

# VARIETY SHOW

*Twenty Years of Watching  
the News Parade*

*By*

FREDERICK GRIFFIN

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FREDERICK GRIFFIN

*Author of Soviet Scene*

TORONTO: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF  
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To  
H. C. HINDMARSH  
WHOSE NAME DOES NOT  
APPEAR ELSEWHERE  
IN THIS BOOK

## FOREWORD

This book is being published while I am a staff member of *The Toronto Star*. It is a purely personal one, off my own bat, unofficial. It relates, in brief, the performance and reaction of a single cog in the human mechanism of the newspaper—who had no responsibility except the relatively carefree one of turning out news and magazine articles.

Any one of a number of colleagues might have written such a book in his own terms. Like most newspapermen they no doubt feel that nothing is more dead than yesterday's news. I like to think of to-day as merely heir of all the yesterdays. Hence this record which has no moral otherwise.

One thing I must say clearly. I owe *The Star* much—of opportunity, outlet, realization. Nowhere else in Canada, certainly on no other newspaper, could I have had the experience, the quickened living, the freshness of interest, the fun.

FREDERICK GRIFFIN.

Toronto, July 1, 1936.





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# VARIETY SHOW



## BEGINNER'S ACT

FOR a full two minutes I hesitated . . . then knocked on the door lightly lest too much sound disturb the dead, half hoping that no one would come. No one came.

Maybe there isn't anyone in, I thought, my mind jumping at the idea of escape, and an impulse to go seized me. Should I? It would be easy to report that I had tried the house and there had been no answer. No, a dozen times no. Duty called for at least one more attempt to get in. I knocked again, a little more firmly.

That brought response. The door opened solemnly and a woman in black said "Yes?" . . . The widow. No backing out now. This was the moment for which I had been steeling myself since I had received a curt, casual order to call.

"Y-your h-husband—I was s-sent—I'm f-from *The Star*."

Ah! At last it was out, and for the first time in my life I had proclaimed myself a newspaperman.

"Won't you come inside?" and she stood back to let me enter. Stealthily lest I make a sound, I followed her into the darkened living-room.

She was not crying, I noticed, and was grateful, since I had thought that widows always cried; she seemed cheerful about a reporter calling as if it was something to be thankful for. Little did she know that this timid novice had had to flog himself to this intrusion on her, that he was fighting an almost irresistible impulse to take to his heels.

Yet it was just an obituary, an affair of obtaining a routine paragraph.

An elderly railroad man had died, and I had been sent to whet 'prentice pen on the task of writing his simple life story. This involved a street car journey to the suburbs, a lengthy walk on a below-zero morning and this call on his widow.

The ice once broken, she told me when and where he was born, of his faithful service for the old Grand Trunk, his many years at the throttle, of his retirement some time previously, of his illness and death. If this is reporting, I thought, it is not so hard; buoyancy succeeded my backwardness, and I became so enthusiastic in my interest, as if I were a friend of the family and had known the dead man, that she showed me a chair which some brotherhood had presented as a mark of esteem.

"Sit in it," she said, "and see how comfortable it is. He loved it. He always sat in it." I sat in it, wondering now that I had obtained the material for an obit how to end the visit and get out.

She urged me to regard a clock on the wall, given him by fellow workers when he retired. Not knowing how to refuse further interest and guessing it was part of my business of reporter, I got up to look at it. Drawn curtains had shut out the light and I had to lean over closely to see: it seemed imperative that I should prove my sympathy.

As I bent over I became conscious of a queerness. The hair began to creep on my head. With an effort I looked down.

There, within half a foot of my own, lay the face of the departed, grey, cold, ghostly. My Irish youth had been fearful with spectral tales, and this was the first dead face I had ever seen. Choking back a yell, I backed up, shaking; said an abrupt good-bye and hurried to the office downtown with my little harvest of collected fact.

The copy I wrote may or may not have been printed. I forget.

Such was my first newspaper assignment.

This was in February, 1916.

It was in Toronto, capital of the Province of Ontario and the principal English-speaking city of Canada.

It was before radio was born to link wilderness, farm and city home in a unison of broadcasts and before the moving picture had to any marked degree penetrated its towns and villages. It was before the general ownership of automobiles and the spread of paved highways.

Canada was then in the midst of the Great War.

Men, not in khaki, wore buttoned boots, invisible suspenders, visible belts, watch fobs and fancy garters to halter their shirt sleeves. Women wore high boots and barrel skirts. Only a rare woman played golf and only an odd adventuress smoked a cigarette in private. Bridge had not yet arrived.

Simple it may all seem now, looking back at those simpler days of twenty years ago, but to this tremulous reporter on *The Toronto Star* it was complex indeed. Three years of an apprenticeship in the morgue or library of the newspaper as filing assistant had been little enough to give a primer sense of Canadian values.

Toronto, still to a degree a big overgrown village, was to me, new to city life, a bewildering place. I was an immigrant from Ireland. Until my arrival in Canada in July, 1912, I had never used a telephone; I had never seen a typewriter; I had never ridden in an automobile; I had never clicked an electric light switch—oh yes, I had, on the boat coming over. This was a strange and a vast world in which I found myself. The newspaper, the affair of news-getting, was a very great enterprise in which I became an uncertain cog. With hesitant steps, therefore, I sallied forth to see

and hear and ask questions. I had the dread that sometimes it might be necessary to ask unpleasant questions, and people might not like them.

