feast. And in the supplication the Lord was called upon to receive the humble devotion of "Thy servant Alfred", a phrase that must have sent an inward smile throughout the vast assemblage. The phrase is worth remembering, for it enshrines the conventionalized religiousness of the Chief. He had no attitude towards the eternities other than that of the ordinary unthinking man in the street. I remember remarking at the time that with "Thy servant Alfred", which became a by-word for a while after the event, the prayer being duly reported in the *Daily Mail*, we were on the same religious ground as that of the naïve negro spirituals:

It's me, oh Lord!
'Tisn't my father, 'tisn't my mother,
'Tisn't my sister, 'tisn't my brother,
Just me, oh Lord!

XIII

IT would be idle to disguise the fact that in the days of his greatest journalistic successes, when as regenerator of *The Times*, as absolute master of the world-famous *Daily Mail*, and head of incomparably the greatest group of publishing organizations ever associated with the name of one man, Northcliffe was far from being a happy mortal. While no one may question Northcliffe's courage in the face of danger—his behaviour at the Front during the War provided ample proof of it—most of his maturer years were passed in an ever-present apprehension of physical affliction and of death. This I attribute to his irrational outlook on religious matters: to his lack of well-established convictions; the shallowness of his philosophy.

The state of his health was a constant preoccupation—eventually an obsession. He was always trying some new diet, endeavouring to stave off the approach of age, to remain fit to tackle the increasingly onerous problems which his ever expanding enterprises presented to him. The grisly spectre of death would be peeping over his shoulder at times when all thought of decay and dissolution might have seemed to be extinguished in the tremendous energy with which he assailed each new problem, and rejoiced in triumphing over it.

A doctor accompanied him on his frequent travels, and he gave ear to all sorts of health and food faddists. For a

time he was devoted especially to Leslie Willson, who had come into the firm originally as the editor of the "Daily Mail Novels" after an interesting career as cricketer, artist, and editor of art publications for Sir George Newnes. Willson, largely on the strength of his treatment of Northcliffe's diseases, real or imaginary, eventually set up as a specialist and got together a considerable and profitable clientele, to whom he issued varying diets in which raw apples, mineral waters and biscuits, and baths and all sorts of mortifications of the flesh, were inherent. He was supposed to have "cured" many persons in the Northcliffe entourage, but what he cured them of I never discovered. Willson himself was only about sixty when he died in 1924. During his Leslie Willson regime it was no uncommon thing to find the Chief lunching in the midst of his luxurious surroundings on a raw apple, some biscuits and a small bottle of Perrier. That he benefited by these recurring spells of meagre diet I am open to doubt. The mere fact that a doctor or a food specialist was always within call inclined him to take a morbid interest in his physical condition.

When he heard of the death of someone whom he had known and was told that he had died of any one of the multitudinous diseases that await each of us, you could see him shiver and squirm as though he himself were already suffering from the onset of that same disease. That vivid imagination of his, with his tendency always to dramatize his thoughts and to see himself the protagonist of the tragedy, caught him afresh at each of these intimations of mortality and made him suffer a hundred deaths long before his fate decreed one more dreadful than he had ever foreseen.

At his magnificent home at Sutton Place the locals used to call him "the mad lord", and not without reason. There,

where all the conditions for rest and refreshment of the mind were ideal, where his wealth had enabled him to acquire a superb mansion which afforded the last word of modern comfort against a background of antique loveliness, he became obsessed with the idea that the house lay too low to be healthy, that he could not sleep at nights in his spacious bedroom. So on rising ground in a distant part of the parklands surrounding Sutton Place he built a wooden hut, attached to which was a kitchen where his chef in the morning could come and cook his simple breakfast, and here each evening he retired to seek that rest which in his fancy he could not find in his luxurious chamber at the mansion. I never heard that Lady Northcliffe found any difficulty in securing rational repose in her apartment there.

As his reactions to suffering and death became even more acute, his sympathy with those who suffered deepened. His solicitude in the case of Twells Brex might be held to prove this. No employer ever did more by personal effort to bring comfort to one of his assistants who was passing under the shadow. The circumstances, however, were exceptional.

Twells Brex was a writer whose lightness of touch had enhanced the attractiveness of the editorial page of the *Daily Mail* for some years before his death at the early age of forty-five in January, 1920. Few of the many who served Northcliffe ever displayed such a whole-hearted devotion to the Chief. Brex had practically no experience of journalism when Northcliffe first saw something he had written as an outside contributor, and with his instinctive knowledge of "good copy" he realized that the writer was the sort of man he wanted to help brighten the leader page of the *Mail*.

Brex finding himself thus suddenly set up in a new and amusing profession—he had been a brewer's traveller or something of the kind—with substantial remuneration and the patronage of Lord Northcliffe, it is not surprising that he should have conceived an admiration for his benefactor which stopped only this side idolatry. In the Savage Club and other literary and journalistic circles he hymned the praises of the Chief so persistently that he soon earned the disapproval of the many whose experiences of Northcliffe had been less agreeable.

My own memories of Brex are entirely pleasant, and if his measure of hero worship exceeded mine I thought none the less of him on that account. Stricken with cancer, he showed himself a brave man. Without the slightest exhibition of self-pity, without whimpering or girding at his fate, he settled down to employ his remaining days as profitably and as cheerfully as his affliction permitted. Almost to the last he continued his contributions from his deathbed, and his whole attitude in his time of suffering made a deep impression upon Northcliffe, who never let a day pass without showing him some kindness and often, I believe, visited him at his home. The Chief attended his funeral, and I remember being told by some of those who were present how moved he was.

Northcliffe's sympathetic interest in Brex was something distinct from his ordinary morbid interest in disease and death. There was a certain nobility in it; an expression of the finer side of his nature. He was, indeed, so deeply impressed by Brex's fortitude in his farewell to life that he got Hamilton Fyfe to tell the whole story in a book, as he thought that it might afford some comfort to others in like affliction. In the *Mail* also the story of Twells Brex was given great prominence without the least touch of sensa-

tionalism. There was always this quality about Northcliffe's journalistic ideas: they were meant to let others into a knowledge of something he had just himself discovered, or experienced. Sometimes the impulse was no more than the exploitation of the news element—and no journalist ever rivalled him in a “nose for news”—but often it was an honest belief that the information might be of use to the world at large that urged him to its immediate circulation.

Perhaps he over-estimated the interest of the general public in matters of health, and the methods of medical science in fighting disease. During the relatively short period in which I had anything to do with periodicals of his which could be classed as journalism, I was embarrassed by his continual suggestions about getting articles on the health of the individual. “The Problem of Yourself” was one of the ideas he urged me to carry out. This was to be a weekly article by some doctor discussing the condition of your liver, your kidneys, or your intestines, and it was very grudgingly that I gave it the space he insisted upon.

Again, I remember his telling me that the best article that had ever been written by G. W. Steevens in the *Mail* was one describing an operation, and immediately having convinced himself that his statement was true (probably he had not thought of the article in such terms until that moment) he proceeded to insist that I should have it disinterred and reprinted in my next weekly number. “And be sure to send a fee for it to Mrs. Steevens,” he added. I duly reprinted it and, beyond some postcards from readers saying how disgusted they were with its too realistic details, I have no reason to believe I had done other than waste a bit of space. But I may be prejudiced in this matter of

health discussion in the daily and weekly Press. Since Northcliffe's death it has been carried to a limit which I believe he would have approved, and yet I take leave to doubt if we have not far too much printed talk about disease of the body.

XIV

HOW far one could accept any of the advice so freely administered by the Chief to those who, like myself, passed years in frequent contact with him, I was never quite able to determine. Two instances will suffice to show my difficulty. Both of them go back to the early years of our relationship. "Beware of Fleet Street flatterers," he was fond of warning me. "So long as you are in a position where you command the money to buy articles from needy journalists you will be surrounded by flatterers. Every man with a manuscript in his pocket will tell you what a clever editor you are. Beware of them!"

This advice was entirely unneeded, for, although I will not say that I never, in all the hundreds of thousands of pounds that I have spent as a Harmsworth editor, bought an article or commissioned a contribution except upon the strictest and coldest business principles, I am persuaded that at no time have I ever been flattered by any contributor into buying his wares. Often out of a charitable desire to employ some journalist who stood in need of encouragement I have commissioned an article which afterwards had to go in the waste basket, but there was never a second article accepted from the same source. And I do not suppose that any Fleet Street man who has been in a position to dispense large sums of money among the writing fraternity is without similar experiences.

I had no need to be warned about flatterers, but my adviser did not take his own advice. I have seen him flattered and kow-towed to so successfully that the flatterers have scraped their way to fortune. Nay, I could name several who even to this day are gathering the fruits of their flattery. But it must be conceded that in each case they brought some sort of flavouring to their flattery that caught the Chief, who quite sincerely resented the more obvious sort.

Another of his injunctions to me was: "Never trust a Jew. He will be all right for a while, but in the end he'll let you down." Many times was this repeated. But once he remarked by way of exception that K. was a Jew whom he liked, mentioning the name of a well-known writer associated with the Harmsworth publications at that time. I had never suspected that K. was a Jew, so I took an early opportunity to ask him personally, as we were on terms of intimacy. I told him what the Chief had said, and he flew into a very genuine passion of indignation at the suggestion that he, "a devoted son of mother church", who could point to generations of Catholic ancestors, should have been mistaken by Northcliffe for a Jew. With my concurrence he went straight from our luncheon to see the Chief and to disabuse his mind on this particular point.

Northcliffe was quite pleasant about this incident and in no way resented my having repeated what he had said to K., as he realized that it was done in all frankness, and said: "Then since K. isn't a Jew, I don't know anyone to make an exception of." Actually he made numerous exceptions. One of the most devoted and least pushful of his staff for whom he had a considerable personal regard was a Jew, Charles Benham, the learned legal critic of the *Daily*

Mail, who is, I suspect, the author of the most interesting chapter in Max Pemberton's memoir of the Chief. I am quite sure that he trusted Benham, as he had every reason to do. And years after he had warned me to beware of Jews there was at least one occupying a position of some eminence on a Harmsworth board of directors.

Had I ventured to give him my advice in return for his counsel to me, I should have advised him to beware of cross-eyed men! And I should probably have been about as sincere in my advice as he was in his to me. For I confess to an instinctive mistrust of all who cannot look me straight in the face, but considering the number in the Northcliffe entourage who suffered from obliquity of vision the Chief evidently never had any such feeling. His expressed distrust of Jews was probably some inherited peculiarity like mine of the cross-eyed. But it persisted to the end of his days.

My old friend, Clement Shorter, often told me shortly before his death about a chapter he was going to write on Northcliffe for his reminiscences, which were never completed. In it he was to relate how the Chief had rung him up one day, either late in the War or soon after its conclusion, in connection with some Irish matter. One of Northcliffe's greatest desires was to see the Irish question definitely settled, and peace restored to the distressful island of his birth. In many ways he exerted himself wisely and unsparingly to this end. And the episode I have in mind was associated in some way which I have forgotten with the eventual Irish settlement.

I think that Northcliffe was entertaining some Irish delegates or certain persons identified with the movement for settlement, and wished to give Shorter the opportunity

of being present, but Shorter, who had become more Irish than the Irish through the influence of his first wife, Dora Sigerson, the Irish poetess, was antipathetic, and on the 'phone, by which means the invitation came to him, he told Northcliffe rather plainly his views on the matter. Whereupon the Chief said to him that he was welcome to stay away, adding: "You are only a damned old Jew, anyway." And according to Shorter the latter managed to retort before the conversation closed: "And you are a damned liar."

Northcliffe was not the only one who insisted that Shorter was of Jewish origin. His appearance at least was un-English, and his resemblance to the elder Dumas was noticeable. Perhaps somewhere in his ancestry came a strain of Portuguese blood, but he was no more a Jew than Northcliffe himself.

XV

IN his youth Alfred is said to have shown considerable musical taste and was able to play the piano by ear. Personally I never saw any trace of this musical strain, and I am doubtful if it amounted to anything beyond a facility for vamping, although I have seen it stated that he had claimed to be a composer in his youth and to have had some of his pieces published. I have also heard of his brief enthusiasm for the player-piano, the perfecting of which coincided with his early access of fortune. After buying a fine player-piano, he used to hurry home from the office to have an hour or two at it before dinner. This, like other enthusiasms, soon spent itself. A few weeks, a month or two at most, saw the lid of the player put down for the last time. Its removal from his lounge would no doubt

be his next concern: he would certainly be as anxious to get rid of it as he had been to possess it. This, of course, is no unusual characteristic, but it is chiefly noticeable in those who never grow into habits of staidness and remain temperamentally young.

The gramophone, as offering a larger variety of amusement and less effort in reproduction than the player-piano, took its place, and to the end of his days he liked to listen to gramophone music. After having emptied his mind of the worries of the day and dined in his frugal fashion, it was his custom "to prepare for sleep", as he liked to call it, by listening to the most indiscriminate selections on the gramophone, or inviting his guests, who were usually few and intimate, to tell him the latest stories they had heard. He invariably repaired to bed while the evening was still young in the estimation of his guests.

One of his favourite gramophone pieces was a music-hall song by Harry Ford. I doubt if he had ever heard it sung in a music-hall, as he went but rarely to entertainments of any sort, an occasional visit to the play or the opera being the most that he permitted himself. It was, I think, the words of the song that caught his fancy, and their phrases may have touched a note in his mind that vibrated to the tragic rather than the comic. The song was based upon an old story which I remember J. L. Toole telling me in 1894 during an afternoon I spent with him at Blackpool. That inveterate joker had been having a walk in the West-End with his friend, Henry Irving, and passing a dairy he saw in the window a card which read: "Families Supplied." Dragging Irving into the shop before the tragedian realized what had happened, Toole said, to the consternation of the young woman at the counter: "My friend here wants a boy and a girl and I'll have a pair of

boys." The refrain of Harry Ford's rollicking song on this theme, ran something like this:

We all walked into the shop
To shelter from the rain,
We ordered a couple of kids apiece
And we all walked out again!

His love of children led him always to make the friendliest inquiries concerning the offspring of any members of his staff in whom he was particularly interested and whom he knew to be "family men". More than one of these have told me of his pleasing attentions and congratulations, and one in particular used to be proud to repeat that the Chief had told him his family of four or five little ones would one day be more to him than all his journalistic successes, which were then considerable. Having lived to see this former colleague's later struggles with adversity due to some extent to this self-same large family, and having frequently had to lend a helping hand to the once proud parent, I can look back on these happy congratulations of the more prolific Carmelites with an inward smile at the vanity of human wishes.

I fancy that he had "a way with him" among children, and could play their games and carry on with them much as Sir James Barrie is known to do or as I imagine Sir Henry Irving did from the anecdotes told of him. That he had not a son to succeed him in the title and no children to satisfy his marked philoprogenitiveness, to enrich and amplify his home, was one of his great sorrows. He must have contemplated with bitterness a fate that had proved so indulgent to him, had proffered unheard-of rewards which he grasped with eager hands, yet denied him his last desire, that the name of distinction he

had acquired, the immense wealth he had gathered to himself, and all his beautiful material things should in the years to be remain identified with his own seed. To found a family that would bear his name and keep his memory green was once his passionate desire, and it cannot be denied that to be thwarted by a capricious fate did in some degree embitter his life. Towards the end it certainly robbed him of a measure of solace and devoted companionship which would have outweighed all his disappointment had he been wise enough to realize it in time.

Northcliffe's devotion to his mother was one of the most lovable things about the man. It was, of course, a devotion which his mother well merited, but not always are the maternal virtues so productive of deep and abiding filial affection as they were in the case of Alfred Harmsworth. Nothing that he achieved, no honour that came to him, no riches that he commanded, but, from the beginning to the end of his career, were enhanced and hallowed by the fact that his mother survived to share in them. Only his most intimate friends ever had the opportunity of meeting this mother of his devotion, as she was content to remain in the background of his life, watching and admiring the activities and triumphs of her son, whose energy and genius had been instrumental in raising the whole of her large family to positions of eminence and power beyond her fairest dreams for them in the days when her husband was still by her side.

The only occasion on which I personally saw this charming and gifted old lady was at the luncheon given by Alfred at Olympia to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Daily Mail*. What a scene that was—some 7,000 employees of the *Daily Mail* all brought together in one vast hall and

served with a banquet such as an emperor might have commanded. The greatest happiness of our host that day came when he led his aged mother by the arm around the gallery of Olympia and explained to her the various sections of his gigantic enterprise which were represented in that great gathering of his work-people of every rank, from office boys to editors. And when she realized—as I have no doubt he pointed out to her—that if he had been banqueting the whole army of his employees he would have required at least another Olympia, how she must have thrilled at the visible achievement of her wonder son!

XVI

NORTHCLIFFE, we are told, cared nothing for society. He is said to have avoided the social whirl as eagerly as some seek to be caught up in it. Only in a measure is this true. In his earlier years of success, at least, it was not true. Newly possessed of great wealth, the stream of which, once flowing, promised to increase in volume, titles and social distinctions, so eagerly sought after by others, at his command, it was only to be expected that, as in some sort a new-comer into the society of wealth and elegance, he would seek to establish himself by observing the conventions and offering entertainment such as he could afford.

When a man sets up house in Berkeley Square, with an ultimate eye on Carlton Gardens, and acquires a great showplace in the country, it cannot be said with any honesty that he cares nothing for social distinctions. Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Harmsworth, and very soon Sir Alfred and Lady Harmsworth, had to make some sort of splash in society, and they did. It was perhaps a rare thing for them to

employ highly paid singers and artists of world-wide fame at their "at homes", but they did.

Certain of Alfred's friendships were, I suspect, inspired to some extent by their reciprocal value, as they brought him into touch, in his earlier years of success, with persons of a social standing who might have been expected to look a little askance at the prosperous young newspaper proprietor as one of the pushful *nouveaux riches*. This, however, endured for a relatively short time. For the dazzling position which the unimpeded progress of the *Daily Mail* and the proprietorship of *The Times* secured for him eventually brought the whole social world to his feet and made the stiffest of aristocrats eager to court the man of power.

In acquiring *The Times*, he was as much actuated by the political and social power which would come to him as its proprietor, as by the sheer delight of the journalist in attaining to the control of the world's most famous newspaper. After he had arrived at the apex of his journalistic achievement, he had certainly no use for society and its conventions, but that is different from having a constitutional dislike for them. He was prepared to make use of them when they suited his purpose, to be rid of them when they ceased to be of value.

The snarlers who are always ready to bark and bite at the heels of those ahead of them in the race were represented (in the lower grades at least) by those practical jokers who, after Alfred received his peerage, used to take a delight in ringing up 13 St. James's Place, asking for Lord or Lady Northcliffe, and then requesting that he or she, if either had answered the telephone, might be good enough to forward two quires of *Answers* as quickly as possible to some address in Mile End Road or Hackney. It was this sort of petty

spite and not any snobbishness on the part of Lord or Lady Northcliffe that led them to remove their names from the London telephone directory. I mention this because it is notorious that in the last twenty years a cheap form of snobbery has arisen in social London which does not permit of one's telephone number being printed in the public register.

One of the consequences of success, when one has started in modest circumstances and risen to a condition of great wealth and influence, is that the friends of one's youth or early married life are apt to withdraw. It has been wisely said that while no one can ever wish ill to befall a friend there is something in the success of one's friends which is never entirely pleasing. No doubt Alfred experienced this in common with many who have risen from obscurity to a degree of distinction far below that reached by him. At the zenith of his career he would occasionally encounter by some turn of the wheel of chance one or other of the old-time friends of his Hampstead days. He was always as genial to them as he had ever been, and quite sincerely invited them to call upon him.

I happened, more than once, to meet some of these associates of his days of obscurity and I found that none of them had ever sought to continue or renew their old friendship. They felt that he had moved into a world so remote from theirs that they could not follow him and preferred to retain only their memories of humble but happy days together when he had hesitated at the tenancy of a house because it was some £5 or £10 a year more than he had meant to pay. One was a "brother Savage" of mine. His name I have forgotten. I remember that he was noted for his ability as an imitator of rustic characters. With much amusing detail he told me how young Alfred had been a

member of a goose club to which my informant acted as secretary.

This club, as I suppose, was somewhat similar to those that abound in the industrial districts, whose treasurers usually abscond about a week or a fortnight before Christmas when the funds are due for sharing out. Perhaps it was a special attraction that this Hampstead club had a drawing for a goose at Christmas. Alfred with his proverbial luck won the goose, and it was my informant's job to present it to him at his home.

Now, I had heard so many stories of Alfred's early days which did not sound authentic, indeed I have had to endure several times over a long-winded recital of how a certain individual made the success of *Answers* and put Alfred on his feet, a recital in which there was not more than the half of one per cent. of truth, that it occurred to me to test the story of the goose by retailing it to Northcliffe.

If I were to state on my oath whether he was delighted to hear that I had been told about his winning of the goose, I should have to weigh my answer. But on the whole he was not annoyed that my brother Savage had told me the story, the truth of which he admitted, and said that he was glad to hear old —— was still well and happy. Yet I had just a shade of feeling that he would as soon the matter had not been remembered.

It was, I think, on this very occasion he confessed to me that his own happiest days were assuredly those in which he had lived in his little house in Hampstead, and with his young wife came in each morning to deal with the problems of the day in his newly-established publishing business at Paternoster Square. For young Mrs. Harmsworth, whose charm and devotion to her husband of genius were of incalculable service to him in the realization

of his early successes, took her place for a time as his coadjutor in his publishing office, and I should not be surprised if, looking back across the intervening years with their amazing scene of change, those early days of struggle are still to her the sweetest of her recollections.

Another journalist of my acquaintance who has also attained to very considerable things in his profession, and who started still lower down the ladder than Alfred Harmsworth, remarked to me the other day, when discussing his personal losses of some scores of thousands of pounds which he had been able to support without breaking, that his happiest days were when the limit of his means permitted him to treat a friend to a "twopenny pie and a cup of tea" at the Mechanics' Institute of his native town.

The hallowing effect of Time on all such recollections makes it difficult to get at the real truth of them. But I doubt if Lord Northcliffe amid the splendour of his princely home at Carlton Gardens really wished to have his achievements cancelled and be back again at Hampstead and Pater-noster Square, any more than my brilliant friend would have been willing to forgo the riches and the reputation, which he still retained after his heavy losses, to be back with a twopenny pie and a cup of tea at the Mechanics' Institute.

XVII

FEW public men in England before the outbreak of the Great War were so well informed as Northcliffe about the conditions prevailing in Germany. For many years the German menace had been ever present in his thoughts and coloured the policy of the *Daily Mail* and *The Times*. In some quarters he was laughed at as a crazy amateur in

international politics who had a German bat for ever fluttering in his belfry. In the world of high politics he could never be other than an amateur, and his opinions on international relationships were not always sound, nor always based upon a penetrating study of the conditions, although his information was usually accurate. But the course of events abundantly proved his wisdom in warning his country for many years in advance of the great catastrophe, however deaf it remained to his appeals, of Germany's determination to measure her strength against Great Britain.

In this vital matter, he had, of course, the immense advantage of Lord Roberts's intimate opinions to support him in his attitude of suspicion towards all the moves of Germany's foreign policy, although I believe that he had arrived at very definite conclusions in his own mind before he associated himself wholeheartedly with Lord Roberts in their joint effort to arouse the country to some sort of consciousness of the coming terror.

Himself he told me that, from his early youth, he had opportunities of studying the German character of which the public and, indeed, his own friends were not aware. Some distant relations (on his mother's side I think) had married Prussians, and as a young man his contact with these relatives had given him no very favourable opinion of the mentality of the Prussian. I have never seen this fact stated anywhere, nor have I taken pains to investigate it, as I see no occasion for doubting Northcliffe's own statement, which I had direct from him, although it is curious that nobody ever drew attention to this relationship during the War years, the idiots who crudely put it about that he himself was of German origin being, of course, merely uninformed mischief-makers.

One of the many little indications of changing character

which he exhibited in the post-War years was an almost comic punctiliousness in referring to his titled employees, who by now had become quite numerous—Sir George Sutton, Sir Andrew Caird, Sir Campbell Stuart, Sir Mayson Beeton, and several others who for various war-time services had acquired some of the titles which Lloyd George distributed with so prodigal a hand during the War. He would speak of Sutton as “Sir George” as though he were referring to some baronet of ancient lineage and not to one who had been originally his office boy and with whom we had all spent many happy years of business intimacy.

Before the War he usually spoke to me of the later baronet as “Sutkins”. He had a very real and enduring affection for Sutton, whose absolute faithfulness eventually had its exceeding great reward. He once said to me, “I will die in the last ditch with Sutkins.” And that was when outsiders used to imagine that the object of the Chief’s affection held his very responsible post on a somewhat precarious tenure. They little knew how deeply Sutton had entered into the life of Northcliffe and how utterly he was trusted—as he well deserved to be. But every time in those later days that I heard the Chief speak ceremoniously of his faithful henchman as “Sir George”, I had the feeling that it was no longer the old familiar, companionable Chief that was speaking, but a changeling personality tenanted the same skin.

And was it indeed the same skin? Perhaps not. With the gradual break-up of his mental faculties one saw his old beauty of form and feature steadily disappear. In early life he must have been a singularly handsome man. I first met him when he was just approaching his fateful forty. He was then a man of uncommon and commanding appearance. His figure was still elegant, his features retained that

refinement and sensitive beauty which his early photographs register. He moved briskly. He gave the impression of a man in splendid health; neither too florid nor yet too pale; no bagging of the eyes nor sagging jowl. There was about him something of that personal glamour one associates with Byron. Northcliffe a romantic! Well, he lived romance and to most of us he was a figure of romance. I thought him just as handsome in appearance as he was graceful in gesture and in conversation. One day I realized, almost with a shock, that I had not before observed his feet, which, to my surprise, I noticed as we walked together, were large and somewhat splayed and suggestive of flatness rather than of that firm, well-arched nimbleness one had assumed from the rest of him. And wasn't Byron, too, less romantic in the feet?

In the later period of the War and during the few remaining years of his life he changed radically in appearance. He developed something more than an ample habit of body. In truth he tended to grossness. Gone was the incisive outline of his once so pleasing face. The clean-cut cheeks and firm lips had become soft, enlarged, "puffy". The eyes always brilliant and prominent were often blood-shot and had an uncanny glare in them. At a luncheon party given in his honour immediately after his return from the ill-fated world tour of 1921 he looked—indeed I think I made the remark to one of my colleagues on the occasion—like a heavyweight prize fighter out of condition. His old habit of speaking in short incisive sentences, which made him so effective on his rare appearances in public, had become exaggerated and the sentences were rapped out with a gesture of impatience, a defiant mien as though he expected everyone to contest what he was saying. Assuredly the handsome, clean-cut, inspiring Alfred Harmsworth was

already dead. The figure that recognized each one of us in a somewhat perfunctory manner as we shook hands with him was of one already receding from us in an unfamiliar guise.

A little etching stays in my mind of a strange and pathetic scene which I witnessed at Fleetway House about this time. Northcliffe's old rival and defeated competitor, Sir Arthur Pearson, whose magnificent service for the welfare of the blind eventually brought him recognition which had been denied to his journalistic enterprises, had come to visit the Chief at Fleetway House. Sir George Sutton and I happened to be together when the Chief, leading the blind Sir Arthur, brought him to Sutton's room and with superfluous ceremoniousness introduced him. I do not think that the tragic fates which so soon removed both Northcliffe and Pearson from the scenes of their one time rivalries colour my remembrance of this apparently trivial happening with a tragic gloom, for I am sure that the instant impression I had at the time was of the pathos of the scene, little though I could guess how soon the fates were to confirm it.

XVIII

AN innate gentleness of manner in another person seldom fails to show itself in its reaction upon ourselves. Now, Northcliffe, as I have shown, was not lacking in gentleness. There were times when anyone who came in contact with him was agreeably conscious of this, but it was not a predominant characteristic. The true epithet for his general demeanour would be "imperious" rather than "gentle" and "considerate". Possibly when he believed himself to be considerate he was often none the less disturbing to anyone

unfamiliar with his bearing. It was one of the defects of his qualities. Merely to know him, to have the privilege of his companionship, was to be exhilarated. He exhaled a certain tonic quality which, by some—and assuredly by myself—was definitely experienced in his presence.

There are others, however, who by their own preconceptions are apt to produce in a man of Northcliffe's highly nervous temperament a gesture of impatience where none had else been forthcoming, and it is needless to say that many of his employees, even some who had attained to positions of importance and influence in the firm, were apt to approach him in an attitude of mind which was not conducive to his gentler side. One little incident may serve to illustrate my meaning. It happened, I think, soon after the War and was in essence a typical everyday occurrence, though the circumstances were exceptional.

Northcliffe had come downstairs from his room at Fleetway House carrying in his hand a very valuable piece of Chinese jade which had belonged to one of the Ming emperors. In the hall he suddenly remembered some instruction he wished to give and went towards the hall telephone. In his quick way he handed the precious little parcel to one of the commissionaires to hold while he telephoned, telling him to be very, very careful, as it was breakable and was worth some hundreds of pounds. While he was telephoning he heard his jade ornament drop on the marble floor! He rushed from the telephone box to find the flurried old commissionaire lifting up the parcel. By a miracle the thing was unbroken.

It would not have been dropped had the chief in the ordinary way merely said to the man, who was always a little nervous in his presence, "hold this for a moment while I use the telephone." The Chief's vivid imagination had

pictured the old fellow dropping the gem before he had handed it to him, and his well-meant instructions served only to fluster the nervous one. Now this, or something very like this, happened on innumerable occasions when he had to give orders to one of his employees. And in this way, a thousand times, his own anxiety created nervous reactions in others, eventually producing a body of evidence for his being a very disturbing and imperious person while he was quite sincerely trying to avoid either implication.

An uncommon delicacy of speech was a Northcliffe characteristic which, I think, has been mentioned by some other writer. While he was extremely fond of a witty story and would even ask one to tell him "the latest", he was always unresponsive to any yarn of the smoke-room variety. Indeed, one had to be almost as careful in his company in the after-dinner give-and-take as though the minatory figure of a Pecksniffian nonconformist had been present. It has been often pointed out that those who display most sex interest in their conversation are the least sex active in their person, and those in whom sex instinct is strongest are the most reticent in open reference to it. In some degree this may have applied to Northcliffe. We at least have reason to doubt that his outward austerity in this matter had any sort of relationship to an inward monkishness.

In no crucial action of his life were his impulsiveness and lack of cool consideration more obvious than in the making of his will. For months after his death the columns of the Press were occupied with legal discussions and unseemly trouble that arose therefrom. It was an unbalanced, unimaginative, and entirely unworthy document. Numerous petty bequests, contingent legacies, ill-considered provisions. No large and imaginative use of

the wealth which he had accumulated. He was, indeed, but vaguely aware of the extent of his wealth when he made the will, in 1919, three years before his death. His provision of three months' salary for all the thousands, from editors and chiefs of departments to printers, labourers, char-women and office boys, who had been three years in his employment was typically thoughtless. Meant as a noble gesture, it was mere futility. More than most I had no reason to grumble, as it worked out to my own considerable profit, but it produced much heart burning among deserving employees. It was based upon a period of service quite unworthy of consideration. To lump those of twenty or thirty years service with the fluctuating mass of semi-temporary workers showed a lack of proportion which, I fear, was too often characteristic of his actions.

A later will, made during one of his clearer periods in his final illness, tore up the whole ill-woven fabric of the earlier will to which I have been referring, and left, as a farewell remembrance of an old and dear companionship, Lady Northcliffe the sole arbiter of his estate. Neither will was an act of wisdom. And it remained for the Courts, at vast legal expense and with much painful publicity, to do what he himself had failed in doing.