At first I wrote obituaries, and was dreadfully upset at the sight of a man in a coffin, though I was to grow to look casually at many dead as simply fragments of a story.

I covered suburban meetings, truded around unpaved shack districts on the city's outskirts, hustled to secure items about war casualties, recorded recruiting rallies, called up the hospitals to discover accident cases and the fire halls to uncover conflagrations which never fortunately arose, filled in on the police beat, reported the police courts and the law courts, and sometimes rose to the height of substituting for a regular man at the City Hall, calling on those exalted dignitaries, the Commissioners of Parks and Street Cleaning.

Gradually the pattern of it began to take shape as a species of news drudgery and of exactitude in small things, such as a man's initials and the spelling of his name, and of the avoidance of a vague reptilian monster called Libel. It seemed that this reporting had little more meaning than bookkeeping, no more excitement than department store clerking—or junior schoolmastering, which I had tried in Ireland.

In December, just before 1916 ended, I was to learn that it had moments, hours, that were heady indeed.





## WAR CORRESPONDENT

ONE December morning in 1916 the City Editor sent me to see E. R. Wood, president of a trust company, about a rumoured development in Canadian aviation to help on the War. He was a member, it appeared, of the Imperial Munitions Board which had been created to handle the manufacture and delivery of Canadian supplies to the British Ministry of Munitions.

J. W. Flavelle, packing magnate and noted organizer, later to become Sir Joseph Flavelle, Baronet, for his war services, was chairman.

“We have a scheme in mind,” said Mr. Wood, “but Mr. Flavelle is in England and won’t be back until next week. He has to endorse it. See me then.”

Thanking him, I started for the door. He came from behind his desk, began suddenly to talk and to my surprise told me the plan. Why, I do not know; mine not to reason then about distinguished men’s moods. He said that the Dominion planned to build aeroplanes and to establish flying fields, with barracks, for the training of army pilots. Exciting news, you may be sure, with so many Canadians entering the British Air Forces. I knew enough to hold my tongue and let him talk, which was intuitive wisdom; left at the right moment, and turned in what proved a scoop that was featured on Page One. When, following up the story, I saw Mr. Wood again he accused me of having broken faith by printing it. I argued he had merely said that Mr. Flavelle had to endorse the scheme but had not told me not to publish it. The incident ended with him laughing good-humouredly, as much at himself as at me.

Two or three days later the City Editor gave me a contingent assignment.

“Flavelle’s just back from England,” he said, “where he’s been conferring about shells with Lloyd George. He’s to address munitions manufacturers this afternoon in the Board of Trade rooms. Drop over and get a line on it. It probably won’t be much and you probably won’t get in, but have a chat with Flavelle about that aviation story.”

The Board of Trade auditorium was on the eighteenth floor of the Royal Bank Building, at the corner of King and Yonge Streets, the hub of Toronto. It was the tallest building in the British Empire then. The *Star* office was less than a block away.

The meeting was about to start when I got there. The door was unguarded; entering, I took a rear seat. Some two hundred men were present, presumably interested in making munitions. Shells, I knew, were news. There might be something in this, but I made no attempt to take notes. Flavelle was my aim, afterwards.

It began without liveliness. The Inspector-General of Munitions, a Col. Edwards, recently appointed, and C. W. (later Sir Charles) Gordon of Montreal spoke briefly. Then Mr. Flavelle arose. Almost immediately he launched into an harangue.

Generally, he said, the munitions makers were not making British delivery as promised. They were falling down in their war effort, failing the Allies. Worse than that, he went on, some of them had been forwarding shells which did not fit guns. In English dumps, he declared, he had seen stacks of Canadian-made shells piled there useless. A waste, he exclaimed, and criminal in wartime.

So far he had spoken quietly if strongly. All of a sudden he turned as emotional as a gossamer. Few preachers put into their pleas for souls the fervour with which he talked about shells. Tears showed in his eyes.

Sir Joseph Flavelle, one of the most notable contemporary Canadians, has been the victim of much mixed opinion but always to me he has been the weeping patriot of 1916.

“On board ship coming back from England,” he cried, “I was unable to sleep at night thinking of the enormity of the offence of which some of you, either through carelessness or ignorance, have been guilty. I cannot think that any of you erred wilfully; that would be dreadful. It must have been inexperience.”

Dramatically he told of British soldiers, Canadian gunners, killed by the explosion of defective shells in their own guns.

Passionately he raised his voice. “If any of you,” he shouted, “any of you men here, have been deliberately guilty of sending forward such a shell, I could almost wish that it might explode—right here in our midst—bring these walls down—and blow us all to perdition—rather than in the ranks of our own men.”

His words rose and fell, laden with feeling. The audience held itself tense. Men sat stiffly, not daring to look at a neighbour, afraid of seeming to accuse, afraid of sensing accusation. The manufacture of shells was a new thing for Canadians. Plants making knitting needles and plants making tea kettles had been swung joyfully into the making of munitions.