One of the eventual results of the confusion which followed this legal intervention was the passing from the control of his family and his old colleagues of all that immense organization known as the Amalgamated Press. Far more romantic in its growth and development than even the *Daily Mail*, associated with all his earlier and dearest successes, it had become the greatest publishing concern in the world, in whose works a different periodical went to press every twenty minutes of the working day, their aggregate weekly circulations being something like ten

million copies. This immense and individual enterprise passed into other hands four years after his death. It is fortunate for those of his old associates who still remain faithful to the old firm that in hardly any respect have its new controllers sought to depart from the conditions of co-operative enthusiasm which had built it up and still maintain it pre-eminent among the publishing houses of the world.

PART TWO
WITH NORTHCLIFFE
IN FLEET STREET

ON a day in 1895, when I was editing the *Nottingham Daily Express*, I went into the manager's room where there happened to be a lady visitor. At the moment of entering, her presence was unknown to me. I apologized for my intrusion. The manager (David Edwards, who had later an interlude as manager of the *Daily News*) introduced me. The lady, who had "the pectoral proportions of a Juno", resembling thus her sister John Strange Winter, whom I came to know in after years, remarked that she had been surprised as I came into the room; rather brusquely I have no doubt. For a moment she thought I was Alfred Harmsworth!

It had not occurred to me that in those days I bore any sort of resemblance to the young colossus of the press. Assuredly there was no conscious imitation. Such vague resemblance as there may have been was due to nothing more than the colour and cut of the hair. In point of fact I was more interested in meeting the recently widowed Mrs. George Augustus Sala than in pluming myself on any fancied resemblance to Alfred Harmsworth. For I could not yet account myself one of his admirers. Scotsmen are said to worship success, but it is not true. Rather is there something about the success of others which in Scots—and I suspect in English, also—is more apt to engender a feeling of resentment than of admiration.

Whether there was something of this in my early attitude to Alfred Harmsworth I cannot now determine.

But I do know that he was not yet one of my heroes. Perhaps some distrust lingered in my mind from the only Harmsworth experience I had then registered. It is worth mentioning, since it illustrates how an eminent man, whose success is in some measure built upon the work of numerous employees, may not escape the obloquy of their misdeeds if he enjoys the credit of their good work.

As a very young journalist, I had in 1890 or 1891 sent an article to *Answers* describing "How One Feels Under Gas". I had thus made "copy" out of my first experience in the dentist's chair. The article was retained by the editor of *Answers* for approximately two months, before being returned with a curt "declined with thanks". In that same week *Answers* came out with an article entitled "Mr. Answers Under Gas". *Answers* happened to be running an attractive series of lively articles describing the everyday adventures of "Mr. Answers". Many, if not all of these articles were written, I believe, by Max Pemberton. And most vivaciously written they were. The author of this particular one was, no doubt, entirely unaware of the fact that the editor had received my article, and (as I chose to believe) had forthwith asked Mr. Answers to go out and have a dose of gas at the nearest dentist's and write up his experience. To hold up my manuscript until the appearance of Mr. Answers' article went strongly against my youthful sense of fair play, although I am sure the editor got a better article in consequence.

I quite believe that it was due to this trivial but antagonizing action of the editor of *Answers* that I had no friendly feeling for the Harmsworths in those distant days. Alfred, of course, knew nothing about it, but he stood to me as the offender, and I never again submitted an article to *Answers*, nor, as it happens, have I ever written as a paid contributor

for that publication in all the six and twenty years in which I have been at work in the same office.

The very success of the early Harmsworth enterprises, cutting rudely athwart the more dignified ideas of the older journalism, seemed to set up the backs of all the older school, and I was personally more inclined to do homage to the old school than to the new. A proper characteristic of youth, in my opinion. Everywhere in the older-fashioned press the name of Harmsworth was mentioned with sneers and jeers. A few errors in one of the Harmsworth publications was held sufficient to justify an article in one of the weekly reviews headed "Keep out of Harmsworth's Way". It would have been quite as easy to have discovered as many errors in the critical review that thus poured its contempt on the new-comers.

A member of the *Express* staff in my time was Henry Leach. He was the first of us to become a Carmelite. I recall his saying to Arthur Mee and myself when we were still unregenerate, "Both of you must have been inoculated with some anti-Harmsworth virus." It certainly seemed so. He had ceased to be associated with the Amalgamated Press before I joined it, having quickly built up a wide free-lance connection as a writer on golf, a game of which I suspect he knew nothing in our Nottingham days.

Alfred in later years had a great admiration for Leach and often quoted him as an instance of how a free-lance with the wit to specialize on a popular subject and to select the best markets for his wares could earn three thousand a year by writing merely about the game of golf. He was a little indignant when I once expressed my doubts about that three thousand. It seemed a large annual sum to collect twenty years ago from pleasant gossip about mashies and niblicks and the smoothness of greens. Talk of the Scot

and his worship of success! Northcliffe was ever ready to admire anyone who succeeded, and it really pleased him to think that Leach was paying income tax on £3,000 per annum all from golfing gossip.

He loved to relate amusing tales of Carmelite House, and Henry Leach was the hero of one of the best. I should date the incident sometime in 1903.

"Leach!" the Chief would exclaim. "You know Leach? That's the man I *found*—FOUND!—In Carmelite House. Everybody had forgotten about him. I was looking round the office one day and opened the door of a room I hadn't been in before. A nice room. A very nice room. 'Marble halls' style. Turkey carpet. Fine furniture. And a man writing at a lordly table. 'Who are you?' I asked. 'My name's Leach,' said he. I asked him what he was doing. 'Oh,' he said, 'I'm assistant editor of the *Sunday Circle*.' And the joke of the thing was that the whole idea of the *Sunday Circle* had been dropped for months and months. Had never got beyond the dummy stage! Yet, there was Leach steadily preparing copy for a monthly magazine that had died before it was born!"

The comic aspect of the situation never ceased to amuse him and his inventive wit amplified and enriched the narrative as time went on. I am sure that he liked Leach from that moment and never gave a thought to the waste of energy or room space involved. At that time there was ample accommodation in Carmelite House for the Amalgamated Press, *Daily Mail* and *Evening News*, but in a year or two the immense expansion began and entire new buildings were quickly needed to house the ever-swelling staffs, until to-day the whole of Carmelite House has become the office of the *Evening News* alone, the *Mail* and the Amalgamated Press occupying immense individual build-

ings and great printing works on both sides of the river. That room in which the lonely Leach was "found" was soon afterwards worth a substantial rent as one of the editorial rooms of the *Mail*. In the largeness of Northcliffe's ideas the waste involved was infinitesimal.

My colleague and friend of nearly forty years, Arthur Mee, who has long since made an international reputation as a writer and editor for the young, was just completing his apprenticeship as a reporter on the *Nottingham Express* when I became editor. After some two years of association with me in Nottingham, where he eventually edited the evening edition of the *Express*, he had written so much miscellaneous matter in *Tit-Bits* and in *Answers* that he had invitations from the editors of both of these journals to come to London and interview them with a view to joining the office staff. I can see him now setting out with frock coat and silk hat—like Barrie he had bought the latter "to impress editors"—on the first stage of his London adventure and returning a day or two later to tell me that he was fixed up. "And thank heavens, not with these Harmsworths!"

How little can we foretell the courses of our lives. I quite agreed with him at the time and for many a year later. Yet both of us have given the best of our lives, and I should hope without a shadow of regret, to the service of Alfred Harmsworth.

II

WHEN I went to Birmingham in 1897 to take over and remodel the old *Weekly Post*, my move to the Midland capital was dictated by a desire to escape from the unhealthy toil of daily journalism—in those days a provin-

cial editor was kept at his desk until three or four in the morning—rather than to leave a town where life was most agreeable and in whose literary associations I took delight. Alfred Harmsworth and his audacious journalistic enterprises had now become the familiar topics of newspaper offices everywhere. The *Daily Mail* had been started (May 4, 1896) during my last year in Nottingham, and although old-fashioned newspaper proprietors curled their lips at the new halfpenny press, I had not been long in Birmingham before the inroads which the *Mail* was making on the ground so long and profitably occupied by the *Daily Post* had quickened the rate of thinking to which John Feeney had been accustomed in his supposedly impregnable position as owner of the *Post*. By 1900 it was alleged that the circulation of the *Mail* in Birmingham rivalled that of the *Daily Post*, and lips were curled no longer in contempt at a ha'penny London sheet that could obtain at least as many daily readers in Birmingham as the most widely circulated and best established of the local daily papers. No wonder that Harmsworth and his doings were a frequent source of discussion at our editorial teas over which Thackray Bunce, that great editor of the old school, presided until his retirement, which was followed all too soon by his death.

Birmingham had a link with the *Daily Mail* of which little or nothing is known to the young journalists of to-day. It is associated with the name of Kennedy Jones. If I were writing a full-length biography of Northcliffe I should have a great deal to say about Kennedy Jones. Of all the personalities associated with the early success of the Harmsworth enterprises and the founding of the journalistic fortunes associated with the name, I can think of none more vital to Northcliffe's main success in life than "K.J.," whom I had

first met in London in 1893, when he was a sub-editor on *The Sun*.

My acquaintance of early years, J. M. Dick, well-known for a generation as "J. M. D." of the *Evening News*, had left Glasgow a year or two before then to join the London *Evening News* as sporting editor when the paper was under the control of Harry Marks and its shares were standing in the market at about sixpence. I remember his taking me up to *The Sun* office to introduce me to K. J. I was chief sub-editor of a new evening paper, the *Glasgow Echo*, and Jones was wanting inside information about it. At this time he was earning about £5 or £6 a week as one of T. P. O'Connor's staff, but his head was full of grandiose schemes for newspaper enterprises and there came a day when, after many other notable achievements, he succeeded, in co-operation with Harold Harmsworth, in acquiring the *Glasgow Echo* (which had been foredoomed to failure) and transformed it into the *Daily Record*, a morning journal which, I suppose, has earned millions for its successive proprietors in the intervening years.

In his own way Kennedy Jones was quite as remarkable a man as Northcliffe. He was, however, destitute of that charm of character which threw a glamour of romance about the most ordinary of Northcliffe's doings, and he combined a Scottish canniness with a somewhat blatant ruthlessness, which led those who knew him casually to form wrong opinions of the man. Here I am not in the least concerned with his personal character, but only with the part he played in making possible the journalistic achievements which led to the pivotal success of Northcliffe's career. For I believe that without K. J. the whole story of Northcliffe would have to be re-written.

Within a few months of my having met him as an

obscure sub-editor on *The Sun* he had, in company with his friend, Louis Tracey, secured for Alfred Harmsworth the control of the moribund *Evening News*. And it is undeniable that, largely owing to K. J.'s journalistic experience, the *Evening News* under Alfred's direction was changed in the course of one year from a losing property to a prosperous enterprise, which soon attained to undreamt-of prosperity and continues to-day, under the impetus it received from Alfred Harmsworth and Kennedy Jones, London's unrivalled evening paper.

The starting of the *Daily Mail* within two years from taking over the *Evening News* was one of the most natural things that could have happened. But the *Evening News* was essential to the preparing of the way. While I cannot write with assurance of the share which K. J. had in planning and floating the *Daily Mail*, I imagine it was not less than second to that of Alfred Harmsworth. Considering the different experience in daily journalism which the two men possessed, I should be prepared to believe that the relative contributions were "fifty fifty". The title of the paper was suggested by K. J., who, before coming to London had been a sub-editor on the *Birmingham Daily Mail*, the evening journal run by the proprietor of the *Birmingham Post*. As an example of how little things lead to great. Jones once confessed to me that if John Feeney, the proprietor of the *Birmingham Mail*, had been generous enough to have given him a rise of 5/- a week (his weekly salary was about £3 at the time), when he demanded it, he would in all probability have continued "subbing" in Birmingham. The refusal of that five shillings made him throw up his job and try his luck in London.

Jones was fond of expatiating to me—for many years we travelled and talked together almost daily—on his ideal

daily newspaper. It was never my ideal. But I like to listen to an enthusiast even when I cannot share his enthusiasm. To some extent, however, it was Harmsworth's ideal. The daily newspaper was to become a national institution. To provide the news of the day was to be only one of its functions. It was to enter into almost every concern of the individual: not only to insure him, but to find him a job through its employment bureau, to get him a house through its housing bureau, to furnish him with coals and with the main necessities of domestic life through its supply departments, and (I should imagine) to arrange economically in due course through its undertaking department for his funeral. Judged by such a programme the *Daily Mail*, after more than thirty years, has gone only a little way towards the ideal of at least one of its founders.

III

WITH my coming to London in the autumn of 1900 my own newspaper days, so far as editing was concerned, had ended. My mind was set on the more literary side of magazine and book work. The next five years, which I spent in a dingy corner of Paternoster Row, working to that end, seemed at the time to be carrying me safely away from any Harmsworth contamination. They were merely developing my usefulness for absorption into that amazing and amorphous mass of human energy which was rapidly accreting round about the colossal personality of Alfred Harmsworth.

There was still no sort of wish in my mind to have anything to do with "these Harmsworths". One could no longer refrain, perhaps, from a grudging admiration of their

achievements, but the stories which were continuously circulated in Fleet Street about the shameful treatment of Harmsworth employees must have deterred many, like myself, from cherishing a desire to enter the house of the ogre. One day in Fleet Street when Arthur Mee and I met F. A. Atkins, editor and proprietor of *The Young Man*, a Harmsworth newsbill caught our eyes and Atkins at once enlarged upon the evil which Harmsworth was doing from the point of view of the welfare of the British Empire. What the subject of the bill could have been I cannot guess. Arthur Mee, with his instantaneous reaction to any bit of unexpected news, proposed on the spot that he would write a set of six articles for *The Young Man* on "Men who are Ruining the Empire: No. 1 Alfred Harmsworth". "Right," said Atkins, "I'll publish them." But the project never got beyond the title suggested on the kerb of Fleet Street.

This was a straw, however, that showed how the wind was blowing for us, although I will avow that at no time have I ever found myself greatly out of sympathy with the Harmsworthian ideals of Empire. They may not have been the loftiest of ideals, but at least they were ideals, and I consider that throughout his life Alfred did expound and develop a fairly rational notion of Britain's imperial mission, from which the commoner impulse of sensationalism was entirely absent.

Oddly enough, the man who was to have the blame or the credit for making the lines of my own life run on converging lines with the great Harmsworth adventure was none other than this same Arthur Mee.

One of the many Fleet Street failures had been an ambitious effort to establish a high-class illustrated weekly under the editorship of C. N. Williamson, a journalist of talent and a man of real personal charm, whose most

fortunate achievement during his editorship of *Black and White*, as the journal was christened, was to marry that charming lady and brilliant novelist who still writes successfully under the name of A. M. Williamson. Mrs. Williamson's delightful villa, La Dragonnière, at Cap Martin, has long been a favourite retreat of Lord Rothermere, who bought it from her many years ago. After a few years the ideals of *Black and White* had to be abandoned. One of these was to revive and adapt to modern needs the decaying art of wood-engraving, the disappearance of which Northcliffe often lamented to me, saying that he was sure it would one day be revived. A prophecy which I thought had no hope of fulfilment, unless the recent vogue of crude black and white effects achieved by hacking pieces of boxwood may be accepted as the revival he had foreseen.

In due time *Black and White* joined the ranks of the photographic weeklies, becoming notorious for its frequent changes of editorship. There was a time when a dozen men in Fleet Street could claim to have edited *Black and White* for a month or so. With the possible exception of Nicoll Dunn, who left it to edit the *Morning Post*, Arthur Mee contrived to hold the position longer than any of them, producing a bright and lively journal whose long buried files would compare very favourably with some of the shilling illustrateds of to-day. With him, too, the inevitable happened, and save for his daily contributions to the *St. James's Gazette* he was "out of work"—in his case never more than a relative term.

Together we had discussed the idea of a new weekly which would combine something of the character of T. P. O'Connor's *M.A.P.*, a weekly budget of personal gossip very popular at that time, with matters of a more serious and

less ephemeral nature. The title, which I suggested, was to be *Who's Who This Week*. I had no desire to be editorially associated with the scheme. So Arthur worked out a dummy entirely of his own conception, using that title, and showed it to his friend W. Dallas Ross, then manager of *Black and White*, who was also associated with C. Arthur Pearson in the proprietorship of the *St. James's Gazette*. Ross put up the scheme to Pearson, which struck me as the stupidest thing to do, in view of the fact that Pearson was the proprietor and publisher of *M.A.P.*, to compete with which the proposed new journal was primarily designed. Of course, it was "turned down". Arthur Mee was done with Newnes, so with Pearson eliminated there was no road to turn that did not lead to Carmelite House. It was thus that he was caught up in the Harmsworth web in which he has ever since remained a more or less willing prisoner, and has contrived to achieve an immense amount of highly individual work to the great profit of the Harmsworth organization and his own personal fame and fortune.

The dummy of the new weekly was no more than a "conversational opening". It brought him into the presence of Alfred Harmsworth, who realized at once that here was another of the young men he needed, pullulating with ideas and tingling with journalistic energy. Arthur had hardly transferred himself to Carmelite House and produced a few printed dummies of the proposed publication, for which I wrote many articles that have never seen the light, than the whole scheme was abandoned and Alfred put him in charge of "page 4" of the *Daily Mail*, in succession to Philip Gibbs.

That is how most things happened at Carmelite House. One never knew what the adventure of the morrow would

be. To those who had the staying power and had brought with them something that strengthened and enriched the brain power which, in an apparently loose and wasteful manner, was casually directed by Alfred Harmsworth, there was an extraordinary zest in the atmosphere of Carmelite House. At least that was my experience when, within a year of Arthur Mee's taking the Carmelite vows and renouncing his past, he was the cause of my joining the brotherhood.

One is tempted to write thus in pursuing the Carmelite metaphor, but there probably was never anything that less resembled a brotherhood brought together under one roof, unless in looking back along the vista of years one sees that a certain fraternal relationship was evolved among those who stood the test and still continue in daily association.

To the *Daily Mail* I was at that time a regular contributor and, indeed, before quitting the old-world atmosphere of Paternoster Row for the rush and tumble of Carmelite House I had already established a connection of an editorial sort with the *Daily Mail* in an advisory capacity for which a modest, but acceptable, weekly cheque added to my freelance income. One or two proposals had been made to me—Arthur Mee the instigator—to join the Harmsworth staff, but an element of vagueness left me uncertain of future possibilities, and not until Alfred had an inspiration which struck me as entirely well-conceived did I decide to entrust my future to the tender mercies of the Harmsworths.

It happened in this way. Nelson, the well-known Edinburgh publishers, had produced an admirable new encyclopedia which had been edited by George Sandeman, who in after years was to be very closely associated with me in various enterprises, and this encyclopedia, completely created in every editorial and material detail by the Edin-

burgh firm, was issued to the public with the backing of the whole Harmsworth organization as the *Harmsworth Encyclopedia*. Its success was astounding to a publishing world accustomed for two or three generations only to such publications as were identified with the name of Cassells. In its fortnightly parts, giving unheard of value for 7d., the *Harmsworth Encyclopedia* sold by hundreds of thousands and presumably brought immense profits to the Edinburgh firm and also to the Amalgamated Press. It was not the first part publication upon which the Harmsworths had tried their hand, as they had achieved considerable successes with earlier works such as *Sixty Years a Queen*, and *With the Flag to Pretoria*, but these were editorially unimportant by comparison with this ably edited and beautifully printed encyclopedia.

The alert and nimble mind of Alfred saw unlimited possibilities in this form of publication, and he suggested that Arthur Mee should get busy at once producing a companion work to be entitled the *Harmsworth Self-Educator*. The idea was obviously based upon Cassells' *Popular Educator*.

No sooner had the suggestion been made than you are to picture Arthur Mee at work on the preliminaries, myself called into consultation. It was obvious to him that there was here an immense amount of co-operation which I could give and hardly any possibility of my doing so while I still remained outside the office. How was I to be got in?

The ingenuity of Alfred was equal to the occasion, as the success of the *Harmsworth Encyclopedia*, together with the immense amount of publicity which the word encyclopedia was receiving at that time in another of the numerous campaigns of the *Britannica*, gave him the idea that a

magazine designed to supplement month by month all existing encyclopedias would be a successful undertaking. And so it came about that, when he had sent for me and expounded his idea, the possibilities of which instantly fired my imagination, I had no sort of hesitation in agreeing to join up. The letter engaging me is before me as I write. It is dated 13th July, 1905, and thanks to it I know that I began my association with Alfred Harmsworth "not later than October 1, 1905", at "the inclusive salary of £20 per week". The agreement was to be for one year and six months' notice thereafter. In the event of the *Monthly Encyclopedia* being abandoned or postponed I was to give equivalent service in the production of the *Harmsworth Self-Educator*.

IV

TO "join the Harmsworths" had the spice of adventure. There was the popular idea that members of their staff had to be capable of standing up to the most brutal treatment if they were to last out the term of their engagement. And it was notorious that life in Carmelite House was one of continual surprises. No one knew what next week might bring forth. One might be editing a periodical with a declining circulation to-day, the outlook gloomy and uncertain, but in a week or two the gloom would have gone and the declining periodical with it, absorbed into a new and instantly popular publication in the editing of which one would have a thrilling sense of having arrived, and the prospect of long years of success. The fact that the buried periodical which had just been merged—"knifed" was the office term—into a new one had, in its day, provided its first editor with a similar illusion, did not in the least matter,

Hope sprang eternal in the breasts of young Carmelite editors.

Coincident with the possibilities of unexpected opportunities for young editors were the chances of financial reward. For a man with ideas and the capacity to give these form and substance there not only seemed to be, but indeed there was, almost boundless scope under the Harmsworth shield in the first decade of this century. It was the most ordinary occurrence for a sub-editor who was earning three or four pounds a week suddenly to find his weekly income swollen to £20 or more as the editor of a new and successful penny paper on which he was paid 1/- for every thousand copies that were sold. This commission was in addition to his salary, which was always sure to be higher than salaries paid in other publishing houses.

So far as I was concerned personally, I certainly looked upon my joining Harmsworth in the light of an adventure. I was not then nor at any later time bent upon "making a fortune". In fact, when I encountered J. M. Dick in a corridor one day, soon after my arrival in Carmelite House, and he gave me friendly greeting, asking if I had come to make my fortune, I was taken aback. The idea of making a fortune had never occurred to me! That was why I dismissed as a mere pleasantry the answer which Arthur Mee made to my wife when we turned up very late for dinner at my Crouch End home, and she jocularly demanded an explanation: "I have been making Sandy's fortune." It was the day I had fixed things up with Alfred Harmsworth. Arthur spoke truer than he thought, or he may have been more far-seeing than I, but in every sense of the word his answer has been justified, and although I may now have lost most of the very considerable fortune that I made, and

had never expected to acquire, the fact remains that it was earned as the result of that introduction.

Perhaps I was in a more fortunate position than many, of whom cautionary tales were related in Fleet Street concerning their misadventures in Carmelite House. I was entirely sure of myself. If Alfred had said "Go over and edit *The Times*," I should have tackled the job without a tremor! These were the days of "glad confident morning". I believed in my ability to carry out whatever class of editorial work I undertook. Better still, I was able, as a free-lance journalist, to earn all the money I reasonably required, and I could thus look with equanimity upon the possibility of failing to hit it off with Harmsworth.

I was familiar with the system, which in those days obtained on the *Daily Mail*, of giving everyone a chance. Almost anybody who could put up a plausible story of his journalistic capacity was allowed three months probation on the sub-editorial staff at a decent salary. A great many young journalists did three months and no more. Afterwards they were to be found applying elsewhere for jobs, and the reasons they gave for not having outlasted their probationary period were never framed in the precise terms of truth. They were all aggrieved parties. They were the real propagators of the legend of Harmsworth ruthlessness.

This method of testing men always suggested to me a person sifting cinders through a sieve. According to the mesh in which they were shaken they either fell through to the rubbish heap below or remained in the sieve. With relatively few and noteworthy exceptions, in which Alfred did show some real appreciation of character, it was by this crudely mechanical method that his editorial staffs were eventually chosen.

In my own case the test of the sieve did not apply. In

common with a number of other journalists and editors who came to him with some reputation acquired outside of his enterprises, a personal contact was immediately established and one stood or fell on the measure of success which one achieved in carrying out new undertakings to which the Chief had given his blessing. One was left to work out one's own salvation almost independently, yet always under the scrutinizing and penetrating eye of the head of the firm.

It would be untrue, however, to say that he showed remarkable perception in the choice of those who from the beginning occupied positions of importance. His judgement was so often reversed in the higher court of experience that it was difficult to eliminate the element of chance or luck—call it what you will—which played so large a part in all the relationships of his life. That he got together a remarkable assemblage of men efficient, and even brilliant, in their respective ways did not, as many have been ready to believe, indicate any great prescience in the matter of human character and ability. A quick appreciation of results achieved was the true explanation. So that, after all, even in his ultimate decisions as to his lieutenants that hazard of the sieve could never be said to be entirely absent.

What I do know is that from the moment one came in contact with Alfred Harmsworth as the directing head and sole dictator of a great group of journalistic enterprises, a new feeling of exhilaration invaded one. His boyish enthusiasm for the latest idea of which he had approved or which he had invented—in a week or two he invariably believed himself to be the inventor of every idea that proved a success—reacted on his editors as a tonic. I think it would be true to say that in every Harmsworth publication issued during his life—and to some extent since his death—no matter how slight his personal part in its production may

have seemed, some measure of his own vitality, his own enthusiasm, his own optimism had been communicated to its editor. He was thus the coadjutor of all his numerous editors. At least, so I found it when I first became one of them.

I think it was on the first day of taking up my quarters in Carmelite House that Percy L. Parker, afterwards editor and proprietor of *Public Opinion*, who had been one of the earlier editors of the *London Magazine* and was then running a part publication, *Japan's Fight for Freedom*, entirely written by H. W. Wilson, the brilliant military critic of the *Daily Mail*, invited me and our common friend Arthur Mee to lunch at De Keyser's Hotel at Blackfriars (on the site of which the great mass of Unilever House now rears itself) to celebrate the event. We were in the midst of the luncheon when Alfred came in unaccompanied and made a fourth at our table. He was dressed in black, as he had just returned from the funeral of Somers J. Summers who for seven or eight years had been editor of *Answers*. Summers I had known but slightly. I recall him as a blond young man. All who were in positions to judge were agreed that he had a remarkable flair for popular periodical journalism and that a good deal of the sustained success of *Answers* was attributable to his ingenuity.

I fear that the strain and excitement incident to the production of a popular periodical, which involved continual inventiveness in devising new and compelling attractions, sensational competitions, and even more sensational serial stories, told upon the constitution of Summers and resulted in his neglecting his health to an extent which would eventually have impaired his capacity for such exacting work. Alfred's solicitude for the health of his brilliant young editor was such that he provided him with a room

next to his own, so that he might be continually under his wing. He fully recognized his editor's value to the organization in which *Answers* from first to last was the apple of his eye.

The death of Summers affected him acutely, and he cannot have been the brightest of companions at that particular luncheon, although I remember the air of detachment with which he discussed the arrangements he had been able to make for the welfare of the family and the amount of money (some £13,000 I think) which the young editor had left. "A pretty good amount, I think, for a man just over thirty," said Alfred, with just the same quality of professional interest as any other journalist who had not known Summers might have commented on his fortune. The monetary achievement of any journalist was ever a prime matter of curiosity and speculation for Alfred Harmsworth.

V

"DO you realize," said Alfred to me when first discussing his project of a *Monthly Encyclopedia*, "that Hooper and Jackson have spent about a quarter of a million of money drumming the word 'encyclopedia' into the head of the British public? 'Encyclopedia' has now become so familiar to every man, woman and child in our country that there's a ready-made public for you. And what a story to tell! This new monthly of yours will solve the old problem of an encyclopedia: how to keep it up to date! Month by month you'll sift and collate all the new information on every subject under the sun. Arrange it alphabetically and print it in your *Monthly Encyclopedia*. Everybody that owns an encyclopedia will want your monthly supplement

to keep their original work up-to-date. Besides, at the same time you'll be giving them an informative magazine."

An alluring programme that strongly appealed to me. Without waste of time I produced an imaginary number 1. Alfred seemed to like it, but said he would let a month or two pass before giving me the word to go ahead. Meanwhile I suggested that he should let me carry out an idea which I had conceived some years before: to compile a set of volumes from the back numbers of *Punch* under the title of the *Punch Library of Humour*. I had in my mind's eye a picture of twenty-five volumes illustrating Mr. Punch in all his moods: "In the Highlands", "In Society", "In Bohemia", "At the Play", "At Home", "In Wig and Gown", "At the Seaside" and so forth.

"A topping idea, my dear Hammerton, but the dear old-fashioned folk at *Punch* office would never let you do it." When I protested that I was confident I could put the scheme before the proprietors of *Punch* in such a way as to make it acceptable, he gave me his blessing and told me to get ahead with it as soon as I liked.

The result of my activities very quickly became apparent when stacks of the *Punch Library of Humour* in shilling volumes appeared on all the bookstalls throughout the country. I can still recall the thrill with which I received my first cheque for £300, or so, based upon a very modest royalty per volume. Not all the twenty-five volumes were issued in shilling form, as I soon developed the scheme into a set of books to be sold in an appropriate bookcase on the instalment system. I do not think that the shilling issue exceeded twelve separate books and I have no record of the total amount I received by way of royalties; but from first to last the idea brought me in a few thousand pounds, as immense numbers of the complete sets, bound in cloth with

a most delightful series of original drawings on the bindings by John Hassall, were sold.

It was from this set of books that there developed an important off-shoot of the Amalgamated Press—the Educational Book Company. My *Punch Library* and the *Harmsworth Encyclopedia* in volume form were the first works it had to offer to the public.

My success with this little side-line—"butterfly-chasing" Alfred used to term anything out of the run of his periodical publishing—was peculiarly gratifying to the Chief. It amused him to hear from different quarters that he had become proprietor of *Punch*. In those days he had a mania for acquiring control of old-established journals even when they were moribund. In 1903 he had bought the *Weekly Dispatch* and two or three years later *The Observer*. Among less noteworthy and, indeed, ill-advised purchases was the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which was no longer moribund but had become a corpse. One day, when I was with him in his private room, G. A. Sutton, his *fides Achates* then as ever, came in. Sutton was wearing a lounge suit which had in the skirt of the jacket a very large inner pocket adapted for carrying manuscripts and sheets of quarto size. Most of us were so provided in those days. The Chief was in his boyish mood. "Let Hammie see what's in your pocket, Sutkins." Whereupon Sutton exhibited rather shyly the contents of this skirt pocket. "He's got the world in his pocket," said the Chief, his face beaming with pleasure. It was thus he conveyed the news that he had just completed that day negotiations for the purchase of Edmund Yates's celebrated weekly journal, *The World*, one of his many "bad buys".

In later years he did not favour the policy of acquiring old and effete publications with a view to revitalizing them.

The success of that policy in the case of the *Evening News* had led him at first to think it was a good one, but after registering many failures in its pursuit, he insisted that the best cure for a losing property was "the knife", and that it was better to make a clean start with a new periodical than to try to galvanize an old one into new life. Even the *Dispatch* took years before it was worth while printing. The real reason for acquiring it was to own a Sunday newspaper, as the violent campaign directed by Nonconformist bigots in 1899 against the *Sunday Daily Mail*, a finely conceived and brilliantly produced Sunday companion of the *Daily Mail*, had actually led to its discontinuance. It was converted into a quite purposeless weekly, *The Illustrated Mail*, which dragged along at a loss for a few years, until it was "knifed".

Doubtless many of the ill-informed and obstinate Sabbatarians who denounced the *Sunday Mail* might afterwards have been found reading the *Weekly Dispatch*. At any rate, its purchase was one way of getting into the Sunday market without prejudicing the *Daily Mail*, and the time came when *Sunday* could be substituted for *Weekly* in its title without fear of offending any considerable body of the reading public.

It is amusing to look back upon the old opposition to Sunday papers, now that a score of them published in London and the provinces enjoy circulations that range from one to three millions. Indeed, anything less than the million mark is hardly worth considering. Except for their distribution, there is no Sunday work on a Sunday paper. What their noisy opponents a generation ago should have attacked was the Monday paper. Oddly enough we have to go to Spain for the logical solution, as there many of the daily papers which also appear on Sunday do not issue a

morning edition on Monday, thus giving their work people a Sunday holiday.

I have said that the *Dispatch* had a long way to go before it began to make money. One day (most likely in 1908), when Arthur Mee and I happened to be lunching at the Savoy (a rare occurrence) with Kennedy Jones, Arthur—ever an outspoken and sometimes extreme critic of the Harmsworth newspapers, accused K. J. of making profit out of Sunday sensationalism, meaning the *Dispatch*. Jones in his quiet way took from his pocket a folded sheet of notepaper, and handing it to him said: "Cast your Christian Sunday eye on that, Arthur, and tell me what you think of our ill-gotten gains." It was a summary of the *Dispatch* balance-sheet for the year just ended, showing a net profit of five pounds. The faith that moves mountains and confidently awaits miracles is often as necessary to newspaper proprietors as to Seventh Day Adventists.

VI

ONE stipulation I made on becoming a Harmsworth editor was that I should be allowed to retain my pages in *The Bystander*, in which from the first issue of 9th December, 1903, I had been writing every week a literary causerie that proved more popular than I had dared to hope. To this Alfred assented. But I had not been many months with him before he suddenly determined that he would revive the Friday column of "Books and Bookmen" in the *Daily Mail* and that I should write it. He was as keenly interested as any young journalist could be in literary and journalistic gossip.

No matter how obscure or insignificant the newspaper,

it held some interest for Alfred Harmsworth. Whenever he stopped in a town where he had not been before the first thing he did was to buy the local papers to see how they were edited and printed. He was better informed about the minor journals of the provincial press than many journalists of the jog-trot type who worked in neighbouring towns. For instance, I am pretty certain he could have told you more about the old *Midland Counties Herald* of Birmingham than most of the newspaper men between Wolverhampton and Warwick ever knew. His curiosity about the doings of journalists, obscure and eminent, and of journals, great and small, was insatiable. It is, I fancy, a characteristic of all good journalists. An example of the contrary occurs to me. A Midland journalist came to me nearly thirty years ago for advice concerning a London editorship that had been offered to him. I asked him how old the journal was which he had been asked to edit, what was its circulation, its selling price, and how many pages its average issue contained. Believe me or not, this prospective editor could not answer a single one of those questions. But he got the job, and he is still there, probably at the same salary.

Very considerably Alfred had pointed out that there was no occasion for my giving up my "Bookman's Causerie" in *The Bystander* although I was to write a column of original matter every Friday in the *Daily Mail* about the activities of the literary world. He well knew, however, that with my growing editorial interests in Carmelite House there was small chance of my finding time to do both of these outside pieces of writing. Inevitably I should have to drop *The Bystander* and thus bring myself into line with what, at that time, was his rule for all his workers: to confine their energies to the editing

and writing of publications in which he was interested as proprietor.

In "Books and Bookmen" he took a lively personal interest. No week did my column go to press without his having seen me and discussed what I had written. One day some imp of mischief made him suggest that I should have a dig at Clement Shorter. Now Shorter was a good friend of mine and I had no wish to say anything that might offend him, although there never was a writer of literary gossip who gave greater offence to a greater number of people than Shorter did weekly in his "Literary Letter" in *The Sphere*. He put no restraint upon his pen and as he wrote without grace or *finesse* the crudity of his comments often tended unduly to magnify their appearance of ill-nature. He would print the most objectionable references to his fellow journalists and men of letters and quite sincerely express surprise when he heard they had been offended. Alfred, out of pure mischief, was anxious that I should give him a rap over the knuckles. But how?

N: Another week gone by, dear Ham, and no par about Clem. Can't you get an idea?

H: I'm waiting for a happy thought. Some day I'll think of something with a snap in it to say about him.

N: But I want something said about him *now*. Haven't you heard that I am founding an anti-Clement club?

H: I'm not sure I'd want to join it.

N: Oh, you would if you were asked. The idea of the club is this: each member will undertake in turn to see that Clem gets his daily bath. I feel sure he doesn't wash enough. And just look at his clothes. They are never brushed. That's another duty for the members.

It did not occur to me to point out that the purpose of the club was hardly in keeping with its title; unless it

implied that Shorter would object to being bathed and brushed. But in that strain Alfred would continue his jest week after week. Never about Shorter's literary pretensions, always about his person. And there was some appearance, at least, of justification for this persiflage, as Shorter somewhat resembled his admired Dr. Johnson in his indifference to dress. Often have I noticed when walking with him in London streets that he was carrying specimens of the baked mud of Missenden at the extremities of his trouser legs, while the dandruff from his hyacinthine locks usually powdered the collar and shoulders of his coat. In his later years, and thanks no doubt to the more critical eye of his second wife, who brought him much happiness, Shorter took more pride in his personal appearance. In any case, I could give the lie to the proposed programme of the anti-Clement club, for I had seen the object of its anxieties extremely upset at having forgotten to bring his bath sponge with him, when we were staying together at a certain seaside hotel!

Notwithstanding Alfred's frequent jokes about Shorter's person, I think that he really liked him. He liked most people who were not afraid to express opinions totally opposed to his own. He liked persons who "stood up" to him.

At first I took Alfred's weekly tease about my neglect of Shorter in the spirit in which it was given, and never thought of introducing a word about the editor of *The Sphere* into my notes. "To admit that you have been writing this column week after week for nearly six months and never found anything to say about Shorter only shows how you let your chances slip." So he said one day, adding, "Think of the hundreds of journalists in London who would give anything for the chance you have to give old Clem a

bit of your mind in the widest circulation in the world!" And then he said with a fine assumption of gravity: "It comes to this, if you don't have a par about Clem in your next column I'll put one in myself, and you'll get all the blame for it." His imp of mischief was still active.

It came about, however, that in writing a review of the literary year for the *Mail* I had occasion honestly to comment upon a most ludicrous statement made by Shorter to the effect that Elinor Glyn was the only considerable lady novelist writing in England at that time, and the book which she had written (*The Vicissitudes of Evangeline*, I fancy) was the book of the year! My comment on this absurd literary judgment did not exceed three or at most four lines. But it gave Alfred some satisfaction, as I remember him saying "Mischer Clemend Shorder wond lige thad"—he always imitated Shorter's characteristic speech, which resembled an ordinary person talking through a heavy cold. Shorter did not like it. He actually wrote to Thomas Marlowe, then editing the *Daily Mail*, and adjured him to stop an irresponsible scribbler like myself from writing the literary column in a journal of such importance. "What he wrote in *The Bystander* did not matter. Nobody read it, but in the *Daily Mail* it is serious," so he wrote in his letter, which was shown to me. He was curtly informed that the Editor of the *Daily Mail* in a matter of this kind did not seek to influence the opinion of his contributors.

Presently Shorter attacked me in another quarter. I had just completed and published with—if I may say so—some literary success, a hefty book on the life and art of George Meredith, upon which I had been at work on and off for four or five years. It was widely and favourably reviewed, among the notices it received being two columns in the *Daily Mail* written by Edward Garnett.

In this book of mine I had, without naming him, passed an adverse but entirely justifiable criticism on Shorter, who had organized the presentation of an address to Meredith on his eightieth birthday. This address, signed by a select number of the most eminent literary men in England, was so poorly phrased that I expressed my regret at an occasion so noteworthy having been marked by a composition so indifferent. This brought ferocious attacks upon me in *The Sphere*, and wherever Shorter could get a letter printed. It transpired that his was the pen that framed the address!

The fact that my publisher had refused him a review copy of my book, as it was Shorter's practice to attack anything that came from that particular publisher's office, so that he had to pay his 12/6 for it, was a bad start, and to find that I deprecated the form of the address made him furious. In the most unscrupulous way he set himself to attack me wherever opportunity offered, even writing a letter to the *Daily News* to protest against the editor allowing Edward Garnett to waste two columns of valuable space in praise of a book which in Clement Shorter's estimation was quite worthless. None excepting my own friends knew the real cause of these attacks, which I publicly ignored, but Shorter in one of his letters to me had naïvely admitted that they were prompted by my adverse opinion of this Meredith address! Some day I may publish the correspondence. It is quite amusing even to those who have never heard the name of Clement Shorter, for I did not hesitate to tell him that despite his literary pretensions he remained the laughing-stock of literary London.

Here I mention the matter only because it flows naturally out of Alfred's private fun about his anti-Clement club, and especially because, having shown him some of the letters which passed between us, he insisted on my making a type-

written booklet of the whole which he carried about for many months with him and read with glee to all sorts of people, even writing about it in his private letters, as I have been told. Whenever he was feeling a little bit gloomy he used to read over these plain-spoken epistles of what he called "the great Habberdon—Shorder correspondence."

Despite this episode I personally never ceased to like Clement Shorter, and when he wrote to me after a few months saying it was too absurd we two should be other than friends I readily agreed, and continued with him on terms of the pleasantest intimacy until the day of his death, which I am sure none of his friends regretted more than I did.

Although it takes me ahead of my narrative—but this will often happen—I may set down here how my *Daily Mail* column eventually disappeared.

Northcliffe was continually being assailed from all sides by persons with axes to grind. Never in the history of journalism and possibly not in that of any other occupation was one man so persistently the subject of attack by individuals wishing to advance some project of their own or to secure consideration for some idea of a friend. And it was entirely to his credit that he lent willing ear to any suggestion. Among his many achievements was to break down the convention that the head of a great business was unapproachable. Hopeful always that a young man here or there would hit upon a new notion which he, with his quick appreciation of possibilities and the driving force of the great publishing machine his genius had created, would be able to turn to new profit, he listened with care and consideration to all sorts of wild-cat schemes as well as to many that had intrinsic merit. Occasionally he mistook one of the former for one of the latter category, and in

giving it issue came to grief. But more often after it had passed through the alembic of his mind even a wild scheme became feasible, and charged with possibilities of which its originator had never dreamt.

I may be wrong, but I suspect that the scheme which led to the discontinuance of my "Books and Bookmen" did not originate with Northcliffe. At any rate, he told me that it had been brought to him by the two men of letters who undertook to run it, and for whom I foretold certain and complete failure. I had nothing but respect for both of them, yet I was surprised that the Chief should have been prepared to run very considerable financial risks in order to give them an opportunity of carrying out an innovation in the *Daily Mail* which neither jointly nor severally were they able to invest with success. Years on, nothing of this kind would have surprised me, as one had then come to realize how liable Northcliffe was to be carried away by suggestions from without and to give a free head to the suggestors, who usually came a cropper at the second or third hurdle.

Edmund Gosse and Archibald Marshall were the two who were responsible for the disappearance of my "Books and Bookmen" in which the Chief had taken so much personal interest. They were going to do something for the *Daily Mail* in the grand manner. None of your casual gossip and occasional reviews of books. They were to do "the big thing in the big way" and thrust a proper appreciation of true literature upon the blockheads who read the *Daily Mail*. I was more amused than annoyed when Northcliffe expounded the great idea to me and told me how this Literary Supplement was going to be the biggest thing of its kind in modern journalism.

Gosse, a year or two before, had become Librarian to

the House of Lords, and he was known as a critic of some distinction, although long before then Churton Collins had mercilessly exposed the shaky foundations of his scholarship. So far as practical journalism was concerned, he was and remained to the end of his days the complete amateur. Marshall had already made something of a reputation as a novelist, particularly with that admirable story, *The House of Merrilees*, a reputation which he has maintained and enhanced in a long series of novels appearing almost year by year since 1905. I am not aware that his experience in practical journalism was much greater than that of Gosse.

These were the two untried journalists accepted by Northcliffe as the editors of a very ambitious weekly supplement to the *Daily Mail*, which was to show the world how literature ought to be dealt with in a popular ha'penny paper. Anybody in the *Mail* office could have told him that the scheme was foredoomed to failure. It had a short life and a dull one.

I remember his sending for me to break the news that my "Books and Bookmen" would have no place in the Gosse-Marshall plan, as they were not partial to literary gossip of the kind in which Northcliffe and I and so many thousands delighted. "But I am going to arrange that you will transfer your column to *The Observer*, and you will have five guineas a column there instead of three which you have been getting on the *Mail*." So he said, and there the matter ended, not entirely to my regret, as I had more than adequate outlet for my energies.

If I had had any wish to transfer the column to *The Observer*, whose editor, J. L. Garvin, had most likely never heard a word of the matter, and might well have objected to any such arrangement, he would probably have tried to keep his word had I pressed him, but I was quite indifferent

and never re-opened the subject, nor was I ever so tactless as to call his attention to the deadly dullness of the Literary Supplement. Nobody knew better than he, after he had seen an issue or two, that it was merely another of the many failures he had fathered and later had to disown. His hits were so numerous that his misses were soon forgotten, but if anyone cared to compile a record of them their total would be surprising. As my story continues, I shall have occasion to specify not a few; more than sufficient to show that his judgement was often at fault.

VII

AND now I must hark back to my earliest days in Carmelite House. One can't go on drawing a substantial salary week by week and have it charged up for an indefinite period against "New Publication", of which the only tangible evidence is a dummy copy that is growing old. A few months had passed with my *Monthly Encyclopedia* lying on Northcliffe's desk but rarely the subject of discussion between us, when, with his customary impulsiveness, he informed me one day that I had to go across and edit the *London Magazine*. On my protesting that, while ready to obey his orders, I should indeed be sorry if in taking over the *London* the new publication which had brought me into Carmelite House was to be abandoned, he said:

"I give you my word that the *Monthly Encyclopedia* won't be prejudiced by your editing the *London*. Do well or ill with the *London*, the *Monthly Ency* remains a good idea. But I am not ready to let you go ahead just yet. Don't worry about it. Forget about it for a bit. Go and

concentrate on the *London*. Concentrate. Sisley knows you are going to take over."

In other words, Sisley knew before I did, and Sisley was its editor! Thus things happened at Carmelite House.

I have now forgotten what Northcliffe gave as his reason for making this change. I remember only that while I assured him I should do my best, I also told him that in my estimation the *London* was being as well edited as I could do it. Personally I considered that C. P. Sisley was doing his job very well indeed. The magazine had much more character, and seemed to me to have more staying power, than it had a few years before as the *Harmsworth Magazine*. In the circumstances, I was not without some feeling of embarrassment. It seemed a totally unnecessary swapping of horses, even if there was no stream to cross. Nor did I ever quite understand why the change was made. It had its complications.

Sisley who, like Alfred, had begun in cycling journalism and was the first editor of a very bright weekly, *The Cycle*, which was transferred to the Harmsworth organization under his editorship, was editing, in addition to the *London*, the *Penny Pictorial*. This was a most attractive weekly journal of the same size as *Home Chat* and was, I believe, the evolution of *The Cycle*. I may be wrong in thinking that Sisley had also been responsible for the *Rambler*, another attractive weekly which, although it was floated with wide publicity, did not prove a success. In any case, towards the end of 1905 neither *Cycle* nor *Rambler* existed, and the *Penny Pic*, as we used to call it, occupied the field, with only one rival at that time in the *Penny Magazine*, originated by my friend Wood Smith and published by the firm of Cassells.

As I recall a rather tangled situation, on Northcliffe

determining upon the change of editorship for the *London*, Sisley threw up the *Penny Pictorial*: a not unnatural action in the circumstances. Thus I found myself, within twenty-four hours of being appointed to the *London*, also the entirely unwilling editor of the *Penny Pic*.

The consequences were of high importance to a number of persons. My first act on taking over from Sisley was to engage Wood Smith, a very competent journalist, who had not only originated the *Penny Magazine*, but also a number of very successful Cassells serial publications, such as *Living London* and *Britain at Work*. He had spent most of his working life with that firm and had been so meagrely paid that he had a struggle to provide for his family. He was anxious to make a move and had enjoined me, if the opportunity ever offered, to get him into Carmelite House. He had no misgivings about "Harmsworth methods". The assistant editor of the *Penny Pictorial* was Newman Flower, and although there was not the remotest possibility of my wishing to dispense with his services, which I knew to be invaluable, he jumped to the conclusion, as soon as he heard that I had engaged Wood Smith, that he was coming to take over the *Penny Pictorial*. So he immediately applied to Cassells for Wood Smith's post as editor of the *Penny Magazine*! As the name of Newman Flower is now famous in the literary world of London, and his achievements at Cassells are known to all literary folk, it will be seen how vital were the issues of this quite ordinary episode in the life of Carmelite House.

My old friend, Arthur Spurgeon, had in that year become General Manager of Cassells, and not long after these happenings he invited me to join him editorially. Had I done so, quite a different turn might have been given to the development of two great publishing con-

cerns: certainly a very different turn to my own editorial career. What actually happened, however, was that the ability of Newman Flower very quickly asserted itself in his new environment, and when he had not only consolidated the success of the *Penny Magazine*, but had founded the *Storyteller*, Spurgeon realized his good fortune in having secured a brilliantly efficient editor who brought a new era of prosperity to the old and honoured firm.

On the day I told Northcliffe that Flower had given me his resignation and intended to transfer to Cassells, he said: "Let him go at once. What good has he done here? You don't need him. Don't let him hang on here. I'm all for getting rid of people at once if they want to go. Don't try to keep him."

Once again I must anticipate. A year or two pass. I am no longer editing the *London*. The *Storyteller* has scored a big success. I have even shifted from Carmelite House, where within two or three years I had occupied seven or eight different rooms owing to the continual change and expansion going on there. I am at Temple Chambers, as joint editor of the *Harmsworth History of the World* with Arthur Mee, and I receive an urgent message from Northcliffe to come over and see him. I am greeted with: "Do you realize, Hammerton, that you let Newman Flower leave us?" Hammerton said nothing, but waited for what was to follow. "Do you know that he has made a big success with the *Storyteller*?" (No time to answer.) "Do you know that it is the best thing Cassells have done for years?" (No answer expected.) "Now what I want you to do is this. You let Newman Flower go. It is up to you to go and bring him back again. We want him to do the same sort of magazine for us."

To argue, in the circumstances, would have been sheer

waste of breath. I merely said that Flower and I remained good friends, and any proposal which Northcliffe had to make I should certainly put up to him. "Offer him a thousand a year," he went on. "If he wants more, offer him fifteen hundred. But get him back." The rest of the interview I do not recall. Lunching with Flower next day, I revealed the whole situation and asked him what he thought of it. He answered that he was entirely satisfied with his position at Cassells and more than satisfied with his prospects, and although a salary of fifteen hundred a year was attractive (as salaries went at that time) he felt that he had seen enough of Northcliffe, and would stay where he was. A wise decision. He is now the controlling head and chief proprietor of Cassell & Co., and although his interests are no longer centred in magazines, he can contemplate that fact without regret, as the *Storyteller* has been the property of the Amalgamated Press for a number of years and the gold mine which it (and other magazines that imitated it) seemed to be twenty years ago resembles all gold mines in disclosing less auriferous ground.

VIII

TO return to my days with the *London*. While still retaining my own rooms at Carmelite House I had also come into possession of some delightful old-fashioned rooms at the editorial office of the *London* in an unpretentious little building that still stands at the corner of Whitefriars Street and Tudor Street, where it looks up to-day at the great pile of Northcliffe House much as the little Bolivar "swampin' in the sea" looked up at the huge liner going by "like a grand hotel". This little building

was the real focal point of all the early journalistic enterprises associated with the name of Harmsworth. Here it was that the Harmsworth brothers established themselves, when the success of *Answers*, *Comic Cuts* and *Home Chat* had opened endless vistas of progress and expansion to them.

I well remember on one of my early visits to London going down to have a look at it, gay in its white paint, with window-boxes full of marigolds and other bright flowering plants. And here, in a quaint little room which had two levels, I fell heir to the furniture, the particular chair and desk, at which the maker of modern journalism had sat when his dreams were coming true, his visions changing into realities. He did not himself appear to have any sentimental attachment to these souvenirs, else he might have shown some desire to preserve his editorial chair, constructed of interlaced leather plentifully bestudded with brass nails, and incidentally by no means the most comfortable of seats. I doubt if he ever gave a thought to these old things. Yet it was probably in this same chair, in which I used to spend my afternoons, that he sat when he concluded his bargain with Kennedy Jones and Louis Tracey, which made him proprietor of the *Evening News* and threw open the gate to power and position and undreamt-of fortune. It was not without a sense of thrill that I used to sit in that self-same chair, and when I eventually gave up the *London* I took the Chief's old chair to my room in Temple Chambers.

It might prove both unprofitable and boring if I could remember and sought to narrate all that happened to me during the two and a half years that I ran the *London*. They were not easy years. Happily, the *London* was never more than one of my various interests: I was at any moment prepared to step aside and let somebody else take over its

responsibility. I know that I was often praised by Northcliffe for what seemed to me the least praiseworthy features and frequently reproved for those I esteemed of some merit. Especially do I recall meeting him one day on the stairs when he greeted me with: "Hullo, Hammerton, I have just been looking at your June number. Rottenest cover I ever saw. All right for a picture inside. No good on the bookstalls. Pretty, pretty. No punch in it." I assured him that I had had a quite unusual number of congratulations on this particular cover design—it was a charming colour picture of a geisha—and let him have the last word then, but I was able, in a week or so, to send him down a note that the June number was "sold out".

One of the first articles which I published in the *London* was a lively character sketch of Winston Churchill, written by my old friend, the ill-fated MacCallum Scott, who was one of his staunchest admirers, and had, I think, already written a biography of him. Northcliffe was very pleased with this particular item, and told me how much he admired Churchill for his great gifts of intellect and his statesmanlike utterance, saying: "Winston is going to occupy the foremost place in British politics." He also suggested to me, either then or a little later, that a man I was to keep my eye on as one of the coming men in politics was Ormsby-Gore. But my interest in politics has ever been tepid, and I am afraid I did not keep my eye on Ormsby-Gore, although remembrance of this injunction of the Chief's came back to me the other day when I noticed that Ormsby-Gore was occupying a prominent position in the political news. He may have justified Northcliffe's strong belief in him, but I confess that I am quite without knowledge of his career since I first heard his name from

the lips of the Chief a quarter of a century ago. I know, however, that Winston Churchill does not yet occupy the foremost place in British politics.

A certain American influence had invaded the office in the second year of my *London* editorship. I could detect it in such remarks by the Chief as: "I really think the *London* is much too tame. You will never do any good with it unless you develop it on the lines of a sensational daily paper. That's what's making the fortunes of all the American magazines just now." To which I unhesitatingly replied that I would have no interest in the production of a magazine on such lines. Indeed, I put it to him flatly that if he wanted it run on the lines of a sensational magazine he had better get some sensational American to do it. "I think you are right, Hammerton; you are not the man for a sensational magazine. But who am I to get? You try and think of somebody."

Can one conceive a more grotesque situation? That I, who was editing the magazine on lines which were evidently acceptable to a very large body of readers, the circulation being well maintained, should try to find for him an editor who could do it on lines of which I disapproved! The joke of the thing is that after a few months I eventually did find an editor, or rather an "acting editor", to succeed me: one who was prepared to work under the tutelage of an American gentleman whose original criticism may have had some influence on the Chief's idea of making it a sensational magazine. The effort in that direction was sterile and short-lived. But all that is to-day a matter of little consequence, and I shall leave it at that.

What, however, is worth putting on record, since it discloses at least a faintly yellow streak in Northcliffe, was his exaggerated fear of a lawsuit. In one of our discus-

sions as to my going some way towards his pretended policy—I doubt if he ever quite believed in it himself—of more exciting contents than the usual run of well-selected fiction and illustrated articles appealing to the home circle, I suggested that it might be worth while printing a series of articles to be called “Tammany in England”. My experience as a provincial editor had shown me that the amount of corruption which then prevailed in town councils and other public bodies far exceeded anything suspected by the general public.

I framed a total of six subjects, and employed a very capable journalist, J. Cuming Walters, editor of *Manchester City News*, to write the articles. We had an introductory article which was lightly to sketch something of the history of Tammany Hall and to show how its bosses had plundered the ratepayers of New York for generations. This article duly appeared. Its writer had quoted two or three lines from a responsible New York newspaper, mentioning by name “Boss” Croker.

As luck would have it, Croker had transferred himself with his dollars from New York to Dublin, where he was living in the odour of Catholic sanctity and running racehorses. Now it may have been that some bright young Irish advocate, having read the article at breakfast, and noted the reference to Croker, chanced to espy as he walked down Middle Street a brass plate at an office door bearing the words, “The Amalgamated Press Ltd.”. And it would flash into his bright young mind that here was a chance for Croker, whose reputation throughout the United States was notorious, to get an Irish verdict in his favour and flourish it in the face of his American accusers. Anyhow, Croker was certain of a sympathetic jury. Hadn’t he given liberally to the Church funds in Dublin? The mere fact that

he had the courage to bring an action would be something to the good, as such a thing would have been unthinkable in New York, where his misconduct of public affairs was known to every citizen. Result, a writ for libel, and Northcliffe greatly perturbed.

Cuming Walters was quite prepared to answer for what he had written and to face the consequences in court. As editor of the *London*, I was overwhelmed with cablegrams from all parts of America, chiefly from public-spirited citizens anxious to come at their own expense and give evidence if the case went to trial. The only snag was the fact, hitherto unknown to me, that the Amalgamated Press had this branch office in Dublin, so that the Company could be sued in the Irish courts and an application for a change of venue would be difficult to maintain. Northcliffe refused to fight.

“Had it been the *Daily Mail* it would have been quite a different matter. But no statement in any magazine is worth going to law about. You must apologize for the stupidity. Ought to have had more sense than quote these words from any New York journal.”

This was the sort of stuff I had to listen to. But I did not listen tamely. In the first instance I refused to apologize as editor, and secondly, I pointed out that our office barrister had carefully read the article before I printed it, in proof of which I produced the galley-slips with his “O.K.” in blue upon them. Although Northcliffe was in a very bad temper about the whole affair, his sense of justice (sometimes dormant) showed him that my action had been at least reasonably cautious, and on reflection I have often been surprised that he was not in the least incensed at my point-blank refusal to write or be party to any apology. As a matter of fact, he wrote the apology himself, and a suffi-

ciently spiritless one I considered it to be. To my disgust, it had to disfigure my Christmas number.

The whole episode seems to me worth recording, as it illustrates several points of importance in connection with Northcliffe's character and journalistic acumen. A day or two after the news was published in the Press that Boss Croker was going to sue the *London* for libel, not a copy of that issue of the magazine remained unsold on the book-stalls. What a splendid thing for a magazine whose proprietor had been harping for months past about running it as a sensational daily paper! My "Tammany in England" series was booked for a real "sensational" success on the strength of this entirely adventitious publicity. Yet the Chief funked at the mere threat of a legal action which might have been one of the most interesting of the time and, however it had ended, could not have redounded to the credit of Boss Croker. One of the conditions of the apology was that the series would be discontinued. And so ended my only effort to introduce into the *London* matter that ranged beyond the usual subjects of domestic reading.

The fact was that Northcliffe himself did not quite know how the *London* ought to be edited, although he repeatedly told me that if he could do it himself for a month or two he would double the circulation. I remember being particularly satisfied with the Christmas number in which that miserable apology was the only blot, but it brought me a snorting letter from the Chief denouncing almost every item in it from wrapper design to comic pages. He asked me to preserve his letter, as I should find that the number would be a dead weight on the bookstalls. I preserved his letter and pinned to it a month later a note from the publishing department reporting that the Christmas number was

out of print. These I sent down to him without comment. The next time I met him there wasn't the slightest reference to his letter or the circumstances of its return.

Northcliffe's ideas of sensationalism were usually associated with crime and criminals. In the number of the *London* to which I have been alluding I printed a remarkable poem by Jabez Balfour, whose Liberator frauds had been the sensation of the country in 1895. Balfour served eleven of his fourteen years' sentence, and on the day of his release in 1906 Northcliffe began a long prepared "stunt" to exploit the personality and prison experiences of Jabez in the *Weekly Dispatch*. A motor-car was sent to bring him away from prison, and for a time Jabez became the apple of Northcliffe's eye. Very generous payment was made to him for a series of articles in the *Dispatch* and other Harmsworth publications, and he was accommodated in an office in Carmelite House, where I had several interesting chats with the charming little fellow.

It was in the course of one of these that Jabez showed me his poem, and I was so struck with its literary merit that I made it a special feature of the Christmas number with a series of very effective decorative drawings by Sheldon, a brilliant American artist who was associated with my work until his death some years ago. The fact that I had not "splashed" in big letters about the poem being composed in prison (and so disfigured its reproduction) was one of the points of the most violent criticism in Northcliffe's letter. I had explained in an editorial note the origin of the poem, and assuming that my readers were not entirely imbeciles, I saw no occasion for screaming about its jailbird authorship. In all probability had I done so, I should have been subject to an equal reprimand from Northcliffe on the ground that crudities and vulgarities

which might be permissible in the *Dispatch* were entirely out of place in the *London*.

In all these editorial criticisms he was as uncertain as a grasshopper (to which Lloyd George likened him many years later), and the editor who was foolish enough to endeavour to please him by doing what he had last suggested was only laying up trouble. Probably by pursuing my own policy I may have encountered less of it than those who strove to please him. The feminine in him made it unwise, nay unfair, to take him at his word. His "yes" was never absolutely an affirmative, wherein he differed from his brother Harold, whose yes or no could always be accepted without reserve.

There were periods when he was as variable as any woman in his stated opinions and as little logical in argument. And many were the instances I could cite where he showed a lack of what might be called the common sense of business. One will suffice. The *Penny Pictorial*, although brightly produced by my predecessor, seemed to me to lack editorial policy, so I decided to make of it a sort of penny *Sketch*. This was at least a policy where before none was obvious. The changed character of its contents had an instant effect in its advertising pages, which were increased from two or three to eight or ten. The advertisement manager was very happy. No increase in circulation, however.

Like the commercial simpleton I was to prove myself on many subsequent occasions when, had I put my own interests first, I might easily have doubled or even trebled my income from my work for Northcliffe, I was pleased to think that I was making this particular weekly a more profitable possession of the firm. I had not learned *not* to take him at his word. He had congratulated me on

some editorial economy and said: "If you prove an economical editor you are going to be a success here. We have had too many money-wasters." He may have felt that way at the moment; but it was quite uncharacteristic. He grudged no expense if it led to sales, and often when it did not the spender remained in favour. Indeed, there were times when it seemed that the more an editor splashed the firm's money about the better he was liked! And I had still to learn that the Chief had only one measure for appraising the success of his editors: circulation.

That I was probably adding anything from £100 to £200 a week to the income of this particular magazine was of no account whatever. I had not put up its circulation. He and our commercial heads at that time could always tell you with absolute precision if your publication was a good one, provided they had a look at the circulation figures before they looked at the publication.