This, I knew for all my lack of experience, was a story, with Canadians by the thousand at the front and every second or third family in the land interested in their living or dying.

## HOME SHELLS KILL CANADIANS

In my mind the heading took shape. But my mind was a ferment. Flavelle was still up, and the hour of the last edition was drawing on. The deadline!—I had to

watch that. But how was I to get out, if he kept on long? If I started to leave after such a speech, would I not be pounced on? Suppose there was another speaker! Would the story be printed? If it were printed, what would the censor say? What would the people say? Was I hearing it right or was I getting it wrong? Could I remember it? Could I swear to it?

By an effort I held to my seat while Mr. Flavelle went on to talk of the responsibility of the munitions makers.

“Profits!” he exclaimed scornfully. “I have come from the heart of a nation where they are sweating blood to win this war. Profits! I stand before you to say this: in the past we have all had our ideas about profits, but—with men sacrificing their lives for us, to hell with profits!”

Such was the origin of a Flavelle phrase which became famous in Canada. Of course, I have only given the emotional highlights of his speech which discussed the many angles of the munitions problem learned on his British visit.

At last he ended and sat down. Another man got up to speak technically of inspection. The tension eased. Men began to emerge from the dugouts of their own souls. It was my chance for a getaway.

Scarcely daring to breathe, I began to tiptoe towards the door like a burglar in the dark. At any moment I expected someone to yell “Stop!” but I got safely outside. There panic gripped me and I started running down the zigzag stairs. Down and down I ran for six or seven storeys, panting, my heart seeming to choke me, until I began to grow dizzy. There was no pursuit. Calming somewhat, I took an elevator.

A very excited reporter rushed the half-block to his office and burst in on the News Editor busy on the last edition, with three-quarters of an hour to go. To him it was just another story. “Write it,” he said, “be quick.”

Quickly indeed I ripped out two-thirds of a column for I was experiencing for the first time the ecstasy of a hot news story when the blood is quickened, the brain keys fast and phrases come tumbling. I hurried with it to the Editor. He glanced down my noble words and frowned.

“We can’t print that!” he said.

“But,” I cried, “it’s true! I heard him.”

“Why, the censor would shut us up to-morrow.”

“But—c-can’t you use anything—any of this?”

What did I care about a censor? I felt like going to jail, facing a firing squad, for the sake of my story—because I was feeling for the first time the sublime ferment of NEWS. It was my awakening to love. In my ears birds were singing, there was a

smell of violets, little lambs were gambolling—and I was slightly mad. Love!

“All you can do,” said the News Editor coldly, “is show it to Flavelle and find what we may print, if anything. This is wartime, you know.”

Back to the bank building and the top floor, to find the meeting over and my hero chatting. At the first favourable moment I broke in: “I’m from *The Star*. I heard your speech. I want to know how much we may use.”

“Write it,” said Mr. Flavelle, “and let me see it,” and I pulled forth the masterpiece.

“You have it written already!”

“Yes, sir, and will you read it now?”

He glanced at it, whistled and looked up. “Young man,” he said, “no doubt you are a good journalist—but, you know, you have misunderstood me completely. Why, look here, you make me seem to have been abusing these good men. I wasn’t doing that. I was just giving them a little friendly talk.”

He smiled and I grinned, learning fast. He might have been vehement; instead he was gentle and clever. “Yes, sir,” I said, gratefully almost, “will you please go through it and strike out what we may not use.”

He did, handling the copy like a newspaper desk man, and, without comment, pencilled out sentences and paragraphs. He left in the bit about profits. Otherwise it was a sadly cut report.

“Now,” he said, “use that.”

And that was what got into print in the last edition. It scarcely caused a ripple whereas in its first undoctored warmth it might have caused a revolution, but the “To hell with profits!” phrase was quoted widely.

Since that day I have not spoken to Sir Joseph Flavelle though a few months later I heard him speak again, this time giving evidence in the famous “bacon probe” into the war profits of his packing business, the William Davies Company, which I helped cover. His bearing then was not evangelical, but coldly business-like. Often of recent years I have seen him walking with sturdy benevolence along the street with his small black handbag in which cynics say he carries his coupons. He was just the incident of an early journalistic hour from which I learned much. Within a month I was to learn more on my first out-of-town assignment. This was to Kitchener, Ontario, where a war-inflamed riot had broken out on municipal election night, January 1, 1917.

The very name Kitchener was a symptom of the passions of the time. It had been Berlin, a substantial industrial city which was the centre of a fine settlement of German and Pennsylvania-Dutch people. Some months previously an agitation had

succeeded in having the old name wiped out and that of the British War Secretary substituted as 100-per-cent. loyal. But a majority of City Council elected on New Year's Day was obviously of German descent. This did not please the Patriots. Windows of a newspaper office were smashed, a mess made inside the plant and a couple of aldermen-elect beaten. A company of soldiers was sent to restore order.

Into the ticklish situation I landed next morning with no thought in the world but to write high, wide and handsome. I was a war correspondent, no less, and I wrote despatches that Philip Gibbs might have envied had he been describing the occupation of Liège—about Kitchener being a cauldron filled with ugly elements, soldiers sitting on the lid, and so forth, winning Page One flare headlines for the first time.