In those days rivalry between editors in Carmelite House was rampant. Always loathsome to me, who can avow that not for one moment have I ever sought to dispossess another editor or schemed for his downfall, it was encouraged rather than discountenanced by Northcliffe. One greedy editor in particular cast an envious eye—he was cross-eyed, by the way—on all publications not already gathered under his direction, and having continual access to the ear of the Chief, could easily persuade him that this periodical or that one could do much better in circulation if he had control of it. Thus in due course the *Penny Pic* passed from my indifferent grasp, and its circulation increased by some tens of thousands, while its advertising pages went back to a maximum of two or three. The process of "popularizing" was quick and complete, its new appeal being made mainly upon football and sporting topics.

It never occurred to the head of the firm to inquire whether this increased circulation, every thousand copies of which brought an extra shilling to the editor-in-chief, yielded more profit than the increased advertising revenue which had resulted from my change of editorial policy. I know that it did not. It would be no great exaggeration to say that in Northcliffe's journalistic creed the first three tests of any publication were: 1, Circulation; 2, Circulation, and 3, Circulation.

And yet he was then becoming peculiarly sensitive about the tone of some of his most widely circulated periodicals. One of the ablest of his editors in the department concerned chiefly with *Answers* and groups of juvenile weeklies, story papers, and those that appealed mainly to the humbler classes of the community, used to talk jokingly of his own as "the Hooligan Department". He was a man of scholarly attainments, who had also the faculty of guessing what his particular public wanted, and knew how to supply its wants. I refer to my old colleague and friend Gilbert Floyd, who did not know until I told him many years later how near he came to having a very critical encounter with Northcliffe in one of his menacing moods.

Talking on office affairs with the Chief one day, I had casually made some reference to the Hooligan Department. He almost leapt from his chair as he demanded to be told which department I meant. The matter was not improved by my saying that those in it knew it by that term. "Tell me the name of anyone who ever said we have a Hooligan Department. Tell me! And I'll deal with him at once." But having tactlessly said enough, I refused to say more and was firm in not giving Floyd away. Once again I am sure that Northcliffe thought none the worse of me for my refusal: possibly the better. He assured me, however,

that no man would ever be employed by him who looked upon his work as having anything to do with hooliganism. Perhaps his sense of humour was not at its best just then.

IX

NEED I say we have now arrived at a stage where the *Monthly Encyclopedia* has long since been forgotten? I still think it was a good idea, but more likely of success had it been given birth then than now, when the frivolous and feminine dominate the magazine world. To those who knew the Chief in any intimate way it will appear quite natural that soon after I had been saddled with the *London* I was told that I could go ahead with the *Monthly Encyclopedia* when I had added a hundred thousand to the circulation of the *London*. But I do not suppose I was much concerned by then what became of the *Monthly Encyclopedia* scheme.

Amidst the uncertainties of the shapeless, but ever-growing organization at Carmelite House there was always one certainty—that something or other would turn up—if not this week, then the next, or the week after—to take the place of something that was slipping from one's grasp. Never content with but two strings to my bow, I had more often three or four, and did not in the least mind if one or two of them snapped. The advantage of this will soon appear.

But lest it might be thought that I have been elaborating a picture of a life of alarms and excursions and embarrassments and frustration, as typical of the Harmsworth regime in those days, I may say that at no time, then nor subsequently, except for a period when Northcliffe was

beyond all question "mentally unwell" (to quote the words of one of his brothers to me), had I ever any regret at being swept into the maelstrom that swirled about the personality of this extraordinarily fascinating man.

When he received his peerage, in 1906, he was entertained by a select number of the staff of the *Daily Mail* at the Café Royal, K.J. in the chair. I do not think that the total number of us who forgathered on that occasion exceeded thirty, and I doubt if a dozen of the company survive to-day. I was there as literary critic of the *Mail*, and my immediate table companion was Keble Bell, the dramatic critic. There were not many speeches, but I remember Edgar Wallace making one, and, at the suggestion of the Chief, I also was invited to contribute. What I said I cannot pretend to remember beyond its being a sincere statement of my personal attitude to him. This was to the effect that, while there might be those among us who were more at their ease when the Chief was absent from the office, in my own case when I knew him to be in his room I felt like a passenger on a ship in dirty weather who took courage from the fact that the captain was on the bridge. Howls of mock dissent greeted this, and Northcliffe was delighted to find some of his chief lieutenants thus suggesting that they were more at ease in his absence. In later years I may have had some temptations to modify this early impression, but on the whole, in our innumerable meetings and equally innumerable telephonic communications, I rarely had any sense of embarrassment and only occasionally of discouragement.

Coming so soon after his baronetcy, Northcliffe's peerage was a surprise to many outside and to not a few inside Carmelite House. Various explanations for the conferring of the honour were current: some of them far-fetched. But

none that I heard contained the truth as I had it from the new peer himself a year or two later. The statesman responsible for Alfred's baronetcy in 1904 and his peerage two years later was one who had publicly declared that he "never read the newspapers"—A. J. Balfour. The cynics may suggest that if he had been a closer student of the daily Press he might have been slower to recognize the growing power of Alfred Harmsworth. But the grant of the peerage was the simplest thing imaginable, and just what might have been expected from a Prime Minister who could plume himself on his ignorance of newspapers.

In 1905 the political horizon was clouding. The Tories were uneasy as to the issue of the next general election. Balfour felt himself shaky in his own constituency of East Manchester, where the one influential journal was implacably opposed to him and his party. There existed a Tory paper of no great account, the *Manchester Courier*. The quick perception of Alfred Harmsworth here saw a heaven-sent opportunity to render the Prime Minister a service that would justify a coronet, and so bring the career of the bright young journalist speedily to its social zenith. He acquired the *Courier* and put Nicoll Dunn, then editing the *Morning Post*, in charge. Dunn's instructions were to exert every effort to further Conservative interests in Manchester, but especially to act as propagandist for the re-election of Balfour at the next general election. What could a Premier do who never read the newspapers, when compiling his list of dissolution honours in 1906, but give effect to the programme which Alfred had so ingeniously devised? To have awaited the result of the service rendered before giving the guerdon would have been hardly decent on the part of the statesman who was being served. It would certainly have been disastrous for the *Courier's* proprietor. So Alfred got his

peerage and Balfour lost his seat! At any rate, that is the gist of the story as I had it from Northcliffe himself.

How he came by his peerage was of slight consequence to any of us who served and admired him. We all felt that, as the maker of modern journalism, he had better earned it than the many gentlemen who were scrambling into the Upper Chamber on beer barrels and whisky casks. In some sort it was an ennoblement of popular journalism in which all who practised the craft participated. Assuredly it was better deserved than some of the press peerages which the exigencies of the War and the unprecedented complaisance of Lloyd George afterwards brought into existence. The jealous and the spiteful found vent for their ill-humour in such mockery as "Lord Answers of Home Chat", but that sort of pettiness had a very brief day.

There had been some speculation in Carmelite House and in Fleet Street as to the title that Harmsworth would choose for himself, and when that of Northcliffe was announced, those who least understood his psychology deemed it a feeble and undistinguished choice. I suspect it was the result of some very concentrated thinking on his part. The possibilities of the initial N. had been minutely weighed up. He could see the N. of Northcliffe looking as decorative as that of Napoleon, and it had the further advantage of being catalogued with a number of already established peerages beginning with the same initial, indeed, the same syllable. Moreover, it identified him for ever with the corner of England that he loved the best of all and where his days of greatest happiness were spent: St. Peter's in the Isle of Thanet, Kent. There stands Elmwood, the unpretentious country house which he bought when fortune first came to him with *Answers* in 1890 and which remained his favourite residence to the end. Nearby, there is a North

Cliff at Broadstairs. The title had no doubt been one of his daydreams even before he had purchased the *Manchester Courier*. His forward-reaching mind saw things not merely as they were to be but as he wanted them to be.

K. J. had some amusing comments on the title at that little dinner to which I have referred. He foresaw an increase of peerages in Carmelite House, and visualized a daily weather chart in the entrance hall, which might occasionally read: "Northcliffe, cloudy and uncertain; Eastcliffe, fresh with rising temperature; Southcliffe, variable; Westcliffe, sultry". The Chief enjoyed the jest and knew that many a true word is spoken thus.

X

I HAVE confessed that in these early years of my association with Northcliffe I had usually several strings to my bow. One of these was my association with Arthur Mee. There has probably never been a journalist in Fleet Street—always excepting the greatest of them all—whose head so teemed with new ideas. The trouble about many of Arthur's ideas is that they are impracticable and sometimes (wherein he resembles Northcliffe), he has a stone-blind eye to this fact. Northcliffe had a great admiration for him as a "live wire". He once said to me that Arthur's fecundity in new ideas amounted almost to genius. He was right. Genius never takes account of ways and means. It was often my part to make practical some of these ideas, and to assist in the realization of several that were most happily inspired.

The *Harmsworth Self-Educator* was Northcliffe's own suggestion, but the serial work with which we followed that

extraordinarily successful publication, the *Harmsworth History of the World*, was Arthur Mee's. When editing page 4 of the *Daily Mail* he had received from Heinemann, the publisher, a set of Helmolt's *World History*. This splendid production of German scholarship had greatly impressed him, although I am sure he had merely skimmed its somewhat forbidding pages. He has that sense which only journalists possess of knowing a good work by glancing through it. The idea occurred to him that we should follow up the *Self-Educator* with the *Harmsworth History of the World*, using the English translation of Helmolt as the foundation and greatly expanding it by the addition of numerous important contributions from eminent English writers: archæologists like Flinders Petrie, Dr. A. H. Sayce, Leonard King and H. R. Hall; scientists such as Ray Lankester, Alfred Russel Wallace and Prof. Sollas; and brilliant students of history, such as H. G. Wells, Frederic Harrison and Dr. E. J. Dillon. I have never forgotten King and Hall arriving to discuss the terms for their proposed work. These eminent Babylonian authorities came to Carmelite House, each armed with his attaché case, and together they talked of the money value of their proposed work for our history like a couple of tradesmen who might have been selling drainpipes instead of inestimable knowledge! But I think they were satisfied with their fees. King died a few years afterwards; Hall lived to become head of the Assyrian Department of the British Museum, and he wrote some important chapters for later works of mine not long before his death in 1930.

Together, Arthur Mee and I got out a dummy of this proposed "great new work", to which Northcliffe immediately gave his "O.K." The next thing to do was to secure from Heinemann the right to utilize his transla-

tion in the way we proposed, and also to illustrate the new work with an unprecedented number of pictures, Helmolt's containing only a few unimportant illustrations. Harold Harmsworth was a friend of Heinemann's, and undertook to arrange with him for the necessary permission. He did, reporting that he had talked the matter over with him at lunch and had agreed that we should bring out a *Harmsworth History of the World* embodying the whole of the matter in Helmolt and adding whatever we desired. Heinemann was to get a royalty of one penny per copy. As the price of our publication was to be only sevenpence, I was struck with the largeness of the proposed royalty, relative to the value of the copyright, and made a rough calculation of the possible total which Heinemann would secure from our fortnightly publication for the use of a translation which at that time had not repaid the cost of publishing.

When my figures were shown to Harold he realized that his lunch-time offer erred on the side of generosity. A farthing a copy would have been munificent recompense for the contribution which Heinemann's stale copyright represented, as we figured upon a further expenditure of between £10,000 and £15,000 for new matter by English writers, to say nothing of the cost of approximately 10,000 illustrations. At first Harold, with whom a promise was as good as an agreement, could not bring himself to tell Heinemann that he had acted rather quickly in agreeing to such a royalty, but eventually he saw him again, explained the situation and suggested that the proposed royalty be halved. Heinemann readily agreed, and it was probably the most profitable transaction of his whole publishing career.

Few of the book publishers in London had then, or have

now, any notion of the immense circulations obtained by the Harmsworth organization for fortnightly part publications, issued in pre-war days at 7d. apiece. The sales, by comparison with any to which they were accustomed, were almost incredible. Before we had begun to publish the *History*, Arthur Mee, when we were together at Heinemann's in Bedford Street one day, suggested to him in a casual way that he was going to make about £20,000 for letting us use this old Helmolt stuff. Heinemann laughed incredulously, saying that he would be mighty lucky if he touched £10,000. Quick as thought Arthur said, more in jest than earnest: "If you get more than £10,000 will you give me a motor-car?" "You bet I will. I'll be only too glad!" said Heinemann. We were little more than half-way through the publication of our series before a fine Martini car arrived at the door of Carmelite House one day, sent to Arthur by the delighted Heinemann, who had already received royalties that touched the £10,000 mark!

Myself, I had to buy my first motor-car about the same time out of earnings, not having had the quickness to suggest that Heinemann might include me in the celebration of his (to him) entirely unexpected success. Yet, after the initial scheming of the work, the main burden of producing the *History* fell upon me, and among my pleasantest recollections was a fortnight spent in Paris with Heinemann hunting in all sorts of out-of-the-way places for the illustrations which were to make the work unique at that time, as a pictorial history.

When Heinemann died in 1920 his published fortune did not greatly exceed £20,000, and that was approximately the amount represented by his halfpenny royalty on the *Harmsworth History of the World*. I suppose the profits

to the Amalgamated Press fell little short of £80,000. For my editorial labours on the *History* I was paid a little over one-tenth of the sum that Heinemann pocketed. I had no grumbles, however, as it was to the *History* that I turned when I cleared out of the *London*, and there were other interests about equally profitable to me in Carmelite House. Moreover, as I have said, the idea of the *History* was Arthur Mee's, and it's ideas that count.

After listening to the stories about the infallible judgement of those who have built up vast concerns, it is instructive to recall their nodding moments. Here is one of Lord Rothermere's. Arthur Mee was on holiday and I had prepared the entire first number of our *History*. When he came back we were dismayed one day on being informed that the Chief and Harold had suddenly "got cold feet" about the *History*. Both of them were now doubtful whether there was a public that would be interested in history. Neither of them in my belief quite appreciated the attractiveness of a work that was at once alive with human interest and the rarest and most fascinating scholarship, as it must be admitted that few English writers have rivalled, and none have excelled, the German group that wrote the original Helmolt. It is also a safe bet that neither of them ever read it, nor did any one of the directors of the Amalgamated Press. Added to the intrinsic merit of the matter that we were to present was the drawing power of a long list of eminent English writers, all chosen for their ability to be interesting as well as authoritative. Above all, there were these 10,000 pictures, the choice and reproduction of which represented a large portion of my task.

All Arthur's enthusiasm was exerted in hammering these facts into the heads of our two chiefs, and he had need to hammer, for it was no more than the toss of a coin that

eventually determined our going ahead. Every penny that was earned by this publication, and it would have represented the fortune of a lifetime to any of the leading London publishers, was due to the faith which Arthur Mee and I had in the certainty of its success.

I say nothing about the fact that by my protesting against the proposed royalty to Heinemann I added something like £20,000 to the income of the Amalgamated Press, for which I received not one penny of consideration, then or since. In respect to a post-war publication for which I was solely responsible, I shall have occasion to point out how I increased by a stroke of the pen its gross income by approximately £50,000. These facts I state in no grudging spirit, although I have occasionally felt that others who could not point to a single pound they had brought into the firm have been rewarded vastly out of all proportion to their ascertainable earning power.

Far more than in the monetary side of the venture was I interested and amused by another Harold episode which marked the actual publication of the *History*. After Part I had gone to press, he came up to our rooms one day and said in a manner that suggested he had just heard something rather awful, that he had been told we were actually going back before the time of Noah in our early numbers! He hoped we would do nothing so foolish as it might damn the publication in the eyes of that large body of pious readers who supported certain religious publications of the house. He even put the point on record by sending a letter to Arthur, saying: "You must not go back beyond Noachian times!" We were amused—and resolute to go back as far as modern knowledge could take us. "Noachian times," indeed, were quite close to Northcliffian times in our chronology!

Arthur Mee had often been playfully described to me by the Chief as "a narrow-minded little Nottingham Nonconformist." His religious convictions are remote from mine, but I have never regarded him as narrow-minded, although he still harbours many Nonconformist prejudices of his youth. But in common with all who had taken even a superficial interest in the origin of the world and the evolution of mankind, Arthur even then looked upon Noah as a comparatively modern personage. One of his sweeping phrases for advertising the *History* was to be "10,000 pictures of 10,000 years", which left Noah floating about in his Ark somewhere about the middle of the period. Neither of us has ever forgotten the anxiety of Harold Harmsworth lest his firm, through us two adventurous editors, should do anything to cast doubt upon the Deluge and the personality of Noah. So far as Noah was concerned I am confident that Lord Rothermere, like Pet Marjorie in another matter, "did not give a single damn"; but he gave a great many damns for the readers of our religious papers.

My allusion to the profits of the *History* reminds me of a comic encounter with Northcliffe which must have taken place not very long before we started work upon this extremely successful publication. I was still editing the *London*, when one day there came a sudden summons to Northcliffe's sanctum. He was walking up and down his room with a sheet of notepaper in his hand, and as I entered he turned upon me savagely with glaring eyes—H. M. Tomlinson would have described them as "almost feral"—and said without a word of introduction "Do you realize, Hammerton, that you are making over £2,000 a year here? And do you realize that you are not worth it?" Rather a poser! But I said as quietly as I could that whatever I was

earning was based upon terms to which he was entirely agreeable when I started, adding: "You said you didn't mind how much I earned." "Yes, yes, I said that; but you're not worth it! Not worth it," he continued in an excited manner. "Then there's something wrong with the terms of my agreement," I retorted. Whatever else I said and whatever else he said I have long forgotten.

The recollection of this absurd episode only floats back into my mind as a wisp of memory, but I was undisturbed in the knowledge that he was talking nonsense (which fact will appear in due course) and that I was already earning for the firm vastly more than others who were getting as much and more than I. This foolish outburst, no doubt instigated by some enemy in the office wishful to do me a disservice, was followed by no effort to reduce in any way my income from the firm! But I doubt if he ever knew that within a few months of it I had at one stroke of the pen earned ten years of my then income in that little matter of the Heinemann royalty. Such things as these and many others I shall have to set down in the course of my narrative were all in the day's work.

XI

ALREADY I have noted a certain Americanizing tendency of which one was conscious in the Carmelite House of twenty-five years ago. The methods of American business men, the energy and enterprise of American journalists, had powerfully impressed Northcliffe in his early visits to the United States, and there came a time when his frequent transatlantic trips were regarded with some apprehension by his Carmelite colleagues. Just as in the

days of my youth it was common for those who went rolling down to Rio to come back with cockatoos and parrots, so it occasionally happened that the Chief returned from the United States with a bright new American journalist, who was to set Fleet Street in a flutter, or treasuring some new American stunt that was to do great things for the *Mail* or the Amalgamated Press. In this connection much could be told that would amuse British journalists: the futility of most of these importations seen in retrospect would need no pointing out. A typical instance will serve for all, and it is one I can write about with first-hand knowledge.

Northcliffe came back from New York in 1908 with a great money-making scheme in his head. Neglecting the most obvious inquiries, he had undertaken on behalf of the Amalgamated Press to produce a grand new English Encyclopedia based upon an American production that was then having a success of showmanship in the United States! A group of Americans, jealous of the predominance of the *Britannica* in their own country—although the whole organization and production of the *Britannica* since Hooper and Jackson acquired it from its original publishers in 1898 has been and remains mainly an American enterprise—had produced a pretentious American work of about the same dimension and were credited with making fat profits from it. This peculiarly American compilation was called the *Encyclopedia Americana*. Northcliffe, who was ever an eager auditor to any tale of success—open indeed to believe the accounts of their achievements as related to him by all sorts of bluffers—was readily induced to undertake a British edition of this vast *Americana*, without the slightest consideration of the requirements or suffering powers of the British public.

It was the task of Arthur Mee and the writer to get busy

instantly with the job of de-Americanizing the massive *Americana* and turning it into a great British rival of the *Britannica*. Hectic months were in store for us! A considerable staff had quickly to be engaged and plans hurriedly prepared for the scrutinizing of every paragraph of the obese work, which ran to more than twenty million words. And its 16,000 pages were all unnumbered: a bright Yankee idea to enable alterations to be made in subsequent editions! It contained many thousands of individual entries and as a working encyclopedia it certainly was conceived on lines much more practical than the *Britannica*. Before we knew where we were its managing editor had come over to associate himself with us in our editorial job. There must have been much rejoicing in the offices of *Americana* as they contemplated getting one back on the British by invading the homeland of the *Britannica* with an American work and thus "carrying the war into Africa".

Neither Arthur Mee nor I greatly favoured the idea of expending our editorial energy and ingenuity upon the adaptation of this American stuff to British tastes. But "orders is orders". So we set about the job with all the goodwill we could muster. Special offices were taken in Temple Chambers; nearly a score of assistants engaged and put to their respective tasks of examining the existing matter, listing new entries, deleting peculiarly American subjects, and reducing the vast bulk of the work by a percentage which was to make it somewhat less formidable than the fearsome phalanx of the *Britannica*, which it had been designed to meet and overthrow. I can still see Tommy Pope, who so endeared himself to his fellow journalists that at his death in 1930 he had a better "press" than many who have achieved international fame; and Caradoc Evans, since noted for his realistic stories of Welsh life, busy with stacks

of guillotined pages from which everything had been deleted except biographies; J. A. Manson, then recently resigned from the chief editorship of Cassells; W. A. Lewis Bettany, and Ladbrooke Black, all working at top speed, but the rest of the staff, save two or three who, like Bettany and Black, still survive and toil in Fleet Street, are now dim figures that elude me.

We had not been long at work before somebody discovered an article in *Americana* that had been "lifted" word for word from *Chambers's*, and another found one that had been paraphrased from Cassells' encyclopedia and several that had been taken direct from the original *Harmsworth*! Meanwhile, thousands of words of new matter had been prepared, special contributors engaged for peculiarly British subjects, and all sorts of obligations entered into in the most light-hearted manner, simply because the order "full steam ahead" had come from the Chief.

But Arthur and I, who already had some considerable knowledge of the difficulties of international copyright, complicated as it then was by the activities of American pirates and the lack of respect for British interests on the part of American publishers, decided that every existing British encyclopedia and dictionary had to be read against *Americana* from A to Z, and every line that could be identified as having been lifted from or inspired by a British copyright work had to be deleted.

Day by day the discoveries of these copyright infringements multiplied, until in a month or two we had detected thousands of paragraphs which this great "American" encyclopedia had "borrowed" (to use the delightful war-time term of the British Tommy) from all sorts of copyright English, German and French works. The face of the managing editor of *Americana* who had come over to help

us, as we confronted him daily with fresh evidence of his piratical production, wore an increasingly worried look. He could see that the stream of dollars which his publishers had dreamed of flowing into their coffers in New York as a result of having "put it across" Northcliffe, was never likely to flow outside of dreamland.

The Chief himself had not much to say when we were able to report definitely that this brightly coloured parrot which he had brought home from foreign parts had enough English and European blood in it to make its parentage a matter of the gravest suspicion. In short, it was impossible to turn *Americana*, littered as it was with thousands of paragraphs, short and long, to say nothing of numerous illustrations, lifted from European sources, into a British encyclopedia which would have been entirely free from copyright entanglements. So a very broken-hearted American went home, and a very silent Northcliffe quickly forgot that he had rashly landed us in for several thousand pounds of wasted expenditure, of which the only substantial reminders we retained were two or three sets of *Americana* out of the dozen or so he had imported for office use. Our editorial staff had to be disbanded, but positions were found for several of its members in other departments of the Amalgamated Press, and Arthur Mee and I were able, after some months of futile hustle, to concentrate upon our other undertakings and our plans for new work.

XII

VERY speedily the cost of the Chief's little souvenir from America was recovered scores of times over by Arthur Mee's creating—entirely "off his own bat"—a new sort

of encyclopedia that was destined to become the most widely read and incomparably the most successful of all modern publications. When in a little coffee-house in Fleet Street he first disclosed his idea to me, I admit that I was sceptical. It was to be an encyclopedia for children. This I did not object to, but I thought the title, the *Children's Encyclopedia*, unhappy. I remember saying that I could imagine children awakening in the morning and clamouring for a certain brand of children's food, according to a current advertisement, but that I could not conceive at any time a child crying out for the *Children's Encyclopedia*! Besides, I felt that young people old enough to be interested in an encyclopedia would resent being called "children".

It would appear that I was wrong on every point. And yet I am not prepared to say, even now, when Arthur Mee can point to twenty-four years of world-wide success for his compilation, that he was right. I have always contended that a large element of the popularity won by the *Children's Encyclopedia* is due to the fact that parents by the million, the world over, have bought it under the pretence of giving a present to their children, while covertly promising themselves the delight of reading it. Another thing I objected to: it was *not* an encyclopedia. I have always held that an encyclopedia should be faithful to the old model and range from A to Z. Arthur had no respect for old models and planned his so-called encyclopedia in a series of sections, such as "The Child's Book of History", "The Child's Book of Countries", "The Child's Book of Poetry", and so on. And in the end, of course, it does not matter whether the title is an appropriate one or not, provided always that it identifies the work and marks it off from others that might be making a similar appeal. *Answers* had long before proved that to be a truism.

I dare not trust myself to say how many millions of copies of Arthur's famous work have been sold since 1908, but it has been translated into almost every language in Europe and, in part at least, into several Oriental languages, such as Chinese and Arabic, and has been plundered by pirates everywhere and especially in the United States of America, where the authorized edition produced by my old friend, W. M. Jackson of the Grolier Society, formerly joint owner of the *Britannica* with Horace Hooper, has sold to the extent of nearly twenty million volumes. In one year the Grolier Society of New York have, to my knowledge, sold 100,000 sets of twenty volumes, and for many successive years their annual sales have approximated to that quantity. Jackson died suddenly in 1923 at Gibraltar on a tour I had planned for him, and shortly before his death he confessed to me that his company had then sold nearly three million pounds' worth of *The Book of Knowledge*, as it was rechristened for the American edition!

Well do I remember Arthur and myself spending a whole afternoon in a futile effort to induce Major George Haven Putnam, head of the great American publishing firm, to bring out an American edition. He could not be persuaded that there was any prospect of success in it. Soon afterwards Jackson worked out the scheme for an American edition, and the bulk of his very considerable fortune was derived from it. One day in 1920, when Jackson and I stepped out of his car to enter his offices, which occupied two or three complete floors of the big Putnam Building in 45th Street, New York, Putnam's famous bookshop being on the street level, the pavement was so blocked with case loads of *The Book of Knowledge*, that it was difficult to get either into Jackson's offices or into Putnam's shop. Jackson stood and laughed heartily at the picture, remarking that

old Major Putnam must have felt sore as he saw the continuous tons upon tons of that book passing through to the store rooms of the Grolier Society. More money has been made out of that one publication in America than even the important Putnam business netted in the course of a whole generation. But Major Putnam, who was one of the most charming Americans I have ever met and whom it was my good fortune in later years to know with some intimacy, was entirely free from commercial envy and never reproached himself for having turned down what another publisher, whose genius for bookselling lay in a different direction, proved to be a gold mine.

The only thing the Chief had to do in the production of this exhaustless source of income for his firm was to approve of Arthur's project. Let that at least be to his credit. Whole-heartedly he believed at that time in Arthur and his enthusiasms, and it was lucky for the fortunes of his firm that he had this belief.

Apart from the *Self-Educator*, the idea of which originated with Northcliffe himself, I can remember only one other suggestion of his either to Arthur Mee or to myself, and it was a perfect example of the complete "flop". Arthur and I, however, had great fun for some months in producing it. Northcliffe at that time had a villa at Valescure and spent a good deal of his time in France, motor-ing hither and thither. He had seen in different parts of the country some sort of lucky bag publication, then very popular with the children of France, and when Arthur Mee was visiting him at Pau, where he had gone to watch the aerial experiments of the Wright brothers, the Chief suggested that Arthur should at once get out a monthly novelty to be called *The Wonder Box*. It was to be produced in the actual form of a sealed box, and was to contain a variety

of scientific toys, tiny books and ingenious odds and ends that would amuse the youngsters.

As usual my co-operation was enlisted on the production side, and a score of difficulties, which the Chief had never foreseen, quickly presented themselves as we attempted to give form to his idea. The first difficulty was the production of the box, which was to be about the dimensions of an ordinary monthly magazine of those days, sufficiently light and yet sufficiently strong to withstand the relatively rough handling involved in the wholesale newsagents' treatment of parcels. It would have been easier to produce half-a-dozen monthly magazines every month than this one wretched *Wonder Box*.

As much pains were given to the contrivance of the scientific toys, the preparation of the miniature books and other items which constituted its medley of contents as the ordinary monthly magazine editor need exert in the course of a whole year. Hundreds of the boxes got broken, the percentage of waste was beyond anything known in magazine publishing, and presently fiasco was writ large on the whole scheme. In joking about Arthur to me—very often maliciously, as he did about me to Arthur—Northcliffe used to say that his guests at Pau always spoke of Arthur afterwards as “the Wonder Box”, because of his wild enthusiasm for the idea, which the Chief carefully omitted to tell me was his own. Had the result been other than failure he would certainly have claimed credit for it.

XIII

THE last of the Harmsworth fortnightlies in which I was associated with Arthur Mee was *The World's Great Books*. So far as I remember, here again the idea was Arthur's. At least I retain no impression of its germinating in my mind; nor do I think that it originated with the Chief, although he was extremely enthusiastic about the project. To bring together in half a dozen volumes condensed versions of about a thousand of the great books of all times, seemed a good idea. But good ideas are not necessarily successful ones. The notion was not merely to provide bald summaries of the books in the conventional style of *précis*-writing, but to endeavour by a process of elimination and super-condensation to convey the gist of the story, the argument, the history, in the words of the original.

We assembled a staff of able literary men, most of whom carried out their instructions with brilliant success, and I still believe (and in post-war years I put my belief to the test) that the idea of *The World's Great Books* and the manner in which it was carried out resulted in a work not only worthy to succeed but reasonably likely of success. Our programme was very attractive: we were not content with anonymous summaries of famous works of fiction, philosophy or history, but actually secured the co-operation of a number of the leading authors of the day, headed by the peerless H. G. Wells, to contribute condensed versions of their own most notable works. Wells "potted" no fewer than four of his. A masterpiece of condensation was Hilaire Belloc's little replica of his own *Path to Rome*. Belloc also contributed anonymously the summaries of

several French classics. Northcliffe's enthusiasm for the work was sincere and openly expressed. Indeed, when he received advance proofs of the final pages of Part I (it was to run to about 50 fortnightly parts), during a holiday in Newfoundland, he cabled congratulations and ventured to prophesy that the sales of *The World's Great Books* would exceed those of the *Harmsworth Encyclopedia*. It was our first failure of any importance. So much for prophecy.

On the first or second day of its appearance, Arthur Mee and I took a walk of inspection round the West-End newsagents and bookstalls and were told everywhere that nobody was buying it. At a shop in Green Street, Leicester Square, where thousands of our earlier publications had been sold rapidly, there were two vast piles of *The World's Great Books* and the shopkeeper, lifting up a copy, slapped it back on the top of the pile saying: "Believe me, this is a dud. A complete dud."

The business heads in those days at Carmelite House were, by this time, able to express their opinions confidently. I have already done homage to them for their ability to give an absolutely certain opinion about the fortunes of any publications just as soon as they had a peep at the circulation book. But they hardly needed to wait for the circulation book in the case of *The World's Great Books*, as the reading public did not seem to show any real interest in it, although the press advertising was extremely well done, so attractive indeed that it brought S. S. McClure, famous in those days as the American pioneer of cheap pictorial magazines, hastening over by the next mail boat to fix up the American rights of the work.

In a publishing business, where it is usual to be dealing with quick-selling publications, it is highly instructive to observe the same business men who so slickly handle a

success dealing with a failure. Instead of smiles and congratulations, behold quivering underlips, nervous glumness, and "I told you so" from those who would have used the same formula had the public been "eating" our new work. Arthur Mee and I, as the joint editors of *The World's Great Books*, knew perfectly well that we were producing a very useful and an extremely interesting work, but, as the contents of all these publications might have been printed in Chinese so far as most of the then business executive, especially in the high places, were concerned, and their literary opinions were based mainly upon circulation figures, we were clearly in for a bad time. The cry went forth to cut down expenses in every direction, to cheapen the paper, to reduce the number of pages, and in short to produce an abortion of our original scheme, which in the opinion of the Chief was to surpass the *Harmsworth Encyclopedia* in its success.

While our colleagues, who would have gracefully accepted the bouquets in the event of a success, were wringing their hands in the face of a failure, we evolved the idea of giving away a valuable gift to all readers who would pledge themselves to subscribe for the run of the publication. This was to take the form of a large photogravure reproduction of an Academy picture by Seymour Lucas, R.A. I hastened to Lucas's studio in Hampstead, and found that he had nothing which would fill the bill, but made a contract with him on the spot to paint a suitable "literary" picture, on the understanding that he would afterwards make an Academy painting of the same subject, thus entitling us to advertise the gift as an exclusive reproduction of an Academy picture. His subject was a most attractive one: Edmund Spenser reading the Faerie Queen to Sir Walter Raleigh in Kilcolman Castle. And a very charming

picture he painted in the course of a few days. The photogravure reproductions cost us about $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. each and we required about fifty thousand to satisfy the demand.

This may seem a considerable number, but it still meant comparative failure for our publication, as in those days we had to reckon upon a circulation of approximately 300,000 for the first number of any of these fortnightlies, and although that figure was seldom repeated after the first number, our circulation record being a continuous diminuendo, any publication that dipped below 100,000 before it was concluded was regarded as not quite up to our standard of success.

Had we not yielded to the pressure of those of our colleagues whose feet were frostbitten, and cheapened the quality of the production at the same time that we launched this premium scheme, we should not only have rescued the work from failure but have made it something of a success. Above all, Arthur and I would at least have had the satisfaction of carrying it out on the generous lines originally planned. Our original scheme of 48 or 50 parts we had to reduce to 30, on the plea of "cutting our losses". As a matter of fact, this was the crowning folly of the interference of certain commercial colleagues in a project they did not understand and could hardly be expected to appreciate. For had the work run to the length originally planned, it would actually have netted some thousands, as I know that the last few numbers of the series of thirty were each making a profit.

I feel sure that had the Chief been at Carmelite House instead of at his bungalow at Grand Falls, Newfoundland, during those nervous days, he would have encouraged Arthur and me to continue as we had begun and to go ahead with our project regardless of the croakers. He never at

any time favoured reduction of value; rather the reverse. Always a good policy. The sales of no commodity can be improved by stinting its value.

My own explanation of the sad case of this publication is, that, coming as it did after a succession of the most extraordinarily successful fortnightlies, those in whose hands the arrangements for the publishing lay assumed that it was right to print precisely the same quantity of it as of the preceding successes, and they so smothered the book market with copies of the first issue that even a quite considerable and, indeed, profitable sale of the work looked relatively small in face of the vast quantity of copies that had been distributed.

As it was, the total number sold would have been considered highly satisfactory by almost every other publishing house in Great Britain at that time, but the successes of the Amalgamated Press were so immensely greater than those of any of their competitors that an A.P. "flop" would have been anybody else's "winner". The machine which had been created was so gigantic that it could be used profitably only on publications for which vast circulations were attainable. To start the titanic machinery of the A.P. on the production and distribution of something that was going to sell only fifty thousand copies a fortnight was like using a great Hoe press to print some leaflets.

XIV

THE production of the *World's Great Books* was marked by the appearance of one of the best of the literary burlesques written by C. L. Graves and E. V. Lucas, the first of these being *Wisdom While You Wait*, in which

they so ingeniously satirized the Yankee methods of selling the *Britannica* in its own country. That classic of its kind appeared in 1903, and its success naturally determined its brilliant authors to continue whenever a good target for their shafts presented itself. *Hustled History* was no doubt inspired by our *History of the World*, as its descriptive title would suggest: "The Only History of the World written in a Fortnight and Published all at Once in One Part. No Long Drawn Out Suspense. No Fortnightly Spasms". But it contained hardly any direct satire on the efforts of Arthur Mee and myself to provide the British public with an authoritative universal history, which was yet as "popular" and attractive as any magazine, and incidentally sold several times as many fortnightly parts during its run as the most widely circulated monthly magazine of that time.

Farthest From the Truth, published in 1909, was a gem of rollicking fun and approximately half of it was devoted to the most good-natured fooling about "Hammerton and Mee" apropos of the *World's Great Books*. It purported to be "A Series of Dashes", and dealt with numerous topics of the time in the true comic spirit, "The Dash for Brevity", in which the notion of our "potted classics" was lustily turned into fun, being the main section of the little book.

It mightily pleased Northcliffe, who often spoke admiringly of its authors and the keen journalistic insight they displayed in their comic commentary on the events of the day. He was never tired of having his leg pulled by them in *Punch*, and seldom a week went by without *Punch* having its bit of fun at his expense. Apart from the wit of "The Dash for Brevity", which does not read stale even after twenty-three years, I remember we were all a little surprised at the uncanny likeness of some of the imaginary burlesque

scenes to the actual happenings in the editorial office, where the sense of the comic has at all times, and never more usefully than at that time, helped me in my tasks, however serious these may have appeared.

I cannot refrain from making two quotations where so many would be in point. This, for example, "On the Telephone", is not only good fun but it is good Northcliffe as seen through the eye of satire :

Lord Northcliffe: Are you there? Who is it?

Amalgamated Editor: It's Mee.

His Lordship: Who is "me"? It's not even grammar.

A.E. : I'm Mee.

H.L. : What do you mean, I'm me? Do you mean I am I?

A.E. : No, I'm Mee—Arthur Mee.

H.L. : Oh, Arthur Mee. Aren't you one of my editors?

A.E. : I hope so.

H.L. : Listen then. I've got another good idea for you. Something really novel.

A.E. : That's exactly what we want. Some of the old things don't seem to be going at all. I'm all attention.

H.L. : What do you say to a new periodical in which we give brief concentrated versions of the 1,000 best books? There are 1,000, aren't there?

A.E. : Of course. I'll get Hammerton to make a list of them.

H.L. : Who's Hammerton?

A.E. : He's in the office, too.

H.L. : Dear me, is he? I really must keep a "Where is it". Well, you boil them down and bring the thing out in periodical parts and there you are.

A.E. : Splendid. But will the public like it?

H.L. : They will if we tell them often enough that full length is a bore, and that they can get a reputation

for culture on our tabloids. I'll see to that: you get on with the boiling.

A.E.: Brevity is the soul of wit and that sort of thing.

H.L.: My dear fellow, you'll ruin everything. For heaven's sake, don't mention it. If the public ever got the least suspicion that anyone on the *Mail* was witty they'd throw it over in a minute. No—brevity the soul of intellect, brevity the soul of culture, brevity the soul of success, if you will; but never breathe the word wit again.

A.E.: I'm sorry.

H.L.: It's all right. Now go ahead with—what's his name?

A.E.: Hammerton.

H.L.: Yes, of course, and your name? I've forgotten that now.

A.E.: Mee.

H.L.: Me?

A.E.: I mean my name's Mee.

H.L.: Yes, of course. I forgot. Mee, and a very good name, too. Sounds like "The Egoist" as abbreviated for the million.

A.E.: (heartily) Ha! Ha! Very good.

Much of the matter was in rhyme and some of the jingling verses were popular exchange for quite a while; indeed, only last year Eveleigh Nash, whom I met at a literary gathering for the first time in many years, repeated the following verses to me as pat as if he had just read them:

They settled down to Bradshaw
 With quarts of barley bree.
 "My word, this is a jungle",
 Said Hammerton to Mee.

They started out on Hansard
With fearful energy.
"My hair's gone white in a single night",
Said Hammerton to Mee.

They tackled Mr. Henry James
Till tears stood in their ee,
"Look up the trains for Colney Hatch",
Said Hammerton to Mee.

The foregoing were headed "Books that Beat Them", and the third verse is a case of the poet's imagination projecting as a comic idea what was an actual happening!

The impulsiveness which characterized so much of Northcliffe's behaviour was not absent from Arthur Mee in the days of which I write. One should not exclude the possibility of unconscious imitation here. Arthur shared his admiration for men who get things done, and much of his own success was due to an instant endeavour to translate into actuality whichever new idea had received the imprimatur of the Chief. He was quite as impatient as Northcliffe when faced with irritating inefficiency in an individual or in an organization. One amusing result of this was the multiplication of office boys in his department. When he touched the bell, if there was not an office boy immediately standing upon the carpet, awaiting orders, there was trouble, and his secretary would have instructions to get a new office boy at once.

In this way office boys accumulated to such an alarming extent that Sir Harold rang me up one day at Temple Chambers, when Arthur Mee was holidaying in Switzerland, to tell me that he had a list before him of Arthur's staff, which included no fewer than ten office boys. "Will

you go in and sack seven or eight of them at once?" he asked. My association with Arthur Mee's department, which had never been more than partial, had almost ceased by then, and although the need for the axe was obvious, I was not inclined to be the one to apply it. I reported the situation to Arthur, however, and when he returned I think something drastic was done. The real trouble was that Arthur could never find it in his heart to "sack" anybody, while he was perhaps too ready to engage new juniors. I remember a person on the *Daily Mail*, who afterwards made a fortune out of his connection with it, saying to me at that time: "Aye, Arthur's good at engaging, but I'm good at sacking." And he smacked his lips as if he enjoyed it. It was a true statement, and at that I leave it.

The name of S. S. McClure has been mentioned. I made the first acquaintance of this remarkable man, who at one time was known throughout the United States as the most enterprising editor of his day, when he came over to fix up the American rights of *The World's Great Books*. The transaction, I believe, turned out an entirely profitable one for him and his magazine company. The work was produced in America in twenty handy volumes of which hundreds of thousands of sets were used in connection with magazine premiums, and, indeed, the American edition was still being advertised and sold there some twenty years after the first English edition. I met McClure many times afterwards, and last of all when we stayed together some years ago at the Baglioni at Florence, where he was engaged upon a grandiose history of Fascism, which I do not think has ever got into print.

There is a little anecdote of him I cannot forbear telling, as it is typical of many Americans who entertain an exaggerated idea of English sartorial conventions. One afternoon,

when I was with Northcliffe in his study at St. James's Place, the telephone bell rang and he asked me to answer it. It was Sam McClure calling. "Tell him," said the Chief, "that I am expecting him to-night to dinner, but on no account is he to dress, as I shall be wearing this Norfolk suit." I conveyed the message and I think I had also to mention that there were only two other guests, one of whom I seem to remember was the Earl of Wemyss. My stay that afternoon was so prolonged, that when I was leaving St. James's Place it was within twenty minutes or so of the hour of dinner, and whom did I encounter on the threshold but Sam McClure, elaborately got up in tails, complete with white waistcoat and tie! I forgot to ask the Chief afterwards if Sam showed any consciousness of rectitude towards the other guests who, like the Chief, were to be in lounge suits. It is sad to me, as an old journalist, remembering the splendid service McClure did some thirty years ago for American journalism, to see all his once vigorous and flourishing concerns now vanished like streams in desert sands.

XV

WHILE I was still struggling with the production of *The World's Great Books*, I was busy with several other individual undertakings, among these being a new edition of Dickens, to each volume of which I contributed bibliographical and critical introductions and for which I also compiled a book of Dickensiana under the title of *The Dickens Companion*, and another volume devoted entirely to the illustrators of Dickens. The distinguishing feature of this edition, which was known and still sells freely as *The Charles Dickens Library*, was a set of 500 brilliant

illustrations specially drawn for it by Harry Furniss. How the little man worked to produce these! He was a perfect marvel of energy, and although he had stipulated for a year in which to make his 500 drawings, he did the lot in barely ten months.

It was part of our bargain that he would not depart too widely from the style and character of the old drawings by Phiz and Cruikshank, as I felt then, and still feel, that to illustrate Dickens in the modern technique of wash and colour is entirely wrong. The atmosphere of the old illustrations, which Dickens himself had seen and approved, ought, as far as possible, to be preserved, and this Furniss contrived most adroitly. His drawings had all that facility of line for which his work was always noted, they vibrated with life and humour, and they seemed to me to fit perfectly into the spirit of the times they were illustrating. It was a great achievement, and, indeed, the realization of one of the dreams of the artist's life, after he so ill-advisedly broke away from *Punch*. I doubt if any other edition of Dickens published this century, and selling at an equivalent price, has attained to anything like the circulation of this Harry Furniss edition, which for more than twenty years has been selling steadily through the A.P. subsidiary, the Educational Book Company.

Through the many years that I knew Harry Furniss we never had a moment's misunderstanding, and I found him one of the most tractable and likeable of men, yet he contrived to earn a reputation for quarrelsomeness, which at one stage of our relationships almost justified Northcliffe's warning when I originally proposed to him the idea of a Furniss Dickens. "Mark my words," he said, "you're bound to have a row with Harry Furniss. He is a litigious little devil. Quarrels with everybody. You see if I am

not right. Mind you, I like his work and think he could illustrate Dickens better than anybody else."

In later years, when my work took me to South America for a time and I withdrew from the Amalgamated Press for about two years, I discovered on my return that Harry Furniss had an action against the Educational Book Company about these Dickens pictures, and it was down for an early hearing. As some months elapsed before events took me back to the Northcliffe service, I was able to intervene between the two parties, and in an hour or two effect a settlement to their mutual satisfaction. On the whole, the artist was well treated, and the Educational Book Company got good value for what they paid. I think that Furniss received altogether something like £2,500 for his drawings. The death of the "litigious little devil" in 1925 was one of the losses of old friends that I have felt most acutely.

Another of my activities at this time was the production of *Edward VII, His Life and Times*. It seemed to me that the time was ripe for a really popular survey of the whole period of King Edward's life, and, having the Chief's approval, I took the bold course of writing direct to His Majesty explaining the lines on which I proposed to organize the work and asking if such an undertaking would have his personal approval. I had also suggested that, as the Duke of Argyll had been the responsible editor of an earlier Harmsworth publication, *V.R.I.*, dealing with the life and reign of Queen Victoria, it might not be inappropriate to invite him to undertake the revision of the work which I proposed to carry out.

His Majesty's reply was characterized by the sagacity he so often displayed on more important matters. The lines on which the proposed work was to be carried out seemed to him satisfactory, but his satisfaction would be the greater,

he hinted, if in compiling the work I concentrated attention rather upon the events of his lifetime than upon his own personality, as he considered that in so doing a more valuable contribution could be made to Empire history. As to my choice of responsible editor, he expressed the opinion that I might find someone less likely to be biased in favour of the royal family, but made no further suggestion.

Sir Richard Holmes had been in my mind as the alternative editor, and I knew that he would find the work congenial. I, therefore, submitted his name to King Edward who gave it his approval. Holmes at that time probably knew more about the royal family and its share in the social life of the country than any other writer. He had been for thirty-six years librarian at Windsor Castle, and he told me many unpublished stories of the boyhood of the Duke of Clarence and our present king. King George as a boy must have been of a singularly engaging nature, according to Holmes' reminiscences, and I do not think I am indiscreet in saying that he was unable to speak with the same admiration of his elder brother.

The royal approval thus secured, I set to work and was soon well on the way with the production of the book, which was to be produced by the Educational Book Company in a set of four or six volumes. Nothing had been set in type, however, except a few specimen pages when, almost as suddenly as the news of King Edward's illness which postponed his coronation, came the news of that final bronchial attack which carried him off so quickly on May 6th, 1910. At my suggestion an immediate change of plan was made, and what was to have been a set of octavo volumes we began publishing forthwith as a fortnightly serial in the same form—but much more extensive in its contents—as the Duke of Argyll's *V.R.I.*

We had a considerable success with this publication, in which I remember Queen Alexandra took a keen personal interest, an advance copy of each number being sent to her and, I am glad to remember, perused with frequently expressed approval. The whole credit of the work, of course, went to Sir Richard Holmes, who, as it proved, was himself tragically near his end when I fixed up the arrangement for him to supervise our pages. As we were going to press with the very first of the fortnightly parts he had to have a serious operation and was unable to make any revision, so that even the introduction, which is signed by him, had to be written by me. Nor was he fated entirely to recover from the loss of his leg which the operation involved, and we had not reached the end of the publication before our titular editor had passed away. Holmes was a man of infinite charm and old-fashioned courtliness, and it was always a regret to me that my association with him had been so brief.

XVI

THE Chief's absurd notion that forty represented the peak period of a man's mental and physical activity was one that underwent continuous readjustment as he himself advanced beyond that age. It was like John Burns's assertion that no man was worth more than £350 a year, which underwent modification when John got into the Cabinet and not only drew the official salary of the President of the Local Government Board but suffered it to be increased from two thousand to five. But how much one could rely upon Northcliffe's notions even on such a point as this let the following determine. On one of my many afternoons at St. James's Place at the time when the standard

bread campaign was in full swing (1910) he and I had been having an animated discussion on some of my editorial projects.

N: How often shall I have to remind you, my dear Ham, that you are now on forty. Your ideas are frozen! Haven't I told you often, haven't I written to you to surround yourself with young men who can feed you with new ideas? And still I find you relying on men as old as yourself. Men whose ideas are as antiquated as your own. And you imagine you can produce with them a new, original, up-to-date and unhackneyed periodical.

H: But, my dear Chief, what big mental change takes place between thirty-nine and forty? It seems to me——

The telephone bell rings.

N: Hallo, hallo! Who is it, who is it, who is it? Oh, that's you, Curnock. (*Before Curnock gets in another word, the Chief continues.*) Let me tell you how well I think you are doing the standard bread stuff. Very good indeed. The display in the *Mail* this morning excellent. Couldn't be better. No, perhaps it might have been improved if you'd set that par about the Midland millers in a bolder type. But I am pleased with the way you are handling the matter. Very pleased. And remember I shan't forget you. I'll see that you are looked after. You are doing good work for me. Nobody else on the staff could have done the job so well. By-the-bye, Curnock, how old are you? Forty? A very good age, Curnock. A very good age.

Continues to discuss the more momentous topic of how to force standard bread down the gullet of the British public.

After this little telephonic interlude he returned to the subject of my frozen convictions and the need for me to secure young brains for *Everybody's* as blandly as though I had not heard one single word of his talk with Curnock.

Whether Curnock was "looked after" or not in subsequent years, I cannot say, but I doubt if these fair words on the phone were ever entirely justified in fact.

It must have been soon after this incident that I compiled and presented to the Chief the little brochure of which I found a copy in an old bureau a few days ago. I ask leave to put in this "document in the case". I was quite unaware that I had kept a copy. It consists of four small octavo sheets neatly typed in red and blue and must be a fair copy, not a carbon, of the original which I sent to Northcliffe. I remember handing him the original when I was leaving his room one day and asking him to do me the favour of reading it. But I have no recollection of ever getting it back from him or of his ever saying one word to me about it! It was my counterblast to the tiresome joke which he himself had fathered, although he was not its original begetter—"Too-Old-at-Forty". From its title I also gather that he had been ragging me about having "spent too much time with nose to the paste-pot", another of his clichés in the derisive mood. It is entitled:

FIVE YEARS OF SCISSORS AND PASTE

A Review of Work done
by a Middle-aged Duffer

October 1905—October 1910

The text reads thus:

Wrote 200,000 words *original* study of English Literature for SELF-EDUCATOR (Watts-Dunton described the Shakespeare article as the best study ever written in the same space). Also 100,000 words on European Travel, written in collaboration.

WITH NORTHCLIFFE IN FLEET STREET 197

ASSISTED A.M. from start to finish of EDUCATOR, and produced 6 parts of it myself.

EDITED LONDON MAGAZINE for two years while it made a substantial profit for the firm.

SCISSORED AND PASTED, AND WROTE 25 introductions for PUNCH LIBRARY OF HUMOUR, which made £20,000 of profit for the firm.

WROTE "Books and Bookmen" in DAILY MAIL for one year with entire success; until displaced by the starting of the unsuccessful supplement.

JOINTLY EDITED, PERSONALLY SELECTED 8,500 illustrations for, and WROTE numerous headings and items in HARMSWORTH HISTORY during two years. It earned a huge profit for the firm.

WROTE ABOUT 400,000 WORDS of *original* matter and edited the whole of the Poetry section of CHILDREN'S ENCYCLOPEDIA.

ASSISTED A.M. daily on editorial work of CHILDREN'S ENCYCLOPEDIA.

EDITED WORLD'S GREAT BOOKS, unhappily a failure, but involving immense work all the same.

PLANNED AND EDITED LIFE OF KING EDWARD, producing first part in 24 hours, from start to finish of "make-up", selecting, and reproducing of pictures. Every page of this work has been made up by me. It will make a good profit.

EDITED NATURAL HISTORY up till now, passing every page for press.

PLANNED, EDITED, AND WROTE 150,000 words for CHARLES DICKENS LIBRARY (18 vols.), and *scissored and pasted* the DICKENS COMPANION and the DICKENS PICTURE BOOK. Selected 1,200 quotations from Dickens to accompany pictures. Nearly 4,000 sets of this Library sold since April.

PLANNED, EDITED AND PREFACED FINE ART SCOTT (28 vols.), securing 800 pictures for it at trifling cost. In this, as as in "Life of Edward King", "Dickens", "Punch", and other publications, I *chose paper, arranged with printer, suggested bindings, and fixed all details of production.*

WROTE HUNDREDS OF ADVERTISEMENTS and editorial announcements and conducted an *immense correspondence* in connection with all these publications; arranged agreements with McClure, Jackson, Warne, and so forth, and had time for meals!

WROTE IN LEISURE MOMENTS "George Meredith" (200,000 words.)

N.B. *At one time* I have been editing *three fortnightlies* and advancing other work as well.

"Too old at 39"



I do not apologize for putting in this "exhibit" with its necessary egotism. It is both interesting and instructive. It shows that I worked fairly hard for the two thousand a year or so that I was earning in those days, and that I was evidently still active even on the threshold of senility and the dreaded forties. All which Northcliffe knew

perfectly well, though it pleased him to be maliciously jocular where he might have been commendatory. Possibly the need to keep down the sizes of the hats worn by his successful employees (concerning which he occasionally took me into his confidence) had produced in him a tendency at all times to belittle rather than to praise the work of his assistants.

That my counterblast had any salutary effect upon him I cannot remember. It certainly did not stop his joke about too old at forty, as that was still going strong in the spring of 1911; but one felt that its point was wearing down when its perpetrator considered himself fit for work at forty-five. I have no doubt, however, that he enjoyed my method of riposte and the fact that he never said anything about it would indicate that my thrust had gone home. In each succeeding five years of my life I could have produced a not less varied tale of work done, and for the encouragement of others, rather than from any personal pride in the statement, I may add that at sixty, when the Chief has been dead for ten years, I am not only capable of doing as much, but am actually engaged as actively and as variously—and incidentally more profitably to both the Amalgamated Press and myself—as I was from thirty-five to forty.

XVII

THE period of my greatest intimacy with Northcliffe now falls to be recorded. The King Edward serial was drawing towards its close and I was already busy on another and very different sort of publication, with which also I do not think my name was publicly identified: the *Harmsworth Business Library*. I enjoyed the production

of this work, which ran to ten or twelve volumes and was prepared expressly for the Educational Book Company. I have always looked upon it as a very satisfactory piece of book-making and still think that it contained much material of real practical value, the legal section especially being admirably done at very considerable cost.

Among the contributions was one by Northcliffe on "Character in Business". This I wrote myself, yet it contained no expression of opinion that had not at some time or other been made to me by Northcliffe. The Chief did not know about this article until it was in type. I then sent it to him in proof and when he returned it he had written across the top "I must have written this in some previous state of existence." To all intents and purposes it was essentially his article, and he accepted, without the alteration of a comma, the form I had given to opinions which he instantly recognized as his own.

I am afraid that our *Business Library* cannot be numbered among our money-makers, but even now I can look back upon it without a blush. It ought to have been a large seller. Perhaps there was something wrong with the salesmanship, although in my long experience of book production I have never yet discovered a salesman who would allow such a statement to pass unchallenged. Our star salesmen are always delightfully voluble about the methods whereby *they* have built up our successes, but our failures would appear to be due without exception to some inherent defect in the work of the editor. Truly if we editors do not make much money we get a lot of fun out of watching the gentlemen who do.

When the various enterprises in which I was occupied seemed to be each within sight of its conclusion, it was up to me to think of some new one as an outlet for my editorial

energy. And it must have been about this time that I put up the scheme of a new weekly to Northcliffe. He was readily won by my verbal description of it and, indeed, showed a greater amount of interest in this purely visionary thing than in some of the important actualities of the Amalgamated Press which were probably more requiring his personal attention, although I can think of one or two editorial colleagues at that time who would certainly not agree with me here, so far as their own publications were concerned.

The situation was also complicated for me by the Chief taking a sudden decision to make me the repository of much of his family history and the romance of his business life. On April 28th, 1910, he sent me the letter to which I have alluded at the beginning of this book, and which indicates that I was to have the task of putting together his personal papers and accumulating the data of what was to be some day the official "life".

It has to be remembered that this extraordinary man, who could actively interest himself at this time in all sorts of minor questions of office policy and in such futile adventures as *The Wonder Box* or the starting of a new ha'penny comic, was deeply immersed in one of the greatest undertakings which any journalist ever set himself: the saving and reconstruction of *The Times* newspaper, the control of which he had acquired so recently as February, 1908. As I had not been taken into his confidence in the matter of that transaction, I cannot write of it with first-hand knowledge and do not propose to repeat any of the second-hand accounts that came to me at the time. Nearly two years afterwards Northcliffe himself told me, with some considerable elaboration of detail which I cannot now recall, that he owed his control of *The Times* mainly to the information

and assistance which Horace Hooper and W. M. Jackson were able to give him. From Jackson I also had the story on more occasions than one, but curiously enough, my memory, so retentive on innumerable details of those now distant days, has registered nothing concerning *The Times* transaction which I could now set down with assurance of its accuracy.

On the whole, the nearest approach to the truth that I have seen is to be found in *Moberley Bell and His Times*, by F. Harcourt Kitchin, who was assistant manager to Bell at *The Times* office and who discloses himself in this book as a bitter enemy of Northcliffe.

It is easy to be sloppily sentimental about the white faces of the old and superfluous members of *The Times* staff, who, in Northcliffe's plans of reconstruction, had to make way for abler and younger men. I, at least, shall refuse to believe that anything Northcliffe did at *The Times* in the way of re-organization resembled the cold-blooded ruthlessness suggested by the Kitchin narrative. After all, those who linger as mere dead-weights must stand aside for others who have at least the chance of bringing back prosperity to any business which, in the hands of the old 'uns, is sinking to bankruptcy. What, for instance, about the "white faces" of the whole staff some day, if *The Times* had been allowed slowly to continue its declension towards Carey Street? Some individual cases of hardship must have been inevitable, but in the end employment for far more workers was created by the rescue and re-organization of the historic newspaper.

Indeed, of all Northcliffe's services to journalism and to the public life of this country, none exceeded his work on *The Times*. And the fact that with his own lamentable end it passed into the hands of others who have proved not

less competent to maintain its efficiency as a newspaper and are certainly no less altruistic in the preservation of its mission as the leading national organ, is all to the credit of the man who saved the paper in its days of doubt and distress. He at least left a splendidly organized and vigorous newspaper well on the way to prosperity and to regaining most of the ground it had lost as a public institution.

When one remembers the melancholy issue of the Pearson experiment with the *Standard*, whereby a once powerful and prosperous newspaper was brought to its grave by inefficient and wrong-headed management, and remembers that Pearson was Northcliffe's competitor for the control of *The Times*, one has the right to ask whether, had the Chief failed to secure control, the tragic story of the *Standard* might not have been re-enacted at Printing House Square.

XVIII

I HAVE read that in *My Northcliffe Diary*, by Tom Clarke, that writer sets himself to defend our Chief from the suspicion of being at any time mentally disturbed: even in the lamentable weeks before the end. I trust I may not be misrepresenting Mr. Clarke in this without verifying his statement by an examination of his own words, but the reader has had my explanation as to why I am so far unacquainted at first hand with the contents of Tom Clarke's diary. Assuming that the various reviews of that book which have come under my notice, and in most of which attention has been drawn to this opinion of its writer, do not misrepresent him, I must enter a demurrer.

At the time of which I am writing the diarist had not yet met Northcliffe, and I cannot, therefore, guess with

what epithets he would have defined the behaviour of the Chief to all who then came in close touch with him. If, however, he found in the far more pronounced and indeed painful exhibition of mental disorder which so unhappily characterized the pitiful close of Northcliffe's life nothing to suggest an abnormal mental condition, then he might well have accepted the wildest actions of Northcliffe in 1910-1911 as no more than the eccentricities of genius.

The Chief's condition at this time was certainly one of pronounced mental excitement. And was that to be wondered at? No man ever made such continuous and merciless demands upon his own mental and physical vitality as Northcliffe had then been making for many years. There assuredly was one short period which fell within the time of my closest intimacy with him when no other description than "mentally unwell" could charitably have been applied to some of his actions. I shall endeavour here to recall certain events and experiences which were typical of the ordinary traffic of the day between Northcliffe and myself throughout most of 1910 and the earlier months of 1911, and leave it to the reader to judge in what degree, if any, his actions as faithfully described by me differed from those of more ordinary mortals.

The commonest of my experiences was to be talked to by the Chief for hours on end, myself saying next to nothing, although at all times capable of holding my end up in any verbal exchange with him or anyone else. When he had exhausted himself so that he was on the verge of collapse, I would be dismissed by him in some such fashion as: "Now run away home and get on with your work, Hattie, my boy. You talk too much. Talk, talk, talk. You have completely tired me out. Never knew such a man to talk." There were others who told me that they

had occasionally had the same experience of listening to him and being afterwards accused of having talked him to death. But to me I think this happened more often because of his effort to tell me by word of mouth the whole of his family and business history, which he supposed I was recording laboriously in my own time at home after exhausting days and nights at work on his journalistic affairs. While it was difficult not openly to resent the insulting phraseology of such a termination to some hours of patient listening, during which one saw the excited talker weakening and flagging, there was nearly always some sort of saving salt of humour even when the intention to annoy was still evident.

Often on these occasions when we were about to part—and always I was the anxious one, as it must be understood that most of these hours of conversation took place when I should have been busy at my desk, so that in the sum of my editorial work they represented so much lost time which I had to make up later in the day when Northcliffe was abed!—often he would say: “Once again you have worn me out, Hammie, my boy. Talk, talk, talking! Do you know what you are called in the office?” On my saying that I didn’t greatly care, he would look me waggishly in the eye and say: “Conversation Kenge.” I remember remarking to him once that I did not think there was a sufficient number in the firm who knew Dickens well enough to understand the reference. In any case, of course, the only person in the firm who was saying anything of the kind was himself, and that was the fun of it—to him.

On another occasion I remember his exhausting himself with sustained talk so that his throat, which troubled him for many years, was obviously paining him. He said, almost in a whisper, as we were about to part: “This comes

of listening to the loud-mouthed Hammeringtone." In such circumstances there could be no rational reply, and the tiny pinch of humour introduced in the pronunciation of my name at least modified the untruthful statement, which, mark you, he was capable of repeating to the very next person he met.