Elated, I burdened the telegraph wires with words for two whole days. One of the despatches made a minor sensation by relating that the water commission had started the New Year wrong by issuing bills bearing the line, *Berlin, Jan. 1, 1917*, instead of *Kitchener*. The implication was that the Germans were flouting the Loyalists. I was unaware, having made no effort to check, that the bills had been printed before the change of name and had been put in the mails inadvertently. Officials, discovering the mistake, had made a last-minute effort to have *Kitchener* stamped on and had, except in a few cases, succeeded.

Thus I ran along, reporter at last of big events, unconscious of the enmity stirring in worthy Kitchener breasts. Nemesis lay in wait. It came in most friendly guise. Less than an hour before I was to return to Toronto, the war having ended, an editor of the paper which had been attacked stopped two other Toronto reporters and myself on the street.

"Sorry you're leaving us," he said untruthfully. "Won't you have a drink before train time?"

Prohibition was now in effect and he led us along as if seeking one of the bootleggers who had already sprung up. He did not find one. "Let's go to my house," he said at last, which was his aim, I think, all the time.

There he produced, all ready, a jug of wine. For each of us he poured, not a wine glass, but a tumbler full. It was by way of being my first drink and I eyed it dubiously. "If this is intoxicating," I said in all innocence, "it's a little too much."

"You have my word," said our host, "there's not a drop of alcohol in it."

We drank. He, chatting merrily the while, poured us each another bumper. Once more I asked, but less conscientiously, its alcoholic content. Once more he declared it mild as honey.

It was not. Within a few minutes I was drunk. Maybe it was simply Ontario

native wine which is potent enough—I do not know. I do know that we three reporters talked and talked—and when I stumbled forth to the street a boy, who must have been lying in wait, came forward and said, “You from *The Star*? Well, the Water Commission wants to see you.”

The Wa-water Commish—Water Commishun! I tried to recall what I knew about it. My head whirled. My legs did not seem to belong. I wanted to lie down and rest—to blazes with the Water Commission!

“Better go,” said one of my Toronto comrades soothingly. “See what they want anyway.”

Stumbling after the boy, I lurched before two gentlemen who sat behind a desk, my voice thick, my face flushed, my clothes disordered.

“So you,” said one of them icily, “are the reporter who’s been writing all those lies! Listen, Mister, this city is going to take action against you and your paper for \$10,000 damages.”

“D-damages! For w-what!”

“For libel. For saying we had changed the name on the water bills back to Berlin.”

Libel!—that monster! And I stood in front of them, thus. They could say I had been drunk on the job and prove it. I staggered to the train, found a seat, fell asleep, sobered up and got off at Toronto, a ruined man.

That was not the end of my suffering. Two or three days later, when the sabotaged newspaper resumed publication, it celebrated the occasion by carrying on its front page under a seven-column heading the views of Toronto newspapermen on the recent disturbance. We scarcely recognized them but they were ours, given to the editor while imbibing his wine! He had interviewed us, no doubt of that, when we were all friends together and got from us statements at variance with what we had been writing, expressing sympathy with the German element and pooh-poohing the Loyalists.

We had been put on the spot and had not an alibi—caught cold! Each of us was quoted by name.

Sequel? None so far as I was concerned, but Joe Armstrong of *The Toronto World* nearly lost his job. His editor and publisher, W. F. Maclean, was facing an election for the Federal Parliament in South York, a suburban constituency, on war issues. His reporter’s views on the Kitchener situation, as expressed in the interview, enraged him. He feared they would cost him a patriotic seat. Joe had a hard time explaining.

As for myself, afraid to speak to anyone in my office about the affair, I hugged

my unhappy secret of threatened libel, dreading the moment when my guilt would be blazoned forth.

That moment never came. Either the Kitchener officials had been simply making a gesture or they cooled. Nothing happened, except that I learned a lot.





## PAPER OF THE PEOPLE

IN THOSE days six newspapers gave Toronto its news and fought for influence and circulation, of which *The Star* was the youngest. No more generally honest and downright group existed anywhere to entertain and enlighten a community. None was a chain or syndicate product. Each was home-owned, written and edited, although there were implications that *The Mail and Empire* was Montreal-influenced, a dreadful accusation in Toronto. Montreal was a Gomorrah whose race, religion and morals threatened everything Toronto held dear and, besides, housed St. James Street, den of financiers who planned darkly.

This implication may have arisen because *The Mail and Empire* was then colourless compared to the other papers which had publishers or editors, or both, who had convictions and personality. In Toronto convictions might land a man in jail but without them, however subversive, he laid himself open to doubts. It has never been a place for neutrals or philosophers.

Toronto news, views and politics were the principal interest of the six journals. Fire in an Earls Court shack had more reader value than Vesuvius in eruption. A City Council squabble between a couple of aldermen was more important than the fall of a ministry in France. Of course, they featured the War, but Toronto's human investment there made it virtually a local fight. A letter from a Beaches soldier describing how he had been wounded "Somewhere at the Front" might find itself as important as a Joffre *communiqué*.