Although he had a real admiration for Scotsmen and the Scottish character, he never seemed to tire of repeating the usual English clichés about their "joking wi' deefficulty", and their being mainly concerned to mingle with "heeds o' depairtments". As he well knew, although I hailed from north the Tweed I made no sort of claim to be a real son of Caledonia, and prided myself as much in having an English father as in having a Scottish mother—at all times a stupid sort of pride to entertain. But he chose for his own amusement always to regard me as an "immigrant from Grinock", a town I knew no better than he did himself. This I mention as a prelude to the description of an episode which was typical of many and would, no doubt, be confirmed by the experience of other editors, though, I suspect, with results to them which may have been different.

I was in the early stages of preparing the first number of *Everybody's*, the new weekly which was to aim at a higher intellectual level than that to which most of the Harmsworth periodicals of those days aspired. Part of my plan was that as relief to its serious contents there should be a selection of humorous drawings with brief legends on the lines long established by *Punch*. I had therefore got together a considerable variety of such drawings and jokes by the best comic artists of the day, and happening to mention this in one of our talks, I was summoned the next forenoon to Carmelite House with all my "comic stuff".

Dutifully I carted my collection across and dumped it on the Chief's table.

N: As all Scotsmen jok' with difficulty, I must make sure that your comic stuff for your first number is all right.

H: I think I've got a pretty good lot to choose from.

N: (*glancing casually over an excellent drawing with a good joke*) I don't think much of this. (*Chucks it on the floor.*) And this is worse. (*It follows the other.*)

And so he went on through the whole collection of thirty or forty drawings, all of which had been paid for at substantial rates and were the work of such artists as were then making a great success of *London Opinion*. At the end of the lot he came upon a drawing by A. S. Boyd, a regular contributor to *Punch* and an old friend of mine (news of whose death in New Zealand I heard with great regret not long ago).

N: (*looking at the sketch and reading joke*) The silliest of the whole lot. Do you call that funny?

H: I certainly do. And I may tell you that Walter Emanuel, who was in my office the other day, saw it on my desk and was highly tickled. (Emanuel was then writing *Punch's* "Charivaria".)

N: It's a piece of sheer stupidity. Poor drawing. Pointless drivel. You invent a silly name for a man and then try to make a joke out of it. The whole lot of them are useless. There's no doubt about the Scottish lack of humour. Do you really understand a joke?

H: Not always an English joke. But do I need to remind you that I edited the twenty volumes of the *Punch Library of Humour* which you like so much? I ought to have picked up some idea of a joke in the process. Besides, I have lectured on Humour in about a dozen of the principal towns of England and kept audiences amused for an hour

and a half at a stretch. Personally, I'm certain there are a good many laughs for my readers in the stuff you have thrown on the floor.

N: Don't let us discuss it. Get some more, from real comic artists. Don't waste your space with these.

The sequel is not without its own humour. I naturally selected from my stock such as I thought were most attractive for my first number, made the blocks of them and duly printed them, well knowing that Northcliffe would have forgotten which of them he had seen when they appeared, and not caring a bean if he did remember. But the identical joke which he dubbed the silliest of the lot, appeared by an extraordinary piece of good luck with a half-page drawing by F. H. Townsend, or one of the other leading artists, in *Punch* of the succeeding week. On the Tuesday morning of its appearance, I had a letter from Emanuel saying that he had just seen the joke in an advance copy of *Punch* and, although he knew that I would be well aware that it must have been at press before the day on which he had seen it on my desk, he felt he ought to write to me and let me know that he had not been trafficking it among his colleagues at the *Punch* office.

With a copy of *Punch* in my hand I went across to Northcliffe and placed it before him, opened at the page with the silly joke. I invited him to read it and tell me if he remembered it. He did, and added that he still thought it a damned silly joke.

H: But don't you think it a bull point for me?

N: Certainly not. It remains a stupid joke.

H: Well, we'll agree to say that, although it was not good enough for *Everybody's*, it was at least bad enough for *Punch*.

I left him in perfect good humour and never had another

word from him again concerning any of the jokes I published. As a matter of curiosity I give the silly joke here from memory:

Nephew (*introducing college friend to deaf old lady with ear trumpet*): This, Aunt, is my great friend Mr. Smiffkins.

Aunt: Mr. what?

Nephew (*loudly into ear trumpet*): Smiffkins!

Aunt: Dear, dear! How deaf I am. Can't catch his name at all. I declare it sounds for all the world like Smiffkins.

XIX

IT was in many ways unfortunate that the time to try out my scheme of a new weekly paper, which was to differ in character from anything hitherto published by the Amalgamated Press, should have come about this period. The talks we had about this proposed new "popular journal of life and letters" went on for months in advance of the effort to give it material form. It was to be (he assured me) the greatest this and the finest that that had ever come from the printing press. I was warned about the traps that awaited me and into which he was sure that I should stumble. Nothing was to appear in it that was not "thoughtful". A sudden obsession this: to bring thoughtfulness into everything that was printed on his presses. Precisely what he meant by it he was never quite able to explain. But he repeated it at every chance and always contrasted the need to be thoughtful with the uselessness of being "trickily attractive". Often, in truth, did I feel sorry that I had ever suggested the damned thing to him! While it was still no more than an idea, he could seem to see all the

pages of it, each one with only the right sort of stuff on it. The whole thing had become his own idea, not mine at all.

I could occupy the greater part of this volume by recording, as all that happened stays fresh and clear in my memory, a selection from the series of pre-publishing disputes and quarrels in which I was forced to engage myself with him. But it will be enough if I state that after I had gone to the unusual trouble of producing and printing an absolutely complete advance specimen, chiefly for the information of advertisers and the trade, and we heard from all quarters that *Everybody's*, as my journal was to be called, was assured of a big success, I found his captious criticisms, his irrational interference with plans of mine approved by him the day before, and indeed his whole attitude of wilful and childish obstructionism so trying that, a day or two before we went to press with the first number, I told him, as the publication was no longer to bear any resemblance to the thing I had originally conceived and hardly anything but the name remained, I would remove my own name from the wrapper page. He had made a strong point of *his* securing a "national reputation" for me as the editor of this great new journal, but he did not protest against my deleting my name as editor.

Time has probably softened the recollection of much of the asperities of these days, but I imagine that an editor with an opportunity of appealing to the general public through the greatest publishing machine in the country and with the certainty of hundreds of thousands of copies of his first number being circulated, who deliberately expunged his own name from the cover and title-page of his journal, where it had been placed at the suggestion of his proprietor, must have felt very displeased with the said proprietor. What had really determined me in this course was the

Chief's insistence that I should stick the bucolic face of Sir Oswald Mosley on my outside page. Old Mosley and his standard bread were at that time being made the laughing-stock of the country by the *Daily Mail's* propaganda. "See if I don't force everybody in the country to eat standard bread and grow sweet peas," the Chief had said to me, and doubtless to many others, and we all saw that he didn't. I was in America when he was making another effort to force the *Daily Mail* hat upon an unwilling community and succeeded, I believe, in doing no more than to get a few of his office staff to wear that ridiculous cross between a stove pipe and a bowler.

I felt at the time, and I feel now, that all these wild schemes of publicity did not emanate from a mind conspicuously clear and sane. The *folie de la grandeur* was at work. Success heaped upon success—success so great indeed that even a smashing blow in the face like that administered by Lever in 1906, when Northcliffe had to pay up some quarter of a million pounds in damages and expenses for alleged libellous statements about Sunlight Soap in the *Daily Mail*, was no more than an episode soon to be forgotten—had, as we commonly say, "turned his head". There is no doubt that at least for a time, late in 1910 and early in 1911, his actions did betray a lack of judgement and perception quite unlike his decisions and inspirations before and after that time and until the final obscuring of his mental powers.

That this condition should have developed about the time it had been planned to start my new journal was worse than unfortunate. And all had promised so well a few months before! It happens that I have preserved my first rough dummy of *Everybody's*, which I made up from blank sheets of paper with illustrations cut from other journals

pasted on the pages to show my intended lay-out, the headings of the articles and weekly features being sketched in by myself in various styles of lettering. I had, however, a very effective title design for the front page processed and printed in two colours, but the name was not the one we intended to use. So this dummy was christened *Every Week*, a title afterwards used for a post-War publication issued by another firm, just as *Everybody's* is being used to-day for the re-organized *Competitor's Journal*. In preparing dummies, it was customary to choose a title different from that actually decided upon, so that, in the continual leakage of office secrets which goes on mysteriously between all the leading publishing houses, at least the name of the new production should not be known until it was nearer the date of publication.

The sole interest of this old dummy lies in the fact that Northcliffe had pencilled a number of comments on the front page. The first of these reads: "I prophesy 175,000 in three months—if printing is good. I doubt printing." In another corner: "Paper and printing must be perfect." Running down the left margin: "Your paper should be the loadstone of new talent. Weekly Haselden cartoon. I will try and get it. Would like one really leading writer weekly." He is still harping on the printing in his notes along the bottom of the page: "I doubt our printing capacity. It must be *perfectly* done." Finally pencilled along the right margin I read: "Maxim for Dummy Makers—never show a fool or a woman half-finished work. What I really mean, my dear Hammerton, is that the scheme is ripping! Chief." He was right to be anxious about the printing capacity of our works. Although they produced immense quantities of cheaply printed periodicals, they had not specialized to any extent in the better class of work

until the repeated successes of the *Self-Educator*, the *Harmsworth History* and the *Children's Encyclopedia* made it necessary to aim at a continually rising standard of printing. In a very few years our works were not only equipped for almost unlimited quantity, but also for the best quality of printing. The Chief himself was always fighting for the improvement of our printing technique, and he got me to make a special study of colour-printing and prepare a report for him on the subject so that he could tackle the printing works manager with the latest information in his possession.

I may mention that his promise to try to get a weekly cartoon from Haselden did not get beyond the trying stage, as the *Daily Mirror* cartoonist simply could not see his way to take on another weekly job. It will thus be seen that there were limitations to the compelling power of the Chief.

As I have indicated, the capricious interference of the Chief in every detail of *Everybody's Weekly* left me quite indifferent as to its success. Indeed, on the morning when the first number came out and the bookstalls were bright with its red and black portrait of Oswald Mosley's "John Bull" face—how I hated that portrait!—and the street vendors were shouting it along the Strand and Fleet Street, I took no more interest in its appearance than if it had been the latest thing from Newnes or Cassells. When I got to my office that particular morning the Chief was speedily on the 'phone and shouting this in my ear:

"Do you know what I've been doing for you? I've been sav-ing y-o-u-r l-i-f-e! The publishing department has had immense orders for *Everybody's*, and you know what a rotten first number it is. Why are we getting these orders? Not because *you* are editing it. Because the trade and the public know *I* am behind it. And the first number is rotten,

so I'm sav-ing your life by cutting down the orders by one half. This will make people who can't get the first number ask for the second, which is a little better than number one. Come over and work out number three with me this afternoon."

As a matter of fact, the first number was not so bad as I had feared it would be; nothing like so bad as he described it, although he was so much more responsible than I for what it contained. His policy of refusing to supply the trade with their demands was a mere whim of the moment and did more harm than good. But the chief harm was done to *Everybody's* by his insisting upon my adopting the American system (till then rejected by every English editor) of starting all the main articles in the front pages of the paper and carrying over their tail-ends to the back pages among the advertising. This, and the fact that our advertisement manager, Murray Allison, who was then in charge of the advertisement department at *The Times*, let numerous spaces at high rates on an unhappy arrangement whereby the advertiser was allowed to imitate the editorial style of make-up, led to my being overwhelmed within a few days with letters and post-cards of protest from purchasers. "I like your new paper very much and will continue to read it, but"—we had either to stop carrying over the articles or mixing our advertising pages with the reading matter. So these protests ran. This, however, did not last long, as the advertising matter so quickly fell away that we had little paid advertising to print alongside the tail-ends of the articles.

I never really believed in the possibilities of the paper from the day I discovered I had to carry the Chief as a loquacious Old Man of the Sea on the back of my neck while editing it. It was quite impossible to achieve a result

that would satisfy myself while pleasing him, or while pleasing him would please the public. And when I was in South America a year or two later, I remember reading with some satisfaction an open letter to Northcliffe in *London Opinion* in which the writer bluntly put it to him: "Is it not a fact that the only serious effort of your firm to produce a really high-class weekly periodical was destroyed by your personal interference?" There was some truth in that, and Lincoln Springfield, the editor of *London Opinion*, who had originally been in close touch with Alfred on the staff of the *Daily Mail*, said to me some years afterwards that his fellow directors of *London Opinion* were so alarmed by the possibilities of *Everybody's* eating into their public that they actually called a board meeting to consider the situation. But they had no cause for alarm, as a journal whose editor does not believe in the thing he is producing is, of all things doomed, the most hopeless.

I have often thought that in *Everybody's* we missed a great opportunity of establishing a really worthy national weekly, which might have secured a very large body of readers ready for something more substantial than the "Bits" class of weekly and yet not quite so bookish in its tastes as the more limited public of *T.P.'s Weekly*, which at that time held the position *John o' London's* holds to-day. I saw my scheme, which the Chief had described as "ripping", fade away under my own eyes—I "let it rip" as it were—and the changeling weekly which I had to produce as the result of his continual interferences went down in circulation by leaps and bounds, until I did not much care whether they decided to "knife" it or go on losing money on it.

Fortunately, once again I had other fish to fry and I could listen with hardly a tremor of regret to the Chief's

facetiousness about *Everybody's*. He would say to me: "Do you know what your paper is called everywhere, in the train, in the office? *Nobody's!*" Before the first number appeared I had wiped from my mind all thoughts of its ever being a success.

XX

ON an autumn day of 1911, W. M. Jackson came to my room in Temple Chambers and said he was going to put a proposition before me to which he thought I would agree. I asked him to fire away. For a year or two I had known Jackson who, in partnership with Horace Hooper, had shown British publishers what can be done in the way of book-selling on the grand scale if one has a good "story" to tell, a book of standard reputation to offer, and the pluck to spend vast sums in advertising it. Especially the last of these "ifs". I had worked closely with him in arranging the intricate copyright difficulties of the American edition of *The Children's Encyclopedia*, and he was evidently so impressed with what I had done in that connection and also with my other work for the A.P. that he wanted me to join him editorially and also in the selling end of a very ambitious publishing scheme he had planned for South America. I was flattered but not very enthusiastic, as his job involved my residing in South America for nearly two years at least, and preferably, so far as he was concerned, for about five years.

"What are you making here?" he bluntly asked.

"Something over £2,000 a year, I suppose."

"Not enough for you. You ought to be making double that. I am ready to pay you a minimum salary of £5,000 a year on a five years' agreement; and to give you substantial

royalties on sales if you will link up with me for South America. You can make a fortune if you throw in your lot with me."

So many £5,000 a year jobs have come into existence with the post-War expansion of journalism and "big business" that an offer such as this to-day would occasion no comment. But before the War there were not half-a-dozen journalists in London drawing £5,000 per annum, "with substantial royalties on sales". I had, therefore, no qualms about the financial side of the offer, but I would not sign on with Jackson, or any other publisher, on a five years basis, if that involved my serving abroad for most of the period. Chiefly was I attracted by the proposal because of the opportunity it offered of seeing the principal places of South America, not merely as a hurrying visitor but as a temporary resident. The history of the Spanish expansion in that continent had always fascinated me, although I had not yet made myself a master of Spanish for its better acquaintance.

Moreover, in considering the Jackson proposal from all angles, the fact had to be remembered that, having once thrown off the Northcliffe allegiance it might be difficult to resume it. Nay, according to the Harmsworth tradition, there would be no returning to the fold. Was I ready to cut myself off from Carmelite House with which I had a two years' agreement?

And, by the by, Carmelite House, so far as the A.P. was concerned, was now merely a symbol, the whole of the periodical business having been moved from Carmelite House into a large building in Bouverie Street erected a few years before for that disastrous experiment in liberal journalism, *The Tribune*, whose tragedy is the theme of Philip Gibbs's novel, *The Street of Adventure*. One day, before

The Tribune building was quite finished, Northcliffe and I were walking up Bouverie Street and I remarked on the grandiose ambitions of the promoters of the new journal, in starting with such a magnificent building. "They will need as big a building as they can put up to hold all their 'returns'. Bobbie Donald and the *Chronicle* will prove too much for them," was the Chief's comment. It was remarkable that in a year or two this very building was to house nearly all the departments of the A.P., and in a year or two more was to prove so hopelessly inadequate that Fleetway House had to be built as the editorial and administrative headquarters of the world's biggest publishing firm. For some years now Fleetway House itself has been quite unable to accommodate the immense body of editorial and clerical workers employed by the A.P.

In 1911 I had no conception of the immense expansion still to come to the Harmsworth enterprises. The failure of *Everybody's*, and the reasons for that failure, did not leave me with a deep desire to continue toiling as a Harmsworth editor to the exclusion of all other possibilities of editorial adventure. Had I foreseen the subsequent growth of the business—I have often doubted if the Chief himself foresaw it—which at that time seemed to me already at its zenith, I should probably have elected to continue in association with it. For I was none too sure of my ground with Jackson, entertaining as I did at that time a suspicion of all American business men and especially those engaged in the exploitation of encyclopedias and dictionaries. I was quite sure of myself editorially, but less so on the side of salesmanship, which was to be associated with my editorial work. I was expected to undertake not merely the editorial revision and production of a great existing Spanish encyclopedia—much larger than the *Britannica*

—the plates of which had been acquired by Jackson and were already at his printers in Edinburgh when he approached me, but to originate all the newspaper publicity and postal advertising of the work in the South American Press, and generally to control the sale throughout that continent. Jackson himself had no misgivings. He assured me that if I would not take on the job there was nobody else in England who would get it, as he would send the chief of his flourishing New York organization instead.

Eventually I decided to enter into an agreement with Jackson, not to exceed two years in duration. I would cut the painter, so far as the A.P. was concerned. My intention was to obtain a thorough knowledge of South American affairs during my lengthy stay in the country, which was to include sojourns of six months or more at Buenos Aires, Montevideo and Santiago de Chile, as well as numerous shorter stays in other parts of the vast continent. I contemplated returning to England with valuable knowledge to exploit in the way of both journalism and advertising, since I was to spend entirely at my own discretion nearly £100,000 of Jackson's money in advertising the Spanish encyclopedia, and so to acquire a peculiar and extensive knowledge of the South American Press.

Assured that on my return to London I should not lack remunerative employment, I do not think I seriously contemplated rejoining Northcliffe, assuming him willing to have me back. Thus it was the more gratifying to me when I told him of Jackson's offer and my intention to give it a trial for not more than two years, to find the Chief so friendly disposed that, of his own volition, he suggested that I should not regard myself as entirely cutting away from the A.P., but that when I came back, full of new

experiences, I should see what the old firm was doing, as there might be a chance of taking up work again with him. As an outward expression of this attitude of friendliness to one of his staff who had had the temerity to give him notice and seek fresh woods, he arranged a complimentary dinner to me at the Savoy Hotel on February 8th, 1912, and himself took the chair.

It was a very remarkable gathering of "the heeds of departments", together with a few personal friends of my own in the publishing world. Before the very considerable company the Chief hinted at the invitation he had privately given to me to regard this South American enterprise as a big adventure and to come home among my friends of the A.P. and apply something of my newly acquired knowledge to the service of the old firm. He made a very eulogistic speech about J.A.H.'s six years' work for the A.P. and, in fact, summarized my "Scissors and Paste" pamphlet in the most complimentary manner. I believe him to have been entirely sincere in these expressions of praise for my work, yet out of sheer devilment I should have loved to tell the audience in my response about the "not-worth-two-thousand-a-year" episode. Discretion whispered "No!"

While not doubting the Chief's sincerity, I did suspect certain factors in the situation: (1) that I was joining Jackson, to whom Northcliffe felt indebted for his services in connection with the purchase of *The Times*; (2) that Jackson was in no sense a rival publisher; and (3) that I was receiving a salary of £5,000 a year from an astute American not at all likely to over-pay anyone in his employment. These facts may have made a difference, yet I should like to think that the conspicuous kindness with which I was treated by Northcliffe at this juncture was not mainly based upon such considerations, but sprang rather from some

real affection which we had discovered for each other and which at no time blinded either to the faults and shortcomings of the other. Surely it will not be ascribed to vanity on my part in so thinking, for it is right that in any estimate of the Chief whatever tells in favour of his gentler side ought to be recorded, since so much is more readily available on the other side.

The story of my South American adventure has no further part in the present narrative, although it contains much that is both interesting and exciting and may yet bear the telling. Enough, that all I undertook to do for Jackson was done to his complete satisfaction, and that the royalty basis on which my agreement was framed, and of which my £5,000 a year was "payment on account", had been so ingeniously worked out by Jackson that at the end of the South American campaigns, which extended for a year and ten months, the total of the royalties earned was approximately the total of salary received! Something like £380,000 worth of the *Diccionario Enciclopedico Hispano-Americano*, as the bulky encyclopedia was called, was sold during my time in South America. The most permanent possession that I brought back was a good knowledge of Spanish, oral and literary. Some thousands of my profits I lost straight away in an ill-advised investment in B.A.P. railway shares.

XXI

WHAT laughter in the dim background of our lives the gods must have at our "I wills" and even our "I shalls"! What pathetic figures we must all present to our secret selves on looking back and seeing ourselves, out-thrown chest and lips set firm, asserting our intentions,

when we realize in how far we have failed or been frustrated.

My South American enterprise ended in the autumn of 1913, and I was able to carry out a long projected tour through the South American continent and the United States, before sailing for home. This took me by way of Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Columbia and Panama, across the Caribbean to New Orleans and thence by easy stages to New York. My route was determined by a desire to study the Inca remains of Peru and Bolivia, by which my youthful imagination had been fired through the reading of Prescott's *Conquest of Peru* and many another historical and fictional work about the Incas.

In New York I arranged with a well-known publishing firm to write two books, the first to relate my experiences in the Argentine and Uruguay, the second my fairly extensive travels in Chile and the lands of the Inca. So that when I arrived in London my immediate concern was to set about these pleasant tasks. Months were devoted to the first, which gave me immensely more enjoyment in its composition than rewards of a more substantial kind because of events that were soon to change the currents of all our lives. The second is still unwritten.

To return home after an absence of nearly two years in a distant part of the world where almost every day has gone by with a longing eye on the day of return, is an entirely satisfying experience. But to come home, as I did, with a store of valuable information concerning the lands of my sojourn, and with apparently unlimited possibilities of applying that to commercial advantage, the whole of Europe in those days being clamorous for South American markets and offering golden rewards to those who could show the way to acquire them, was still more heartening.

Apart from the writing of *The Argentine Through English Eyes*, which I looked upon more as a diversion than a piece of business, I was speedily involved in all sorts of negotiations with some of our leading advertising agents, anxious to profit by my advice and fresh experience of the South American Press. There was ample choice of tempting alternatives that promised the most agreeable sort of existence for years to come. I was, however, in no particular hurry to engage myself definitely to any of these, and, above all, I had no intention of resuming my editorial association with Northcliffe.

Eventually, however, in the early summer of 1914, I decided that my chief interest should remain editorial and literary, and the much more lucrative work of publicity I would regard purely as a bye-product. I had an engagement with my friend W. M. Jackson, who provided me with a substantial retainer to prevent my linking up with any other publisher interested in the South American field. I began to compile for him a large work to be produced from the start in Spanish and to be called *El Mundo y Sus Pueblos*, in the production of which I was to co-operate with the celebrated Spanish-American author Rubén Darío and the well-known Spanish journalist Gomez Carillo, husband of Raquel Meller. I had, indeed, gone some little way in laying the plans of this work and to this day have in my possession some of the introductory articles written by these two collaborators.

Not content with this, I also entered into a contract with the Amalgamated Press, through my old colleague Sutton, who was now the acting head of the business, Northcliffe having begun the policy which in a year or two he carried to extremes, of withdrawing himself as figure head from the boards of his principal companies. An old scheme of

mine, which the Chief years before had thought a good one, was to select and arrange the thousand best stories of all times and all countries. A large order! But I always liked tackling big things. Sutton gave me a very good contract to get ahead with this undertaking at my convenience.

I also undertook and carried through in those tranquil days of 1914 a revised edition of the *Harmsworth History of the World*, which I produced in fifteen volumes for the Educational Book Company and which was actually passing through the press when that fatal shot was fired at Serajevo, so that I was able to include in the last volume a brief account of the circumstances which brought to an end the pleasant old world wherein I had the good fortune to spend my youth and early manhood.

The summer of 1914 was a particularly fine one. We had enjoyed months of sunny weather when the day of war came. Those who recall that time will remember that the earliest fighting took place amongst the golden corn-fields of Belgium.

In an instant some undefinable beauty seemed to have gone out of the world. To attempt to picture in any detail the confusion that prevailed or to recapture one's impressions of that bewildering time is not necessary to my present purpose, and I am attempting no more than to recall such details as I think essential to the colour of my narrative. Confusion and numbness, cocksureness and fear, patriotism, race-hatred, panic and a brave show of calmness. I had a literary assistant who used to shed a tear when he heard of the Germans, for whom he had a great cultural admiration, being killed in substantial numbers in the earliest engagements, though he seemed much less concerned as to the number of Frenchmen that went below and still less about the poor Belgians.

I am afraid that I was as anti-German as any among the mobs that applauded the patriotic singers in the music-halls. And although a year before the outbreak of the War I had written from South America to my wife at home to advise her of certain things to do in the event of Germany declaring war against us—it was a constant source of discussion out there—I was as little prepared for what eventually happened as if I had been living on another planet. Chiefly, I resented the War because another of my projects at the time was designed to take me to Spain for three or four months in connection with the Spanish encyclopedia, and I had pictured myself in the South American archives of Madrid discovering original sources of information for some of the books which I hoped to write on the Incas and the Conquistadores. It was all very irritating, not only to have our lovely summer days disturbed with war but our day-dreams blotted out so rudely!

The London publishers of my Argentine book had set it up, and the whole of it was corrected and some preliminary notices issued before the declaration of war. Robertson Nicoll, to whom I had shown the manuscript, had accepted it at once for his firm and wrote to me, saying: "It is out of all sight the best travel book on the Argentine I have read." I had hoped, therefore, that it would be well advertised and pushed by Hodder & Stoughton in the coming autumn season. Vain hope. All publishers were cutting down their lists to the minimum and hesitating to issue any book of travel or general literature that lacked war interest. *The Argentine Through English Eyes* lay in type for, I think, another two or three years before they ventured to issue it, and when it appeared the world had changed out of recognition. Thus, bang went several months of arduous literary composition, to say nothing of

the trouble of acquiring the information in my South American travels. Fortunately, the American edition published by Dodd Mead & Co., suffered no delay from the outbreak of war and was published there in the autumn of 1914 under the title of *The Real Argentine*, with quite satisfactory results.

I may mention here that I had originally intended Heinemann to be the publisher of the English edition, and that he had agreed to produce it. He warned me, however, that I should never be able to show my face in Buenos Aires again if I wouldn't modify some of the opinions to which I gave expression. This I refused to do, for the simple reason that I felt the time had come for some plain speaking about the literary exploitation of the South American republics.

In those days there was a class of propagandists who made good livings out of writing books about South American countries, boasting their wonderful mineral resources, their illimitable agricultural possibilities, their highly developed civilizations, and generally flattering the politicians and officials. The *modus operandi* was simple. All you required was the necessary funds to make a fairly extensive tour of the ten republics, interview the officials who had charge of the propaganda, express to them your admiration of their country, and particularly of their genius in developing it, and undertake to write a descriptive masterpiece, well stuffed with photographs, which you would get published in London and circulated as propaganda. There was either hard cash forthcoming to enable you to publish your book and leave a substantial margin in hand, or a firm order for some thousands of copies at a high price, which copies would lie for years and rot in dusty store-rooms at official headquarters.

I had seen so much of this sort of "literature" in my South American investigations, that I determined to have a try at truth and produce a book which was entirely free from the taint of official propaganda. Heinemann knew that ready money was to be found in the elaborately produced works of pure puffery, and as I fancy he had already published one of these, he was a little alarmed at the frankness of my book. He was, however, prepared to stick to his word and issue it. But I was not particularly anxious that anyone lacking enthusiasm for the book should be its publisher. That is why I got the manuscript back and sent it to Robertson Nicoll, with the result recorded.

Thousands of plans and schemes and projects throughout the world, which had looked good and certain of success in July, 1914, were no more than the debris of broken hopes before the end of the next month. It was clear to me that I should quickly have to make my plans anew. All sorts of agreements and contracts instantly became null and void. I held one with my friend Jackson, who, as luck would have it, was aboard the *Kronprinzessin Cecilie*, a German liner which had set out from America with a large consignment of gold for Germany and had an exciting time in the North Atlantic before regaining the sanctuary of American waters. It was impossible, therefore, to consult him, and assuming that our contract would have to become another scrap of paper as events developed, I realized that Fate had booked me for Northcliffe after all!

XXII

THE War was in its second week, I think, when I rang up Sutton and suggested that he should arrange for me to edit and produce immediately a weekly record of events. We discussed it over luncheon at the Automobile Club, and we taxied along to Fleetway House and re-discussed it with Lord Rothermere. It transpired that five or six days before I put up my proposition, they had decided to bring out a weekly record at sixpence, similar in every way to *With the Flag to Pretoria*, which they had published as a fortnightly, and with very great profit, during the Boer War. One of the staff editors had been told to get ahead with this, so that my suggestion came a few days late. But I saw no reason why they should not also publish a weekly pictorial record at twopence, and urged that idea.

Although no decision was reached, beyond the fact that Rothermere approved, another director, my wise old colleague A. E. Linforth, said to me: "Never mind details, you go and get on with your paper and bring it out as quickly as you can." Together we hunted round Fleetway House, that beautiful new home of the Amalgamated Press which had been built and opened during my absence in South America, and we managed by a bit of quick manœuvring to get two rooms freed so that I could begin work forthwith.

That very afternoon I had already secured two or three assistants, had fixed the size of the new paper, type, format, style of blocks, every detail, and next day I was well away with the compilation of the first number. To cut short what might be made a long and not unprofitable story, by dint of working till two or three in the morning and with

the enthusiastic co-operation of the chiefs of the various technical departments, I was at press with number one little more than 48 hours after my talk with Rothermere and Sutton. In fact, by the time that Sutton had confirmed the order to go ahead I was half-way through with the job! Realizing that time was the essence of the contract, in a fever of energy I had almost got ahead of time.

These were truly great days. Even now at a distance of eighteen years I can still recall the thrill of them. All who were associated with me in that undertaking worked like demons, and eighteen hours on end at our desks left none of us with a grumble.

The publication which I produced in this characteristically Harmsworthian manner I called *The War Illustrated*. Although it was sold at twopence per copy, in material value it was essentially a penny weekly, the double price being charged because it consisted as to eighty-five per cent of its contents of expensively produced illustrations, its avowed purpose being to provide "a weekly picture-record of events by land, sea and air". Something of the extraordinary success which attended the first number I attributed to the fact that I had the good sense to secure from H. G. Wells a brilliant article on "Why Britain Went to War". No fewer than thirteen other publications of the same kind appeared within a day or two of the production of *The War Illustrated*—only two of them lasted to the end of the War—and I heard from newsagents that many thousands of mine were sold to purchasers who inquired for "the war paper with Wells's article".

That article of his was a very fine investment for the A.P. I gave him what he asked for it—we negotiated by telegraph—£50, and as I sold the American copyright in a day or two for approximately that amount he obviously

didn't ask too much. Indeed, when in later numbers of *The War Illustrated* he demanded up to £100 for an article of the same length—about 1,500 words—it was willingly paid, and I think I may say that in all my editorial experience no contributor ever wrote for me at a more reasonable rate than H. G. Wells, having regard to the “pulling power” of his contributions.

A music-hall song called “It's a Long Way to Tipperary” had for a few months before the War been enjoying some slight popularity because of its somewhat haunting refrain. When the first drafts of the British Expeditionary Force set out for France some of the Tommies took to singing this as they marched, and in a few days it had attained to an amazing popularity. The words of the song were quite without distinction, the melody commonplace, but there was just that elusive “something” in the chorus that appealed to everybody, and within a week or two of the outbreak of the War it had become almost as familiar, and as revered, as our national anthem.

The music of the song was published at sixpence by Feldman in Arthur Street, and I went up there to see if the publisher would let me print it as a page in number two or number three of *The War Illustrated*. I was particularly interested to find myself in his office, as ten years before I had spent some hours in the same place with my friend Evelyn Wrench, who used the building as the headquarters of the great picture postcard business which he had established soon after leaving Eton, but eventually gave up without the fortune he had expected to derive from it.

Feldman was very friendly, but uncertain. He would and he wouldn't. He was terrified that the publication of the song in *The War Illustrated* might mean the equivalent loss of song sheets in his sales. That certainly would have

been a disaster to him, considering that our sales were on the three-quarter million mark every week. I could get him to name no figure that approached the bounds of reason, but he did offer to let me reproduce in facsimile a portion of the original score which he handled as a holy thing and which he told me he had destined for the British Museum. Above all he was anxious that I should observe his own contribution to the composition, which I gathered was the secret of its wide-spread popularity. In the original draft the writer of the song had written merely: "It's a long way to Tipperary, it's a long way to go." But the publisher, with that true poetic inspiration which we may attribute to the artistic temperament of his race, saw that what was quite ordinary so written became at once irresistible by the addition of another "long", so that the line should read: "It's a long, long way to Tipperary." Feldman's honest belief in his having thus secured immortality for an otherwise ordinary composition was delicious to behold. So far as I remember, the negotiations ended where they began, and *The War Illustrated* did not profit by my visit to Arthur Street.

The circulation of the first number of my twopenny war weekly, which I see on referring to a file copy is dated for the week ending August 22nd, 1914, attained to over three-quarters of a million, and those who know the profits on such publications can judge of the vital importance to the Amalgamated Press of such an addition to its publications at a time of unparalleled crisis, when the directors were holding hurried conferences on the problem of financially weathering the storm of the War. The total circulation of that one publication during the four years and a half that I ran it amounted to 75,124,500 copies, of which a great many millions were sold at 3d., the price having to be put

up as the cost of materials rose with the progress of the War. The firm must have derived from it a total profit of something like a quarter of a million pounds. Most of the leading writers of the day contributed at my invitation to its pages and, in looking over the contents of the nine complete volumes to which it extended, I find myself once more confirmed in the opinion that the best journalistic work is done under pressure. For in the 234 weekly numbers of *The War Illustrated* there is astonishingly little change in appearance between number one and number 234.

One feels justified in entering into some detail concerning this particular publication, not only because it brought me back to the Harmsworth fold, whence I was never again to stray, but because of the circumstances of its production. I have narrated these exactly as they occurred. They were typical of the loose and haphazard method which prevailed throughout the whole of Northcliffe's regime. He knew no more about the production of this extremely important addition to the wealth-earning properties of his firm than any outsider, until he received a copy of the first number when it was ready for the bookstalls. Only then did he discover that I had "come back".

The Chief lost no time in sending for me and in renewing our friendship by taking me to lunch somewhere. When you bring a man a gift—and it was an absolute gift which I brought to the Amalgamated Press—that is going to be worth a princely fortune to him, it is difficult to imagine him other than anxious to give you a pat on the back. I did not remind him that there was a day some nine years earlier when he had said to me that I was not worth the £2,000 a year I was making. But I was foolish enough not to feed fat upon the success I had brought to him and demand a much larger share of profits than I received. I

stupidly offered to be content with the standard commission which Carmelite House editors used to receive on their circulations, namely, 1/- per thousand copies, calculated upon the published price of a penny, which in the case of *The War Illustrated* brought me 2/- per thousand. I felt at the beginning, when I was drawing about £70 a week for editing this twopenny periodical, that I was not too badly paid, but now I believe that had I asked for double, and insisted upon it, I should have got it and should have been the more esteemed. To draw a total of about £8,000 for creating a profit of £250,000 is not very good business. Twenty thousand wouldn't have been a penny too much.

XXIII

AS the reader may have gathered in the course of my narrative, Northcliffe was continually making arrangements with contributors and editors, even to the point of engaging "assistants" (and possibly "successors") for editors who knew nothing about such transactions until they were accomplished facts. On a day in 1915 I heard his voice on the phone: "That you, Hammerton? Listen. I am sending over to you a man named Hannen Swaffer. You don't know him. But he's a very good man. Make a fine assistant editor for you. I want you to take him on at once." It happened that I was not requiring an assistant, and I immediately replied to that effect, whereupon he persisted: "You must see him. He's a good man. You can always do with a good assistant. He'll do good work for you. I'm sending him over. Take him on." This was the nearest he ever came to providing me with any member of my staff, so that personally I never knew the discomfort

of having to accept a colleague who was not my own absolute choice.

At that time I had heard vaguely of Swaffer. Years before, we must have worked under the same roof without ever encountering each other. What I had heard about his alleged idiosyncracies did not fill me with enthusiasm for the Chief's choice, and left me doubtful of his pulling full weight in my editorial team. Therefore, as soon as the Chief was off the 'phone, I rang up Sutton, who undertook to intercept Swaffer and explain to him that I was in no need of assistance and that there was the probability he and I might not get on too well, if I were to do as the Chief had instructed me. I have often wondered what might have happened had Swaffer joined up with me on *The War Illustrated* and *The Great War*. There never was a moment of doubt as to my absolute liberty of action in the conduct of both of these extraordinarily successful publications. The Chief never interfered with any editor who was running successes.

What Swaffer did on finding that, despite Northcliffe's assurance of a job for him at Fleetway House, there was no immediate opening, I do not know, but it was not many months after this that Northcliffe showed his faith in Swaffer and his accurate appreciation of that journalist's uncommon ability by appointing him editor of the *Sunday Dispatch*. I do not think that at any time in the history of that paper it has been better edited than under Hannen Swaffer. I had never taken any interest in it before, but the freshness of its contents under his direction and the adroitness with which he achieved a sort of sensationalism that never slopped over into silliness, made me put it on my Sunday list.

Why he eventually ceased to edit it I do not remember,

but I do know that from the day he took it up it became a paper with a new individuality, and I hailed him then and now as a really brilliant editor. Northcliffe's faith in him at a time when, according to current accounts, faith was necessary, must be put to the credit side of the Chief when considering his perception of character—in which I have always maintained his wrong judgements far outweighed his right ones. It is odd that in all my thirty-two years in Fleet Street, of which all but seven have been spent in the Harmsworth service, I have never yet met Hannen Swaffer, and we have no more than spoken to each other by telephone.

But it was really of another journalist and author that I had intended to write in touching upon the Chief's habit of fixing terms and agreements with contributors and members of the staff without consulting any of the editors who might be concerned. W. L. George, a novelist who had something of a vogue for a few years and who, like so many that had made a name in the literary world, sought to journalize profitably in the columns of the *Daily Mail*, persuaded Northcliffe that he was "the man he needed"—he was always needing that man—to bring new brightness to "page four".

For a time W. L. George's name as a contributor was freely splashed about, and a good many of his articles, rather thin both in matter and manner, had a prominence which they scarcely deserved. As the author of *A Bed of Roses* and other novels which at that time had a strong sex appeal, although to-day they would be as innocuous, by comparison with the latest sex fiction, as the works of Annie S. Swan, he was supposed to be a great feminist. He posed as having made deep study of feminine character and as being informed on all activities of the new world

of women. I, therefore, invited him to write a series of articles for *The War Illustrated*, dealing particularly with women's activities in the War, on which I assumed he would be well informed.

When he came up to discuss the proposed series I found him, to my surprise, profoundly ignorant of all the significant features of women's war work; so much so, indeed, that for each of the proposed articles I had to supply him with the bulk of the material he wrote up. That, however, is by the way; what matters is the fact that when we spoke of payment and I proposed to him something like five or six guineas per thousand words, at that time considered a fair recompense for such journalistic work, he said: "Sorry, I cannot take anything less than eight guineas per thousand. That is my absolute minimum, and it was not fixed by me. The Chief" (any outside contributor to a Harmsworth paper very soon came to talk about Northcliffe as the Chief, as it gave an impression of an intimacy not always real), "the Chief," he went on, "told me that I was never to take less than eight guineas a thousand from any of his publications." To which I replied: "Well, if the Chief said that I shall penalize him by paying it to you, but I'll be frank and tell you that I don't think your copy is worth that rate of payment to me."

George was not in the least peeved, but rather amused, at my idea of "penalizing" Northcliffe by paying what was a very substantial newspaper rate fifteen years ago. I do not think that he continued in the favour of the Chief for many months beyond the writing of this set of articles, and the columns of the *Mail* became as closely barred to him as at one time they had been open. Like most novelists, he had a good conceit of himself and, feeling aggrieved, in a year or two he made Northcliffe the subject of a novel,

Caliban, which had a very considerable success, particularly in America, where I remember seeing it featured in hundreds of bookshop windows between Quebec, Chicago and New York in 1920.

The character of Northcliffe as depicted by W. L. George in *Caliban*, is not altogether a burlesque, although here and there the reader might think that the story verged on caricature; particularly where Bulmer, the editor and proprietor of the *Daily Gazette*, determines that he will show the Government how to carry on a successful war and builds a submarine at his own expense to demonstrate the practicability of the advice administered in his editorial columns. George had a very shrewd idea of Northcliffe's psychology, and, although the book is written with malice and bitterness, I do not think that we are ever likely to have a deliberate study of the Northcliffe psychology that will come nearer to the truth than that which is to be found in *Caliban*. On the whole, I rather liked W. L. George, and he certainly had a lightness of touch in fiction which would have enabled him to maintain a position among best-sellers for many a year, but he died rather suddenly during a lecture tour in the United States in January, 1926.

One had always to be prepared for unexpected visitors sent over by the Chief, and it was comic to observe the importance they attached to themselves when they came thus fortified with his authority to force themselves upon an editor's attention. In the early days of *The War Illustrated* when it was still selling somewhere in the neighbourhood of three quarters of a million weekly at twopence, John Raphael, a bright and pushful Jew who had made a reputation as a Paris correspondent and with whom, years before, I had been a colleague on *The Bystander*, had written one or two short sketches in the *Daily Express*, somewhat on the

lines of Alphonse Daudet's thumb-nails of the Franco-Prussian war, but (perhaps!) not just as good. They were not bad, however, if rather trifling.

Harassed as Northcliffe was with his multifarious interests all suddenly become more important and difficult to control, he still had patience to listen to Raphael, who had somehow got access to him, seeking an engagement to write a series of such sketches. The Chief sent him to me. He did not know that Raphael had been for many years a violent anti-Harmsworth journalist, and in the days of *Everybody's Weekly* had actually refused to write for me unless he received special fees and money in advance. Because I was unable to see him for five or ten minutes after his arrival at Fleetway House, Raphael made a great fuss and demanded to know why Lord Northcliffe had sent him. I enlightened him by saying that probably the Chief hoped to do him and me a good turn, but that I doubted the likelihood of his (Raphael's) assertion that one of his sketches per week would "double the circulation" of *The War Illustrated*, although I would willingly have paid him £200 for a thousand words each week if he could have increased the circulation regularly by three quarters of a million weekly. He was less truculent when he left my room than when he entered it and he never wrote for *The War Illustrated*.

XXIV

THE sixpenny war weekly, which had been started a few days before my proposing *The War Illustrated*, made its appearance about a week earlier than my first number. It was entitled *The Great War* and its object was to provide a much more detailed account of events than was

possible in a publication that depended for its interest mainly on illustrations. H. W. Wilson, the brilliant military critic of the *Daily Mail*, was its titular editor. Beyond writing much of the literary matter and suggesting the subjects for treatment, he did not concern himself with the editorial details, which were left to one of the Fleetway men.

And here must be recorded a curious matter. The office editor found himself short of material to fill the entire 32 pages which had been agreed upon as the size of *The Great War*. He was four pages short! So it came about that, with the issue of Part I, the established size of the publication was 28 large octavo pages. As *The Great War* ran to 272 weekly numbers and reached a total sale of 41,215,000 copies (some millions of the later numbers being sold at eightpence) there was thus a total saving of no fewer than 164,860,000 printed pages in its production, solely owing to the acting editor's inability to rush up another four pages for Part I. This not very brilliant editorial achievement saved the Amalgamated Press (on present day costs, which are lower than war-time costs) something like £45,000. A lesson in not giving one's readers too much value for their money.

As it was clear to Sutton that the success of *The War Illustrated* marked me as the man to specialize upon their war publications, with the fourth number of *The Great War* I took it over also and continued to edit it in association with Wilson until the end. In all my editorial experiences I have never had greater satisfaction in collaboration. For Wilson I had then, and retain now, a warm admiration. There is no finer scholar in modern journalism. He is one of the mainstays of the *Daily Mail*. I believe he has been associated with that journal from the very first, and if Alfred

chose him for his post he certainly chose well. Wilson was originally trained for the navy, and this experience was of great use to him when he turned to journalism. His *Iron-clads in Action* was for a generation a standard book, and he has since made important contributions to the naval and military history of the Great War. A man of true erudition, a brilliant linguist, he is in my opinion one of the finest writers of English engaged in journalism to-day.

Throughout the war he was in intimate touch with the chief sources of information, and though something of a pessimist, his inner knowledge of affairs not being conducive to optimism, he never in his writings gave any inkling of his own doubts and fears. In the earliest months of the war he was one of those who were convinced that years of struggle lay ahead of us, when, in common with the multitude, I hoped to be shutting down both of my war journals in a matter of two years! All the time that Wilson could spare from his very exacting and trying duties as military and naval critic of the *Daily Mail* he gave to writing for *The Great War*. I could never have enough of his contributions. They were more interesting to me than any novel and they were invariably written in the most virile and polished English. Those were great days, "H.W.!" And though we are both glad, I am sure, that they are long since past, we should be sorry if they were forgotten.

Pleasant, indeed, it is to recall that old association of ours. When I took over the actual editorship of *The Great War*, Wilson insisted that our joint names should appear on the publication, and I am pleased to think that the thirteen massive tomes which I edited and which contain an unrivalled collection of contemporary description of the greatest events in the modern history of the world bear my name along with that of my amiable colleague. It is years

since we have met, although we are daily at work within a few hundred yards of each other.

When I reflect on the immense circulation of these journals which it was my privilege to control throughout the duration of the war and for some way into the era of so-called peace, I am inclined to ask if any single individual was responsible for more "propaganda" than I provided in these alone. The official propaganda was costly beyond credence, but all this immense body of attractively produced contemporary record and criticism represented by these two war journals was supplied to the country at not a penny of cost to taxpayers; indeed, we had to pay the government thousands of pounds to use its photographs, which the comic official propagandists were shipping in thousands to foreign newspapers free of charge! Many of these, by the way, went to South American newspapers, which were opposed to the Allies, and they were often published with lying inscriptions to belittle the British effort. A former clerk at Carmelite House—a gentleman of foreign origin—was put in charge of the bureau of War Photographs and received a knighthood for this onerous job. Being of Army age, he secured a commission in a Dominion unit, which somehow allowed him to stay at home, go about in khaki, and get on with his own office work. How I used to dislike walking along Fleet Street with him when men from the trenches had to salute his military get-up! I never had a word of official thanks for my work—you see it was, as Arnold Bennctt would have said, "commercial"—but, on the contrary, had many a tussle with jacks-in-office to be allowed to publish such news and comment as I thought fit to print. There were others who did benefit disproportionately from my work, both financially and otherwise. But I did not repine, as I deemed it a piece of good fortune to have the

opportunity of doing the work itself and that was my ample reward.

My recompense for editing *The Great War* was absurdly inadequate, having regard to the colossal profits that publication must have earned. At first I received ten pounds per weekly part and at no time more than twenty. On the specious plea that I did not "originate" the publication, it was excluded from my royalty agreement. Had I been paid at the modest royalty rate I was getting on *The War Illustrated*, I should have drawn a total payment on *The Great War* of not less than £14,000. I didn't get £4,000, and yet I have heard it rumoured that I am a shrewd business man! ("Scotch, you know.") Others were nippy enough to enrich themselves out of my work and yet I did not grumble, but ten years after the War, and when Kennedy Jones was dead, I learned with resentment and surprise that that astute money-maker had put in a claim for a royalty on the ground that *The Great War* was inspired by *With the Flag to Pretoria*, a publication which he had "originated" in the Boer War. And he got it! Probably more than I got.

This unblushing demand of K. J.'s followed, I feel sure, a conversation we had one night on a bench at Highgate Railway Station when he asked me how *The Great War* was doing. On my telling him he exclaimed: "The profits must simply be colossal! I must have a talk to Alfred about it." The profits on my work during all the years that Sir George Sutton was in command were always a jealously guarded secret at which I could only guess. But on the rare occasions a loss was incurred I was frequently reminded of it and the figures were willingly at my disposal. That's "business", I suppose. But I had the fun of editing and that has ever been worth more than money to me.

A thought about K. J. occurs to me here. To many who knew both, Kennedy Jones seemed the better to retain a sense of values, despite the large successes with which he had been identified, than did the Chief. He was deemed harder-headed, immensely less emotional, and clear witted as to the factors which had brought him to success. He certainly did not so readily give the impression as Northcliffe did, especially in his later phase, that he looked upon himself as capable of almost any conceivable achievement. And yet, for all his Scottish canniness, a particular bee buzzed in his bonnet. When he eventually cut his long connection with the *Daily Mail* and went into the world of business bent on making the firm of Waring and Gillow a great commercial success—a task of which he speedily tired and to which he brought no sort of specialized ability—he told me that he had made up his mind to win the Derby, and having become member of parliament for the division in which I then had my home, he confessed that he had even half made up his mind to become the leader of his party!

But he delegated to his son the doing of the things which he himself would have achieved had he set his mind to them earlier. These were: (1) to become editor of *The Times*, (2) Prime Minister of England and (3) win the Derby. He seemed quite serious when he talked like this and indeed he appeared to be quite serious when I met him the day after he returned from a visit to Russia, where he had had the opportunity of interviewing the Tsar at Tsarskoyë Selo and assured me that he was the only man in England who knew when the War would end! Not even this hard-headed Scot had escaped the affliction which attacks so many men to whom success comes easily. Was his another case of *la folie de la grandeur*, differing from that of the Chief in

degree rather than in kind? I saw his son not long ago playing golf with some dexterity, but those three achievements which his father assigned him to are still, I suspect, some way ahead.

XXV

WHEN it was eventually decided that *The War Illustrated* had fulfilled its function as a pictorial record of the period, the problem of continuing it as a regular weekly pictorial gave us a great deal of concern. It seemed to have established itself with a very large public as an acceptable weekly journal, and at number 234, which appeared on February 8th, 1919, its net sales at threepence per week still represented the greater part of 200,000. To close down a publication with so large and profitable a sale seemed bad business, although all were agreed that to continue indefinitely publishing a journal with such a title in the years of peace was scarcely possible. Many ingenious alternatives were proposed and dismissed.

My own scheme, which I still think would have succeeded, was to continue to run the publication on precisely the lines that had proved so popular and merely to change its title to *Our Times Illustrated*. Unfortunately, in my experiments, I had produced a dummy with the tentative title of *The New Illustrated*, and this so attracted our directors that I was urged to plan it as a weekly paper of general reading, conducted on such lines as would bring in the advertisers who, throughout most of the run of *The War Illustrated*, had been excluded from its pages because of the scarcity of paper, the increased cost of which gobbled up most of the revenue that would have been received from advertisements. I decided on a compromise. And failed.

Compromises in periodical publishing usually do fail.

Under the title of *The New Illustrated* I produced a weekly with a greatly increased number of pages, including a good many advertisements, and printed an inner section called *Our Times Illustrated* which I designed as a weekly pictorial record of the after years just as *The War Illustrated* had chronicled the War years. We had a big send off with the first number. I got Northcliffe to provide a much discussed article on Lloyd George, in which the ideas and opinions expressed were his own, though it was written by another hand.

Although the sale immediately doubled, the general public, curiously obtuse and never responsive to a divided appeal, did not take to the idea of a journal one half of which was of ephemeral interest and the rest of it of permanent value. The downward curve of sales was steep. Very soon I lost all interest in it, another editor was allowed to struggle with it for a year or so and then it was incorporated with some other periodical. There is, I think, only one classic instance of a war paper continuing afterwards as a successful journal and that is *The Illustrated London News*. *The Great War* went on for some time longer than *The War Illustrated*, as the information which it contained was always much behind that of the brief and newsy contents of its junior companion, and fortunately the lack of support for *The New Illustrated* prevented my bothering about any scheme for continuing to cater for the better class public which, to the extent of well-nigh 100,000 a week, were still in the autumn of 1919 paying eightpence per copy for *The Great War*. I had other and more ambitious literary projects in hand. In any case these two publications had well served the specific purpose for which they had been created.

One important result of the success of *The War Illustrated* was that it confirmed Lord Rothermere in his intention to start a Sunday companion to the *Daily Mirror*. "What are you doing now with *The War Illustrated*?" he asked me one day in the winter of 1914. I told him. "Wonderful," he said. "Don't tell anyone." Note the shrewd commercial mind at work. Shout at the top of your voice about the circulation of the *Mail* or the *Mirror*, but be mum about *The War Illustrated*. It didn't carry advertising, so that its circulation was a matter for its proprietors only. But the fact that I had found a public of three-quarters of a million for *The War Illustrated* at two-pence decided him that the hour had arrived for launching his *Sunday Pictorial*, the first number of which appeared as a penny journal in March, 1915, and started with a circulation of one million.

Rothermere in those days would seem to have set some value on my opinion, for he asked me to act as private critic of the first four numbers of the *Pictorial*. But although I was thus admitted to his confidence in the critical stages of one of the most lucrative journalistic enterprises ever known, it never occurred to me to ask to be allotted a few shares. Yet that was all I need have done in order to pick up a fortune. Years later I learned with amazement from Gilbert Godley, the advertisement manager of the *Mirror*, that he had asked for fifty and got them. His fifty pounds on the day he told me this were worth about £34,000. Randall Charlton, the gossip writer of the *Mirror*, I was told, got a hundred and sold them for a thousand pounds! If he had been patient he could have got about £70,000 for them. Rothermere literally handed fortunes away—to those that asked. Perhaps the best turn he ever did me was to refuse to allot me any shares in Northcliffe Newspapers.

The only time I ever asked him for any! I have lost some thousands of pounds by buying *Daily Mirror* shares on "inside information". But I have ever been the unluckiest of investors, not merely letting fortunes slip from my grasp, but actually losing several times over, ten thousand or more which I had earned by hard work. Anyhow I had the sport of earning it.

XXVI

MY scheme for a collection of the best short stories had been approved, as I think I have mentioned, by Northcliffe years before I left for South America. As I had elaborated it on my return it was a very attractive proposal for the Educational Book Company, who readily entered into an agreement with me for its production. Indeed I had made fair progress with it before the War broke out. It involved the co-operation of a board of critics, among whom were Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, Sir Edmund Gosse, Richard le Gallienne, Professor Saintsbury, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Sir Frederick Wedmore, Brander Matthews and several other English and American critics of note. The production of this immense anthology would have been a big enough job at any time, but as it eventually had to be worked out during the War years, when the difficulties of arranging numerous copyrights and securing copies of the stories selected for inclusion were greatly increased by postal irregularities, especially in dealing with foreign publishers and authors, I sometimes wonder how I ever contrived to get the twenty large volumes together, working on them almost single-handed.

As luck would have it, I had secured all the German stories, which were to make two volumes out of the twenty,

before the War broke out. I had even had them set in type. But the publishers were against my including anything German when the collection came to be issued some time in 1920. Eventually I made a concession to a not unnatural prejudice of the time by withholding the stories by living German authors (selected and translated at considerable trouble and expense) and giving only those that were hallowed by time in a volume which I labelled "Old German". This, of course, greatly increased my difficulties and sorely tried my ingenuity, but in the end I got over all the hurdles, and the *Masterpiece Library of Short Stories* (as the work was finally entitled) had a substantial success, ten thousand of the twenty-volume sets being sold in a very short time at about double the price originally fixed for the set, owing to the immense increase in material costs.

I look back upon this particular work of mine as the forerunner of the numerous collections of short stories which have been issued since the War. Until its appearance it had been a maxim in the publishing business that collections of short stories (Kipling always excepted) did not sell. Perhaps the fact that my anthology of a thousand sold to the extent of 200,000 hefty volumes in a year or so encouraged the ordinary publishers to venture with single volume collections, of which scores are now in existence.

Most of my scanty leisure during the War years was devoted to the reading and selecting of the stories, and hunting for substitutes for the suggestions which came from my colleagues of the editorial board, several of whom, while very helpful with their advice, were inclined to forget the limitations I had set, namely that each story should be about 3,000 words in length. Many a time, after weeks of hunting and correspondence with France, Italy or America, I would get a copy of a story, which Professor Saintsbury or

Edmund Gosse had read many years before and thought I should include, only to find that the wretched thing was fifteen or eighteen thousand words in length and quite inadmissible!

In the early days of the War, when I was having difficulties with some of the foreign volumes of *The Masterpiece Library* I was lunching at the old Café Royal with my friend Heinemann, the publisher, and Henry Davray, the eminent French litterateur who had come to London in connection with the French propaganda, and with whom subsequently I have had many pleasant relations. I happened to mention my difficulties to Heinemann who good-naturedly suggested that, whenever I found it difficult to obtain some foreign story, I should turn to some of his collections of Continental literature for an alternative and always to make use of his copyright translations of any stories I wanted rather than trouble to have them translated anew. As my work progressed I took full advantage of Heinemann's offer and when it was ready to publish my *Masterpiece Library* contained something like twenty-seven stories reprinted from books in his catalogue.

When the whole twenty volumes had been printed, and a large part of the edition of five thousand sets actually bound, I sent to Heinemann, in the clearing up of a somewhat complicated job, a cheque in payment of his copyright translations included in the anthology. You can imagine my amazement when I got a letter from him returning the cheque, denying all knowledge of our arrangement, and utterly refusing permission, the amount of the cheque in his opinion being absurdly out of proportion to the value of the copyrights used. Consternation at the Educational Book Company. It was impossible to delete these 27 stories from the collection. That would have involved vital altera-

tions to the contents of eleven or twelve volumes and the destruction of many thousands of bound copies. But, knowing my man, I assured my colleagues that all would be right by 12 o'clock next day. I immediately telephoned Heinemann, made an appointment with him for half past ten next morning, and counselled him to be calm, assuring him that he had made a very foolish mistake.

Now I sincerely liked Heinemann—Jew though he was—and I was entirely confident that I would bring him to earth, but it meant playing the cards somewhat delicately, as he was unaware of the fact that the whole first edition of the work was printed and some two or three thousand sets actually bound in a very expensive way. I do not think I have ever enjoyed an interview more. It was a battle of wits, and the Jew did not win! He began excitedly, stamping up and down his room, waving his arms in that peculiarly Jewish way, and asserting that he was going to put a stop to people using his copyrights.

"I have just made the Oxford University Press pay through the nose for using three hundred lines of Swinburne," he said. "And Swinburne is my property!"

"Come, come, Heinemann," I retorted, "don't talk about Swinburne as your 'property'. It sounds horrible to me."

By urging the unreasonableness of his position and getting him to recall our discussion and the arrangement, of which Henry Davray had been a witness, I got him to say "But you are now asking me to do what no other publisher in London would entertain for one moment." Hereupon I took from my pocket a receipt from Messrs. Methuen and Co. in respect to approximately the same number of copyrights at only a slightly higher fee. I also presented him with a receipt from his own firm for the first of the 27 stories I had used, which had been paid by some fortunate error

several years in advance of the completion of the work and upon which the payment I had made to him was based. He was confounded. And now he began to argue that the amount wasn't enough, whereupon I increased it by some £20 or £30 and came away with the whole extraordinary affair amicably settled.

Northcliffe's "Never trust a Jew" was in my mind all the time, but I was not without a certain satisfaction in feeling that, when it came to close quarters with one, a spot of Scotch blood in one's veins did count for something. It would have cost my publishers about a thousand pounds to have deleted the Heinemann copyrights from the collection, so that their satisfaction when I reported my success was deeply felt. Of course it has to be remembered that from the first I had acted in all good faith and in accordance with an arrangement made, but which, in the stress of the War years, Heinemann had no doubt forgotten.

Were I writing at large of my own adventures in Fleet Street without regard to the dominating figure of Northcliffe, I could dwell, in what I think would be an interesting way, upon my experiences in connection with the production of this *Masterpiece Library*, but I must confine myself to one other instance of the difficulties I had to encounter. I had wished to include two stories by Arnold Bennett, one of which extended to some 4,000 words and the other barely turned a thousand. The name of the first I have forgotten, but the second I remember. It was entitled "The Idiot".

Bennett had an agent for whom I had a long-lingering antipathy but I went to see him when I knew exactly which stories by living writers I required. This agent represented some half-dozen of the authors whose work I wished to include. I submitted to him a list of their stories and stated

the terms I was prepared to pay—a nominal fee in view of the extent of the selection—to which he seemed entirely agreeable. With surprising rapidity, however, I received a letter from him saying that he had heard from Mr. This and Mr. That and they would each require a larger fee. In the case of Arnold Bennett, he suggested twenty guineas for the use of each story. Quite obviously he had not allowed for the difference in value between a story of 4,000 words and one of 1,000 words, or he would surely have differentiated between them. So I wrote direct to Bennett, whom I knew slightly, and told him that, as I did not wish to be identified with the title of his second story, I had refused his agent's proposal and, if he were to confirm the fee suggested by the agent, I should have to omit both of his stories.

Bennett replied that he thought his agent had done as much as he ought to have done in naming a "nominal fee". "Yours is a commercial undertaking," he wrote, "and I think these are commercial prices." I retorted that while it was true mine was in the main a commercial enterprise, my estimate of the value of his stories was *nil* so far as the sale of the finished collection was concerned. In other words, I would undertake that as many copies of the *Master-piece Library* would be sold without Arnold Bennett's stories as with them and that I should have much pleasure in proving this to him.

The fact that two large editions of this twenty-volume set were sold and that Arnold Bennett was not included in it was an effective "commercial" reply, but all the same it did not please me as a literary editor. An editor who is heart and soul in his work is always ready to subordinate the commercial. But when an author and his agent definitely take their stand upon the same ground as an ironmonger or a pork-butcher, one has to meet them thereon and administer

the requisite rebuff to their pride. All editors of experience are well aware that there is hardly any famous living author who, as an item in a collection, let it be a magazine or an anthology, will make a difference on sales such as would justify his own "commercial" valuation of his work.

XXVII

ROTHERMERE believed, in common with most of us at Fleetway, that the War would create a great demand on the part of the reading public for maps. Whatever the War was to do it was to teach people geography. I was quite in accord, and we agreed that I should begin organizing a great new world-atlas, which would register all territorial changes caused by the War. I well knew that to undertake the entire production of a big geographical work, the laborious compilation of cartographical data, the drawing of the maps, and their eventual reproduction by whatever process we decided upon, was "a big order", so I suggested as an alternative that it might be well to acquire the control of an existing geographical establishment of long standing with a view to utilizing its resources. Rothermere thought I should examine the possibilities of that proposition forthwith.