While any of them might have piquant or dramatic flurries, none was persistently sensational in terms of the English ha'penny press or consistently yellow after the fashion of certain American papers in the days before tabloids made them seem prosaic. Yet yellowness was constantly being suspected and the name of William Randolph Hearst, famous American journalist of ebullient methods, was bandied among them as an epithet of contempt for each other's deeds.

Generally though, they were as reputable and respectable as Toronto demanded, even if *The Star* was charged with being more than a little hoydenish in printing a couple of comic strips, *Bringing Up Father* and *Keeping Up With The Joneses*. These *The Telegram* considered a menace to civilization.

It was at municipal elections that their local concern burst into full bloom. Then they staged an outburst of advice in regard to their favourite candidates of sufficient energy to have elected a demi-god and a cabinet of archangels for all eternity instead

of merely a mayor and council for the ensuing year. Each December the city was enwrapped in a newspaper mayoralty contest that might, for its warmth, be regarded as deciding the fate of worlds.

It was all valiant effort, significant of the interest which the community had for its own people. There was concern about Provincial matters, too, but few questions existed then like highways, the gasoline tax, surplus of purchased water power, relief problems, farm loans, huge debts and defaulting municipalities—except the prohibition of liquor and bilingual schools—to exercise their minds. And there was absorption in Federal politics that was much more serious than of recent years, each paper displaying its Ottawa correspondence.

But, except for the interjection of the War, the universe of Toronto was largely local and almost entirely British, though *The Globe* particularly did carry American and other foreign news.

*The Globe*, self-styled Canada's National Newspaper, was then at its peak as a splendid journal of its time and place edited in a high, if somewhat pious, tradition. It was the great paper of what was called Reform, organ of Liberalism and of Laurier until Conscription and the formation of Union Government in Canada gave it a mighty indecision which altered its status as the Grit Bible. Its owner was the late Senator Jaffray. Its editor, recently resigned, had been the late Rev. Dr. J. A. McDonald, Presbyterian divine with a pen mighty for righteousness whether it was banishing the saloon or the cause of British arms. It was a well-written, well-edited paper, dignified and generally fair, with an interest in the arts. A job on it was the aim of most Canadian newspapermen.

*The Mail and Empire* was a Conservative party organ with certain fixed ideas such as: the sun always rises therefore all's right with the world—so long as Tories are in power. It was dull of editorial utterance and lacked virtuosity in its news treatment except of criminal events which were apt to excite it. Of recent years it has become a fine and urbane newspaper. It remains Conservative but its news reports are notably unbiased and its editorial page is enlightened by the witty Fourth Column pen of the generous and broadminded J. V. McAree.

*The World* was also Conservative but it was lively and sometimes brilliant, its columns displaying a brevity of items that was tabloid in manner. Its front page was designed for street-car reading. It specialized in sports and finance. Its publisher and editor was the late W. F. Maclean, M.P., an idealistic, imaginative, impractical, somewhat impish, journalistic great. His happy-go-lucky capacity for business did not balance his flair for ideas and *The World* died after the War. Newspapermen mourned its passing as they were later to mourn the death of the much greater *New*

*York World.*

These were the morning papers. The afternoon papers were *The News*, *The Evening Telegram* and *The Daily Star*. *The News* like *The World* is dead. It, too, was Conservative, with a front page for the groom and an editorial page for the gentleman. Its editor was the late Sir John Willison, a pundit of his day who had been editor of *The Globe* and wrote in solemn fashion. A number of columnists gave it a literary flash. It made a display of sports and society doings. But when *The Telegram* and *The Star* locked horns in a battle for primacy, the pace was too fast and *The News* died.

The dominant local paper was *The Evening Telegram*, owned by John Ross Robertson, one of the characters of Canadian journalism, and edited by John R. (Black Jack) Robinson, who holds a place all his own among the individualistic editors of history. Both are now gone to some restless Nirvana of the scribes, and Toronto has never been the same place since. *The Telegram*, under a board of trustees, has been greatly modified, though it remains a lusty newspaper.

It was unique in many ways. Mr. Robertson had his views of what was right and what was wrong for Toronto, always Toronto, and Mr. Robinson voiced them in editorials that were not duplicated on earth. They iterated and reiterated, strung lines of derogatory adjectives like files on parade, frequently broke into capitalized phrases and often, if the subject was even vaguely patriotic—and most subjects were patriotic to *The Telegram*—separated their paragraphs with minute Union Jacks or tiny Maple Leaves.

It sought to boss municipal politics from the motive of running Toronto right and elected to the City Council largely whom it chose. It believed in God, the King, Toronto, the Empire and Canada and made a fetish of publicly owned hydro-electric power, Sir Adam Beck, the founder thereof, and Tommy Church, perennial mayor who said his prayers to Beck. Yet the mere shadow of Socialism under its own name made it foam.

With standards all its own and a veritable menagerie of fears and hates, it was at once obstructionist and enthusiastic, honest and scheming. Once it put the whole force of its reactionary venom into opposing Sunday street cars as devices of the devil which would empty churches, ruin the young and, of course, wreck the British Empire. It built a fortune out of small want ads, regarded them as its most important circulation device and kept them solidly on Page One for many years instead of giving it to news and headlines. It constantly changed front without logic or apology. Its great appeal was to the British-born.

In politics it professed to be Conservative, but it was as liable to rend its friends

as its enemies. A politician might be tried and true in terms of most of its orthodoxies, but slip in his attitude towards the Flag, the Bible, the English Language, Beck or Tommy Church—then woe betide him! Hell had no fury like *The Telegram* in vitriolic blast. *The Star* was then far behind it in circulation and influence, but it kept up an endless tirade against it. It was enough for *The Star* to opine that a colour was white to have it declare blisteringly that it was black. Day after day it publicized its younger rival—with a strange, quick sequel. John Ross Robertson, the emphatic dictator, is dead. John R. Robinson, the vehement, sentimental editor who neither asked nor gave quarter, is dead. And their claymore of a newspaper has become almost tender in its thrust. It is now some 90,000 copies behind the despised *Star* in daily circulation. Even in the city of Toronto, which they once held on the point of their pens, the latter is ahead.

*The Toronto Daily Star* on which fate made me a reporter in 1916 was not only a junior newspaper; it was, in the most Tory city of Canada, run by an Orange machine of which *The Telegram* was the voice, looked on as an intruding upstart which dared to be irritatingly liberal, outrageously radical in advocating such new-fangled notions as old age pensions, unemployment insurance and mothers' allowances, and economically traitorous in advising reciprocity with the United States and low tariffs generally.

But in conservative, provincial Toronto this liberal newspaper won through to a grudging recognition and finally to a very great, if not altogether converted, following because it never wavered in its independent editorial policy to argue for the under-dog, to indicate the changing world, to pursue a good-humoured pathway towards reform and to preach and practise, in the midst of an imperialist chauvinism, a sturdy Canadianism—and because of the vivacity and sweep of its news columns and its special features.

People found themselves reading it while they professed to distrust its opinions and despise its sprightliness. Conservative politicians railed against it and local contemporaries jeered, sneered and lampooned. But the paper moved on and up while politicians retired to obscurity and rival journals lagged in the race.

Born on November 3, 1892, of a strike of printers on *The News* against machines which had arrived to oust the historic hand-setting of type, it began as *The Evening Star; A Paper of The People*. It suspended next year, revived shortly and survived, but without purpose. Then, on December 13, 1899, Joseph E. Atkinson, a youthful newspaperman who had been a reporter on *The Globe* and was Managing Editor of *The Montreal Herald*, was made Managing Director by a group which had acquired it. It had then a circulation of 6,000.

Thus *The Star* had its real beginning on the threshold of the Twentieth Century. In February, 1916, when I found myself a reporter, Mr. Atkinson, already become owner and President, had nursed it from an uncertain infancy to a circulation of 98,000. It was stretching its wings to soar through post-war years of expansive adventuring that made a long golden decade of vivid journalism, earned it the title of The Greatest Newspaper in Canada and won it recognition as one of the world's most enterprising papers.

Such was the fabric built by Mr. Atkinson's genius; and that is the only word that embraces his capacity for newspaper making, alike on the editorial and on the business side. Of him the Canadian public has known little, and that largely through splenetic local paragraphs and cartoons. Lesser names have become familiar through news mention and magazine articles but the publisher of *The Toronto Star* has seemed content to let his paper appear in public for him, rarely making one of his most apt speeches, never seeking office, never accepting it when offered except on some hospital board or other similar committee, never going in for society, finance or politics where his judgment and force would have won him place.

It is not possible to measure his determination as a publisher or to say how definitely he set himself a goal. He gave, as few men have given to any enterprise, all his energy of intelligence and will to *The Star*. One may no more than etch the way in which, fairly but resolutely, he hung on the flanks of competitors, gaining yard by yard, mile by mile, day after day, year after year, until he caught up, drew level and passed each of them.

He faced not merely competition but derision, for his mood was alien to that of the community in which he had ventured and the entrenched outlook of older rivals indignant at the splash he was making in their waters. But he carried on, rarely letting his left hand know what his right hand did, one of the significant Canadians of his time, a great newspaper maker, one of the few men left who single-mindedly owns and runs a big single newspaper.

Pulitzer, Hearst, Northcliffe were no more important in their day and place than J. E. Atkinson has been in the domain of Canadian journalism. He may have had something of the publishing spark of each of them, but he has possibly more closely resembled Pulitzer, blind wizard of *The New York World*, than the others, in his pursuit of liberalism, his reformist aims, his sense of public values, his flair for seeing history ahead, his zest for features, his encouragement of distinctive writing—but he has been content to be a guide instead of a crusader.

One of his great strengths has been a never-ceasing awareness. He has never seemed to be caught napping by what was coming, either on the news front or the

editorial side, least of all on the business sector. Other newspapermen might fail to sense what the automobile, the movies, the aeroplane, the radio, the machine, mass production, the War, the boom years, the depression years were going to mean in terms of social behaviour and economics. Others might be bewildered by the changes that have come during the past twenty years in political values, human values, entertainment values, newspaper values, but he always knew uncannily; at least, his newspaper constantly reflected his prescience; and he was abreast or ahead of the change, in recording it and meeting it.