After many months of negotiation I was able to report that, on financial terms which he agreed were very reasonable, the control of such a firm was obtainable, but in the proposed agreement there was a clause which left the existing head of this geographical establishment with a determining voice in the editorial decisions. "There's your weak spot," said Rothermere. "You ought to have complete and absolute control, or otherwise you are only going to buy a

bunch of trouble." There were various modifying conditions which I made the most of in arguing the point, but nothing would alter his opinion. At all times a man of his word, he was still willing that the Amalgamated Press should supply the necessary capital if I was prepared to face what he considered to be a high risk of eventual friction. In the end, I withdrew from the scheme, not being prepared to go ahead with an enterprise which involved a very large sum of money and which, in the end, might have brought me no other bouquet than the aforesaid bunch of trouble. Nothing dismayed, however, I undertook to produce an atlas *de novo* and on entirely original lines.

These, indeed, were days of exhilarating enterprise and forward looking to the good time coming after the War! On the top story of Fleetway House I converted a number of rooms into an extremely well-appointed studio and, before long, had a score or more draughtsmen and women tracers at work. We had a strong room on the roof itself for storing our drawings every night, the whole structure elaborately covered with sand-bags, as we were well within the bombing area and had many alarms while the War lasted. None of the employees in this new cartographical department was fit for service in the field, but trouble developed as the war years went on and the government demand for trained map draughtsmen increased, so that I was continually parting with members of the staff and having to find new ones or train women designers from other fields of art work to take their place. *Harmsworth's New Atlas of the World* was the title of the work produced under these war-time conditions. It appeared in June, 1919, as a serial of forty fortnightly parts, and was the first large world-atlas printed directly from colour blocks and not from engraved plates or lithographic drawings. I am

afraid to say what the cost of it was, but I know that all the years of energy and anxiety that went to its making did not in the end bring any money to the Amalgamated Press. Nay, it incurred a loss of some thousands, mainly because it was sold at tenpence instead of a shilling.

We were all wrong in supposing that the war had created a genuine thirst for geographical knowledge either on the part of the home-staying reading public or of those who had engaged in it. Publication of the *Atlas* had been delayed as long as was reasonably possible in order to secure the latest data concerning new frontiers, and it could have been delayed still longer without being any nearer to finality, as minor changes and alterations went on for years and gave the hostile critic opportunities for pointing out that we didn't include the last bit of Czecho-Slovakia added two months ago or some little twist of the Yugo-Slavian frontier, the result of heaven knows what new conference of the powers. I had at least the satisfaction of knowing that Northcliffe was very pleased with the final production of the work, which was, on its technical side at least, as fine a piece of printing as the Amalgamated Press had ever turned out.

One of the novelties which I introduced into the *Atlas* was the utilization of the blank backs of the maps by compiling an immense amount of statistical information concerning all the countries and governments of the world and printing in an attractive way some 3,500 photographs of places of interest.

Any destructive criticism which the *Atlas* afterwards received was based upon some of the few errors which got into these pages. Owing to the confusion of the times in which the work was produced, a photograph supplied with all appearance of accuracy occasionally turned out to be one

of another place remote from that with which the photographic agent had identified it. The *Atlas* really stood upon the excellence of the production and reproduction of its maps, and these I still consider a triumph of the method employed; there has hardly been a word of criticism of them. But I have often wished that I had never bothered to get the 3,500 photographs and compiled all that statistical information, which really involved me in more trouble than the making of the maps, and provided far more opportunities for error and criticism.

XXVIII

IN those days of thrilling activity amidst the distractions of the War, I used to say that we had reversed the old policy, "in times of peace prepare for war", and in time of war we were preparing for peace. For in addition to conducting the two very lucrative war weeklies I have mentioned and entirely apart from the complicated business of the *Atlas*, I had also begun the preparation of an ambitious new work which was to prove itself one of the best money-makers ever produced under the name of Harmsworth: the *Universal Encyclopedia*. If we were all mistaken as to the appetite of the public for maps, we were in no wise mistaken concerning its desire for "universal information". That the War had altered the whole current of our lives, changed the face of the world, and inaugurated a new period of history, with astounding achievements in aeronautics, and many of the sciences, provided a good reason for believing that an entirely new popular encyclopedia could not fail to succeed.

At first I was assisted in the preliminary stages of this

work by one who had more experience than I in the production of encyclopedias: George Sandeman, M.A., the original editor of the first *Harmsworth Encyclopedia* (entirely produced by Nelsons of Edinburgh and issued by the Amalgamated Press under that title in fortnightly parts in 1905). Sandeman, who was a great scholar, was an extraordinary man of singular charm. He tried very hard to make me a Roman Catholic, being himself a zealous convert. But his methods of life were somewhat unsuited to ordinary office discipline. He would come up from some place in the country, where he was staying in a caravan on a heath or common, wearing a thirty shilling "store suit" which fitted him nowhere, with a ruck-sack on his back and a long gnarled staff in his hand, to pursue his editorial work with me at Fleetway! One day he encountered Sir George Sutton in the lift and I was urged to have a sartorial talk with Sandeman, on the ground that the Chief would be displeased if he also chanced to meet him at the office in this unbusiness-like guise. Yet Sandeman was one of the finest scholars I have known, the soul of courtesy, and kindness, a most amiable colleague, and our editorial association was entirely delightful.

One could write a whole book, and not an uninteresting book either, devoted to the story of that Encyclopedia, as it would be in some sort an epitome of a department of literary work which involves the organization of hundreds of contributors and large editorial groups of men and women representing a marvellous diversity of character and attainment. But here I must limit myself to a paragraph or two, especially to Northcliffe's association with the Encyclopedia.

The first number was actually ready before the Chief had heard anything about the enterprise, except in the most casual way. We were going up in the lift one day together

when he asked me to come into his room for a chat, as we had not met each other for a month or so. "And, tell me, what are you doing now?" he said. I told him. "Good idea. If it is well done it ought to go." He was surprised when I told him he would be able to judge as to its being well or badly done when he got a copy of the first number in a day or two.

When he saw the advance copy his enthusiasm was delightful. He immediately began to speak of it as "My Encyclopedia", and he gave me all sorts of counsel as to what I should do about it in view of the fact that his name was associated with it. His advice was good and his criticism of the first number was sound. I entirely agreed with him that we were tending a little to overdo the biographical entries. But his enthusiasm was unbounded and it was really a gesture of approval when he called it "My Encyclopedia", although he had known no more about it a fortnight before than the man in the street. He was extraordinarily helpful in commanding the assistance of the *Daily Mail*, insisting upon the cancellation of some tradesman's order for the front page so that it could be given to "My Encyclopedia" on the day of its appearance, and he even had a very effective article written about it on the editorial page of the *Daily Mail* embellished with a portrait of the editor of the Encyclopedia!

It would be a mild thing to say that the success of *Harmsworth's Universal Encyclopedia* when it appeared in February, 1920, was unprecedented. Its circulation was even beyond the capacity of the great A.P. works. Some five or six outside printing-houses had to co-operate in machining it. The original *Harmsworth Encyclopedia*, with which mine had no connection whatever, not a single line of the Nelson production appearing in it, had been

published in 40 fortnightly parts at 7d. and these, as to their size and format, had set a standard to which many subsequent Harmsworth publications conformed.

The *Universal*, being the first important post-war publication of the A.P., had to set new standards. The immense increase of productional costs, composition, paper, ink, printing, and the very large sums paid for contributions—I had a contributing staff of upwards of 400 specialists—made it necessary to charge a much higher price than the original sevenpence. Sutton, always a champion of cheapness, wanted it to be a shilling, but it was thought that the old selling “slogan” of “a halfpenny a day”, now transformed to “a penny a day” by post-war conditions, was a good one, and so it was agreed that the price should be fourteen pence a copy. The wrappers of the first number were ready for the press with 1/2d. printed upon them, when it struck me one morning, in reading a Spanish paper on my way to the office, that the Spaniards speak of a fortnight as a *quincena* (like the French *quinzaine*), which really means fifteen days, and I thought, Why not make our new fortnightly fifteen pence?

Most of those associated with the publishing side of the Amalgamated Press at that time were in favour of as high a price as possible, and when the editor suggested fifteen pence there was a general agreement that at the last moment I should get all the advertising and the wrappers of the first part altered accordingly. Again at one stroke I produced by this happy thought an extra gross revenue of some £50,000 for the A.P., as I was eventually paid royalties upon a total sale exceeding twelve million fortnightly parts, and a simple sum in multiplication and division will show how much twelve million extra pennies meant, without one farthing of extra outlay. Upwards of four hundred thousand bound

volumes were subsequently sold by the Educational Book Company.

To give the reader a notion of how greatly costs had increased since the pre-war days, I may mention that the actual cost of "authors' corrections" alone paid by the Amalgamated Press to its employees on the run of the Encyclopedia, which extended eventually to 63 fortnightly parts, amounted to more than £12,000. There was, indeed, ample justification for the greatly increased price at which the Encyclopedia was sold, but the immense circulation to which it instantly attained must have meant a magnificent addition to the income of the enterprising publishing house whose liberality and confidence enabled me to create a work of enduring value.

The days in which I was editing the *Universal Encyclopedia* were amongst my happiest. I never grudged the long hours which the fortnightly production involved, very often seeing the whole of my staff away and still remaining at my desk, even on lovely summer evenings, when there was every temptation to be gone. I can remember now with pleasure the frequent strains of a barrel-organ that used to play in Farringdon Street about seven o'clock when I ought to have been miles away at dinner. Among the lasting pleasures of life none offers greater satisfaction in retrospect than the being able to look back upon days of hard but congenial work spent in the making of successes, even when others may have profited grotesquely out of proportion by the work achieved.

XXIX

AMONG the many innovations which Northcliffe had brought to British journalism was the "personal touch". He firmly believed in his editors devoting space to informal chats with their readers. Many times have I had the opportunity of proving the wisdom of this. It is not suggested that in the Harmsworth publications "The Editor's Chat" made its first appearance, but I do suggest that following his lead in *Answers* and in *Comic Cuts*, the editor's corner became a more important feature of Harmsworth publications than of any others, and that it had much to do with establishing them in the affections of their readers.

I can quite well remember, as a youth longing for a journalistic opening, the interest with which I used to read Alfred's own editorial talk in *Answers* and in *Comic Cuts*. I was far less interested in the comic contents of the latter periodical, at that time costing only a halfpenny a week, than in the weekly talk by its editor telling how he was making the paper a success. He would tell his reader that he had been down to Dundee, or Paisley, or some other town in the provinces to get the newsagents to make a good show of *Comic Cuts* and what success had attended his efforts.

Only a few years earlier any journalist would have thought that was preposterous stuff to print, assuming that the reader cared for nothing but the letterpress and illustrations. It was really of a piece with that interest which Alfred sensed from his earliest days in journalism, the interest of learning "how things are done." As a matter of fact, remembering Northcliffe's belief in the Editor's Chat, I even

introduced it with the greatest success in the wrapper pages of *Harmsworth's Universal Encyclopedia*, and I have found there and in many other publications of an encyclopedic nature that the Editor's Chat is almost invariably the first part of the publication to which readers turn.

Alfred realized that the old newspapers and periodicals were lacking in individuality, that their readers had no sense of being in touch with an editor of flesh and blood, and not the least of the factors which made the Harmsworth publications so universally popular was his wisdom in insisting upon his editors conveying something of their own personal feelings to their readers in this natural and effective manner.

Elsewhere in these pages I have mentioned the stupid mistake about Northcliffe's father that appeared in a part of the first edition of the *Universal Encyclopedia*. But the funniest errors were those that I was continually spotting in the proof sheets and those that were caught before they came to my desk. In one case a bright sub-editor had written under a picture of John o' Groat's House the inscription "Hotel and cottage near the famous site at Land's End". The confusion of ideas in the mind of the sub is obvious, but the comic error stood when the pages came to me after some four or five other members of the staff had read them! We also had a contributor whose sense of the ludicrous was so weak that his copy had to be scrutinized with a hypercritical eye. He it was who wrote in defining Archdeacon that the holder of such an office "is appointed by the Bishop and wears gaiters."

On the whole, I had every reason to be proud of the care and enthusiasm of my editorial staff, and, out of the hundreds of thousands of possibilities for error which a new work of seven and a half million words afforded, the percentage of mistakes was so extremely small as to be almost

negligible. The amateur critic in his slippers ease who discovers that one has printed "St. Martin's in the Fields" when there should be no possessive, or that his native town is given as five miles from Birmingham when it is only four and three-quarters, thinks no end of himself, and instantly indites a letter to the editor upbraiding him for publishing such false information and casting doubt upon all the other 7,499,999 words in the encyclopedia.

It was great fun to discover how delighted correspondents were over some utterly trivial error and how seldom anyone spotted a serious one. There is in London, by the way, an authoritative publication which for about seventy years had been publishing the signs of the zodiac in its annual volume with one of the signs wrongly represented. Though millions of eyes must have scrutinized this page in all these years, it was only within the last two or three years that one sharp observer had detected the mistake. Sometimes it would seem that, the more elaborate the precautions against error, the greater is the likelihood of being tripped up occasionally.

A bright school teacher complained to my publishers not long ago that because the name of a minor character in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, in the Dickens set edited by me, was several times misspelt he wished them to refund him his money for the entire collection, and declared that this error would make him, as a school teacher, chary in using any Harmsworth educational publication. I asked him if he had cut the Holy Bible off his list because the late Sir Isaac Pitman had found some two or three hundred typographical errors in it. We editors have certainly to suffer fools gladly: their subscriptions are as valuable as those of the intelligent readers.

Time was when the name of Harmsworth attached to

any publication was not entirely a recommendation to the more thoughtful class of readers. So much of my own work has gone out to the world in association with the name of Harmsworth that I may be supposed to have a pronounced opinion on this point. But it is really very difficult to decide to what extent the trade name was a help, in what degree a hindrance. Some of the most widely circulated and most scholarly of our publications went forth as the Harmsworth *This or That*. The pick of Britain's university professors had contributed to them. Thanks to the almost unlimited financial resources of the house, they established new standards of richness in illustration.

Before its publication there was nothing comparable with the *Universal Encyclopedia* in the number and excellence of its pictures. Nearly 24,000 illustrations were gathered from all parts of the world, and their choice was made from a total supply perhaps five times greater. The method of illustrating the *Universal History* has been approved by many of our leading scholars and the richness of its pictorial documents alone has made it indispensable to history students throughout the world. It is to be found in university libraries everywhere, and by reason of the authoritative standing of its contributors (it is not for me to say anything of its editorial plan and execution) it has really become a standard work. Yet, in these cases, as in others I could mention, I have often been conscious that the name of Harmsworth was a doubtful asset. While its value as a trade mark was undeniable, and possibly outweighed in the commercial view anything that could have been lost by the lingering intellectual suspicion of the Harmsworth Press, I have reason to know, as an editor of serious educational works, that in certain quarters where one would have most appreciated approval I have had to overcome some

degree of hostility. But that is of small consequence compared with the satisfaction of securing so vast an audience of readers to whom the Harmsworth name stood for boldness of commercial enterprise, value for money, and departure from the outworn methods of the old-fashioned publishers.

To have spoken thus to the Chief would instantly have sent him "up in the air". He was entirely convinced that "Harmsworth" had become the trade mark of everything worth while in modern publishing. And it was a favourite injunction of his, when giving me counsel concerning any of my publications in whose titles "Harmsworth" was used, to beware what I printed in them because his name was on the title page. I should say that the prejudice to which I have been alluding existed more noticeably before than it did immediately after the War. For many years before his untimely death, the name Harmsworth had come to be accepted as synonymous with efficiency, and no longer connoted either newspaper sensationalism or "stunt" journalism.

When the War was over we saw less of the Chief at Fleetway House, although he often came for an hour or two to sit in his beautifully appointed room there. The *Daily Mail* and *The Times* were claiming increased attention from him, and his ambition to have a hand in the settlement of the peace terms, which eventually led to his breaking with Lloyd George and others with whom he had so assiduously worked for victory throughout the War, seemed to have a disturbing effect upon him. Still, he could never lose his old love for the Amalgamated Press, as here was the organization which, above all others, had been the keystone of his fortune. Whenever it was at all possible for him he attended at Fleetway House to see the

advance proofs of his dearly beloved *Answers*, for which he had almost superstitious regard as the supreme mascot of all his successes.

XXX

WHILE the *Universal Encyclopedia* was still running its course I was already scheming another publication, the nature of which made a strong appeal to the Chief with his passion for foreign travel. The idea had grown out of the Spanish work, *El Mundo y Sus Pueblos*, I had engaged to do for Jackson, but which had been dropped with the outbreak of the War. An anthropological survey of the whole world, describing and illustrating every race on earth against its national background. *Peoples of All Nations*, when the first part came out in the spring of 1922, proved to be another of our "winners". I had set out to obtain from all parts of the world pictorial documents which had not before appeared in print. To this end I had published advertisements in numerous Continental journals in the language of the country, inviting amateur photographers to submit prints of their best photographs illustrating native types and customs. A big undertaking. I was soon struggling with an immense mass of new material which required great care to sift and use effectively. I had also secured most of the eminent travel writers of the day as contributors. When Northcliffe saw my first number and the plan of the whole work he was quite as pleased as he had been with "My Encyclopedia".

But, alas, it was a different Northcliffe one met now at Fleetway or at the luncheon table at Printing House Square. One who had spent as many years with him as I had, and knew something of his idiosyncrasies and his eccentricities,

could make allowances for passing moods. But in the less frequent contacts which I was now making with him, on account of his absorption in the distracting politics of the time, I found his excitability noticeably increased.

Again it happened, so far as I can remember, that there was some difficulty about getting the front page of the *Daily Mail* on the day on which the first number of *Peoples of All Nations* was due to appear. When he heard this from me he was indignant. Really, it did not greatly matter whether the front page of the *Daily Mail* had been secured for the day of issue or the day after, or even two days later. But he made a great point about the incidence of the advertisement and the day of issue. He was astonished that any of us could be content to miss what he esteemed the enormous advantage of the major publicity—"the finest advertising space in all the world"—appearing the same morning as the first copies of *Peoples of All Nations* came fresh to the book-stalls. He would see to it. And he did—at what office disturbance I can only guess.

Then again I remember his being in France, or somewhere on the Continent, on the day of publication, and his principal secretary, Price, receiving a long and, I fear, rather rambling telegram conveying orders to *The Times* and the *Mail* and others of his newspapers about the sort of attention they were to give to "my new publication *Peoples of All Nations*."

It had been his habit—and a pleasant habit it was—whenever he found that some new thing had been produced by one of his editors, either with success or the promise of success, to show his appreciation in a personal way. There were many A.P. editors who, once in a while, perhaps once in a lifetime, had thus been invited to dine privately with the Chief at St. James's Place or at Carlton Gardens. My

own association with him being of old standing and at certain times of some considerable intimacy, and my meetings with him, even during the War years, sufficiently frequent to maintain the old flavour of our pre-war friendliness, there was less need of him to mark any of my enterprises in this way. What he did, however, on several occasions was to ask me to bring one or two of my chief assistants to dine with him at Carlton Gardens, as in the old days he had—sometimes against my will—had me take an assistant editor occasionally to Elmwood. I do not think there was the slightest suspicion of a desire on his part to suggest to me or to my assistants that he wanted to look them over from the point of view of possible successors! It was nothing more than a gesture of appreciation from the head of the firm, desirous that even assistant editors should not be overlooked in his hospitality.

When he went away on his ill-fated world-tour in the summer of 1921, he knew I was busy on *Peoples of All Nations*. From various ports he sent me picture post-cards with brightly written comments, always associated with this particular publication. A set of three or four photographs showing the execution of a native came from Malaya with the comment: "Snoad thinks that these would be the making of *Peoples of All Nations*". A little joke this, between Northcliffe and his travelling secretary, for a more horrifying picture of capital punishment I have never seen.

Save for his appearance at a luncheon party after his return in the spring of 1922, I do not remember meeting him again. Even at that luncheon he seemed remote and restless. He was no longer, so far as I could gather, interesting himself in what we were doing at Fleetway House, what new publications we were planning. He had been writing wild pamphlets about millionaires and newspapers.

Hustling old editors out of Carmelite House with princely gifts of money and fat pensions. Pushing new ones into their jobs at needlessly high salaries. Appointing advertising men to positions of large responsibility and great emolument, with gorgeous Rolls Royce cars at their disposal, mainly because he had noticed they wore white spats, which in his earlier years had been to him the most detestable of habits! Carmelite House and Fleetway House buzzed with rumours of his latest eccentricities. He would suddenly betake himself to the Continent, whence telegrams arrived every few minutes with all sorts of wild instructions: one insisting upon the immediate discharge of at least one of any two or three brothers who happened to be in positions of importance. There were many instances where two brothers, and sometimes three, had risen to positions of trust by faithful and tried services, and such an order as this showed that eccentricity had merged into something much more grave and alarming.

XXXI

ALL of us whose admiration for the genius of the man and affection for our Chief had endured the years, heard with dismay that he was stricken by a mysterious and terrible malady. Whisperings there had been of the manner in which he was brought home from the Continent by Wickham Steed; his strange conduct on the way. Fleet Street was now seething with rumours, which from experience one distrusted, but which in the end proved true. I remembered that, many years before, the Chief had said to me in discussing the circulation of a part publication which invariably presents a downward curve, the first few

numbers being always much higher than the last, that one had to allow for several factors which made this inevitable. "Think, for instance, how many of your 400,000 readers at Part 1 will have died before you get to Part 50." This he said with that sense of awe which he always conveyed when he spoke of death. *Peoples of All Nations*, in the floating of which he had been so keenly concerned, did not complete its course as a fortnightly publication until more than a year after we had stood by his graveside at Finchley.

During his final illness very few, even of those who stood nearest to him, had admission to his presence, and Sir George Sutton, who probably saw him most of all, confessed to me in those anxious days when we discussed the possibility of the Chief's recovery that he greatly feared, if Northcliffe ever got well again, he would be "a little old man". To picture this man of superb energy and tireless activity as a little old man was unthinkable. Nay, none of us would have wished him back again as such. I am reminded of the old story of the Monkey's Paw, used by W. W. Jacobs to such grisly effect. And I think that if any of us had had three wishes which we could have given for the dying Chief the last of them would have been used in the same way, had we known it was "a little old man" that was coming back to us. We should have wished him not to come back again.

So far as my present intention is concerned my story is told. And yet my own days with Northcliffe can hardly be said to have ended on that day when, together with Henry Leach and Arthur Mee, I rode in the long procession of motor-cars that followed his funeral cortège from Westminster Abbey through streets crowded with men and women bare-headed in their respect for a great man who was passing to his rest. A funeral such as a king might

have had. Such a funeral as must have been entirely satisfying to Northcliffe himself if, by any chance, the spirit of him were conscious of it.

No effort of memory is needed to recall the temporary gloom that settled upon Fleetway House when the Chief had ceased to be. And yet it was only temporary, for every one of us, from Sir George Sutton to the hall porter, felt that the best tribute we could pay to his memory was to "carry on" as though he still were with us. And strive as I may to eliminate everything of the sentimental from my narrative, I cannot help recording that it was in this spirit we all returned to our individual tasks. Northcliffe was no more, but as the years went by the Chief endured and even the least imaginative amongst us continued to do his work with the feeling that somehow we were still working for him.

All this took place ten years ago. To what extent and in what manner must one's impressions be corrected to-day? In my estimation, hardly at all. The Northcliffe tradition lives, that electrical presence of his somehow persists, almost a palpable thing, and all of us who knew him and worked with and for him are still sufficiently under his spell to feel that he might any day push open the door of our room and look in upon us to ask cheerily how we are getting on with our latest job.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

1865. July 15. Alfred Charles William Harmsworth born in Dublin.
1867. Harmsworth family removes to London.
1876. Alfred goes to Stamford Grammar School.
1878. Attends Henley House School, W. Hampstead, where he starts a school magazine. Headmaster J. V. Milne, father of A. A. Milne, the author and playwright.
1880. Receives first payment in journalism as contributor to *Hampstead and Highgate Express*.
1881. Begins contributing to periodicals for young people. Travels on the Continent as secretary-companion to one of Lord Lilford's sons.
1882. Assistant editor of *Youth* (then edited by Edward Morton).
1883. Freelance journalism.
1884. Following severe attack of pneumonia, is ordered to live out of London.
1885. Goes to Coventry to work for Iliffe and Sons publications; chiefly on *Bicycling News*.
1886. Returns to London as freelance.
1887. With a friend, W. Dargaville Carr, founds small publishing business at 26 Paternoster Square; acting as agency for *Outing* (American magazine) and issuing educational monthly *The Private School-*

- master*; also publishing a series of "How to do" books, etc.
- April 11. Marries Mary Elizabeth Milner.
1888. June 2. Founds *Answers to Correspondents* at 26 Paternoster Square.
1889. Death of his father.
Joined in business by his brother Harold.
Travels widely throughout Europe and U.S.A. between 1889-1894.
1890. Office of *Answers* is removed to 106 Fleet Street.
Comic Cuts founded.
1891. *Forget-me-not* and *Home-Sweet-Home* first published.
1893. *Answers Ltd.* registered as a company with capital of £275,000 and printing works acquired in Whitefriars Street.
1894. August 31. Secures control of *Evening News*.
Sunday Companion started.
Finances Jackson-Harmsworth Arctic Expedition.
1895. Unsuccessfully contests Portsmouth as Conservative.
Home Chat established.
Publishes *Tarpon Fishing* in Badminton Library.
Boy's Friend established.
1896. May 4. First No. of *Daily Mail* appears.
Harmsworth Bros. Ltd. formed with capital of £1,000,000.
1898. *The Harmsworth Magazine* (altered in 1901 to *The London*) founded as a threepenny monthly.
The newly erected Carmelite House becomes headquarters of the Harmsworth publications.
1899. Lavington Street Printing works, first portion completed.

1900. *Daily Mail* Manchester offices opened.
Dec. 23. The Amalgamated Press Ltd. formed with capital of £1,300,000.
Extensive new printing works opened at Gravesend.
1902. Begins energetic campaign to promote Entente with France.
Publishes *Motors and Motor Driving* in Badminton Library.
1903. Nov. 2. Founds *Daily Mirror* as a 1d. journal for women.
Acquires *Weekly Dispatch*.
1904. Created Baronet.
Jan. 28. *Daily Mirror* reorganized as ½d. picture paper.
1905. Created Baron.
Acquires *The Observer* (controls same until 1911).
Continental *Daily Mail* established.
1906. Acquires large tract of forest, with lakes, water power and river, and organizes Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company.
Daily Mail offers £10,000 prize for London-Manchester aeroplane flight.
1908. Becomes chief proprietor of *The Times*.
(negotiations Feb. 11-Mar. 23, including Court sanction).
Visits U.S.A. with his mother.
1909. Visits Canada and U.S.A. with Moberley Bell of *The Times*.
Imperial Paper Mills Ltd. formed.
1912. The Fleetway House, new editorial and business headquarters of Amalgamated Press, opened.
1914. Transfers *Daily Mirror* to Lord Rothermere.
1915. Munitions campaign against Kitchener: Publishes

- famous article in *Daily Mail*, May 21, on which day the paper was burnt publicly at the Stock Exchange. Resigns chairmanship of Amalgamated Press Ltd.
1916. Visits Verdun, and sends to hundreds of Allied and Neutral newspapers a memorable dispatch stating that Verdun would hold out.
At the War, a volume in which his dispatches from France and Italy were reprinted in amplified form, appears. Sold for benefit of Red Cross.
 Supports Lloyd George in terminating the Asquith regime.
 Germans produce a "hate-medal" of Northcliffe in bronze.
1917. February. His residence, Elmwood, at Broadstairs, shelled by German destroyers.
 June 2. Goes to U.S.A. as Chairman of British War Mission, returning to London, November 12.
 Nov. 23. Created Viscount.
 Director Civil Aerial Transport Committee.
 Nov. 15. Declines, in published letter to Premier, offer of post as Air Minister.
1918. February. Becomes Director of Propaganda in Enemy Countries.
 Resigns Chairmanship of Associated Newspapers Ltd.
1919. Successfully operated upon for an adenoma of the thyroid gland.
1921. May 1. Presides at luncheon at Olympia, London, to *Daily Mail* staffs (nearly 7,000 being present) to commemorate 25th birthday of that paper.
 July 16. Leaves on world tour, visiting Canada, U.S.A., India (guest of Lord Reading, Viceroy) and other countries.

1922. Feb. 16. Arrival at Marseilles.
Feb. 26. Back in London.
The Amalgamated Press (1922) Ltd. formed.
May 24. Leaves for Continent.
Aug. 14. His death takes place at his residence,
1 Carlton Gardens.
Aug. 17. Memorial service at Westminster Abbey
and burial in St. Marylebone Cemetery, Finchley.
1923. His *My Journey Round the World* published.
1928. February 17. His brothers, Viscount Rothermere
and Cecil Harmsworth, endow a Lord Northcliffe
Chair of Modern English Literature and a Lecture-
ship in Literature, at London University College.
1930. October 2. Monument to Northcliffe in front of St.
Dunstan's, Fleet Street, unveiled.

APPENDIX II

A LIST OF SERIAL WORKS, 1914-1932

The subjoined list of large serial works originated and edited by the author covers only the years 1914-1932. It is printed here in no vainglorious spirit, but merely as germane to the subject of this book. Of these publications the total sale in fortnightly and weekly parts has exceeded two hundred million copies. In addition thereto, about one and a quarter millions of bound volumes have been sold. His name as editor appears on nearly all these many millions of copies, yet he numbers among his private friends several who have never seen a copy of these works and others who remain in complete ignorance of his methods of livelihood. He has seldom met anyone familiar with either his name or his work. And such is fame.

	Parts	Vols.
1914-1919 The War Illustrated	234	9
" " The Great War*	272	13
" " The War Album	—	10
1919-1920 New Harmsworth Atlas of the World	40	1
1920 Masterpiece Library of Short Stories	—	20
1920-1922 Harmsworth's Universal Encyclo- pedia	63	9
1922-1924 Peoples of All Nations	49	7
1923-1924 Wonders of the Past	24	3
1923-1924 Harmsworth's Household Encyclo- pedia	42	6

* This publication was not originated by the present author, but all except its first three weekly parts were edited by him.

	Parts	Vols.
1923-1924 Harmsworth's Wireless Encyclo- pedia	24	3
1924-1925 Countries of the World	42	6
1924-1926 Harmsworth's Home Doctor	42	6
1925-1926 Harmsworth's Business Encyclo- pedia	30	5
1925-1926 The World's Great Books in Out- line	42	7
1926-1927 Lands and Peoples	36	6
1927-1928 World's Famous Pictures	24	2
1927-1929 Universal History of the World	48	8
1928-1929 Wonderful Britain	32	4
1928-1930 Wonders of Animal Life	32	4
1929-1930 Our King and Queen	24	3
1929-1931 Our Wonderful World	32	4
1930-1931 Concise Universal Encyclopedia	52	1
1930-1931 Modern Masterpieces of British Art	25	1
1931-1932 Concise Household Encyclopedia	52	1
1931-1932 Manners and Customs of Mankind	24	3
1931-1932 The Universal English Dictionary*	52	1
1932-1933 Concise Home Doctor	52	1

*Managing Editor, with Professor Wyld of Oxford as responsible Editor.

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