Sensitive, alert, insatiably curious, with few prejudices and fewer fears, untiringly youthful in his welcoming of problems that increased rather than lessened with the growth of his paper in the maelstrom of the last few years, he has forever quested. He opened his columns wide to such varied forms of human effort as the Farmer's government in Ontario, the Oxford Groups movement, Soviet rule in Russia, the Roosevelt experiments in the United States, the Nazi régime in Germany, the social-democratic party called the Coöperative Commonwealth Federation which had arisen in Canadian politics and, more recently, Social Credit. In a city of static likes and standard dislikes he was friendly alike to Jew, French-Canadian, Roman Catholic, Radical and Christian Scientist as brothers-under-the-skin of the Orangeman and the Anglican. Small wonder he was frequently suspect by the capitalist and the communist, the intellectual and the man on the street. All of them struggled to find his motives from their viewpoint, seldom realizing that he was merely charting the times.

Perhaps the key to his success—at a time of imperial parochialism and in a city wallowing in a British sentiment that was more imagined than real—lies in his early sensing of the scene as North American in fact and getting out a newspaper continental in values and performance.

Mr. Atkinson has left his imprint on his Canadian generation, for he gave to Dominion journalism a new vigour and, in spite of his critics, new ideals in a country of scattered localisms. Out of a morass of provincialism, he ranged. More than that, he gave a new measure to working Canadian newspapermen by giving them an opportunity to write and a decent wage. Except for a few magazines which have developed, *The Daily Star* and *The Star Weekly*, the week-end or Sunday edition inaugurated on August 9, 1910, offered for years practically the only market to Canadian writers.

During the War salaries on *The Star* went up as the cost of living rose and, subsequently, the paper paid special and senior men amounts high in relation to general newspaper pay in Canada. With these went an immense sense of liberty. A

number of staff men have written for years, according to their personality and philosophy, without other instructions than to go here, go there, virtually without editing other than a desk man's interjection of sub-headings. Naturally they reflected the paper's policy and viewpoint, but considerable freedom was theirs of individual reaction so long as they entertained.

Such was the newspaper and its publisher to which this reporter found himself attached. At the moment of his intrusion on the Canadian scene, and for some time afterwards, he did not know his luck.





## WORDS AT WORK

FIRE of unsolved origin on February 3, 1916, reduced the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa to a shell of grey stone. While they were being rebuilt to a grander scale with a magnificent Peace Tower as a war memorial the Victoria Museum, a barn-like structure in a residential district, was cleared of its curios and fossils and given to the law makers. My news apprenticeship included parts of the 1917 and 1919 sessions there as a member of the Press Gallery of the House of Commons, with forays into the Senate when its elder statesmen edged into current history.

This gave a sustained course in speech tasting and an intimate glimpse of the Dominion being run in wartime and afterwards.

The view was necessarily close for the Museum, while no doubt admirable as a makeshift legislature, was a clubby place as compared with the present House of Parliament with its cathedral dimensions and austere halls. The Commons met in a large auditorium across from the front entrance which had galleries suitable for press and public. It was arranged in the traditional manner and lacked nothing of mace or Speaker's throne to give customary form.

From the Press Gallery it seemed that almost one sat on top of the Members below, so near were they. By stretching it might have been possible to reach down and scratch the head of that most urbane of Speakers, Hon. Eric N. Rhodes, which would have surprised though it would not have upset him.

Each of the wings, to right and left of the entrance, had been converted by partitions into a double series of stalls which made offices for Commoners and Senators, leaving an aisle between. Along this ran a strip of cocoanut matting. This had the effect of genteel stabling—but no more impressive sight may be imagined than that of the lean, athletic Speaker, wearing his tricorne hat, black uniform and gown and buckled shoes, sweeping along one of these corridors on his way to or from the chamber, the gowned clerks with their books and the Sergeant-at-Arms carrying the mace in dignified attendance.

But with its passage the corridors lost all pretence of historic charm or high and courtly mystery and became a kind of political market-place. Commoners, Senators, correspondents, Ministers' secretaries, Hansard reporters, girl stenographers and lobbyists found them a common rallying ground. This robbed this Parliament *pro tem* of that aloof atmosphere which doth cloak legislators and made most of them most ordinary human fellows, with the exception of the greater men, Borden, Laurier,

White, Meighen, Lapointe, Fielding, who were not to be found leaning against a partition in mood for chat.

This to me was Ottawa, for I kept a beaten track between my lodging and the National Museum, saw little of the city and learned little of its life, if any, outside Parliament, except such as went on in the Chateau Laurier and the Russell House, the two hotels which were hives of political swarms. My first lodging was modest enough but during the 1919 session I inherited the lease of a small, chaste suite in the Roxborough Apartments from a Gallery predecessor of expansive tastes. This noble housing gave amusement to some of my colleagues who had little pretentiousness, and the veteran Tom King of *The Toronto World* dubbed me “the bird in a gilded cage”.

The Roxborough had select lodgers and a very imposing doorman in uniform who saluted gravely, and I had a conviction of guilt every time I slipped past him with a bundle of soiled clothes for the Chinese laundryman. He would, I know, have died of shame if he had suspected a guest of such low habits. However, Tom King and other Gallery spirits were delighted at the dilemmas of etiquette which I brought them to solve. My white room and tiled bathroom were charming. An older colleague frequently came there to sleep off the effect of too much hospitality elsewhere. Nothing, he said, sobered him like a short stay in my room at the Roxborough.

The Gallery held a number of personalities, men without affectation who were kind to a neophyte: the white-haired, wise Tom King with skin soft as a girl's and eyes so nearly blind that he could not see the Members below or take notes but carried every tone and twist of the debate in his mind, to dictate his despatch afterwards; Arthur Ford of *The London Free Press*, modest and courteous; the late J. K. Munro, of *The Toronto Telegram*, caustic, cynical, warm-hearted; the late Tom Blacklock of *The Montreal Gazette*, untidy, gruff of manner, keeper of a thousand confidences; Charlie Bishop of *The Ottawa Citizen*, bland, imperturbable; Grattan O'Leary of *The Ottawa Journal*, quick, clever, sharp; H. E. M. Chisholm of *The Manitoba Free Press*, excitable, lovable Highlander; Vernon Knowles of *The Winnipeg Telegram*, cool, quiet, wise; Bill Marchington of *The Toronto Globe*, unhurrying, helpful; and the French-Canadian group who kept largely to themselves and do not come so easily to mind except Savard the elegant and Brousseau the *boulevardier*, delightful fellows. The Gallery men were more real than the Parliamentarians, more clever than most of them, as they quipped and scribbled.

In 1917 I reached Ottawa as relief man in time to cover the passage through the Senate of the Conscription Act and afterwards in that and the 1919 sessions I reported Commons debates on the acquiring of the capital stock of the Canadian

Northern Railroad, the War Times Elections Act, the formation of the Canadian National Railways, the abolition of titles in Canada and the rights of the provinces to create their own divorce courts.

Public interest in these measures was great. War and the imminence of Union Government and an election made the 1917 session a contentious and strenuous one and I frequently put from eight to twelve thousand words a night on the telegraph wires for the next day's paper, every word by hand since typewriters were not then in as common newspaper use as they are to-day. The bulk was running copy, ground out while listening to a debate, catching up, if necessary, afterwards and writing the introduction when the House arose.

During both sessions there was considerable steam-rolling, in 1917 by the Conservative Government, in 1919 by the Union Government which had succeeded it to carry through the War, and many nights saw the closure rule in effect—twenty minute speeches, with debate automatically ending at 2 a.m. when the vote was taken. Such nights were crowded with talk. I often found myself writing until 4 or 5 o'clock and turning into bed after sunrise, facing the necessity, usually, of being back at the House at 11 a.m. to report a committee or a morning sitting, for in 1919 morning sittings were the vogue towards the end of a heavy session. I became an automaton spinning out copy in an unending weave from this marathon talk factory. Thumb and wrist muscles grew at times so weary that the hand could scarcely guide the pencil. At least, it engendered stamina.

That historic period remains in the memory largely for its work. Parliament ceased to be a place of romance or wonder and became just a chamber in which figures, grown familiar as the whirling riders of a six-day bicycle race seen each day, uttered ceaseless speech that had to be listened to endlessly. Not that it did not have its drama and its emotion, and that work of importance was not accomplished in parliamentary fashion. But, while feeling was sincere enough, there was an effect of sham fighting for purely party advantage, of wordy and inferior oratory except by the leaders, of waste of time and energy. That is, as viewed in retrospect. Perhaps one should have a taste for debate to appreciate continued sittings of a legislature just as one must have an ardour for wrestling to be a fan.

One afternoon, during an exchange on some forgotten subject, an Ontario Conservative of cabinet rank and a Quebec Liberal who had been a Laurier minister joined issue and abused each other lustily. Both are now dead; they were no worse than many of their fellows; their names do not matter.

The Gallery went into action to garner the hot periods of attack and retort while the Hansard reporters' pencils raced to put their words imperishably on record.

Shortly they ceased and sat down; the House resumed its dead level of debate by back benchers; the Gallery relaxed. I strolled out to the front hall for a smoke, in time to see the two opponents issue from opposing doors and rush at one another.

To start fisticuffs! Good gracious, no. To shake hands and almost kiss in the Gallic manner.

“Ah, *mon vieux*,” cried the French-Canadian, “your speech, it was grand. The Orange lodges will love it.”

“Hope they do,” said the other, “but say, Quebec will gobble yours up. Hot stuff for the *habitant*, eh!”

“You think so? Good! Come, let’s have a drink.”

And the pair of them, lively likeable men, went chuckling down the corridor.

The War was still on in 1917. Tens of thousands of young Canadians were being shipped overseas to squat in trenches, to be shot at, wounded and gassed, to die. Tens of thousands of loyal fathers, mothers, wives, daughters and sons had their eyes turned towards the distant, invisible, soundless guns. But in Parliament went on this endless talk and the often petty, frequently spiteful party warfare. Yet what would you? There had to be discussion. This was Democracy, in war as in peace. In 1917 there was a general election in the offing with loyalty as the keynote. The great game of the Conservatives was rubbing it into Laurier and those Liberals, mostly French-Canadian, who were opposed to conscription. The Liberals, bitter, uncertain, divided by the threat of Union Government which many were ultimately to join, feeling Laurier going shortly from among them as leader, fought back as best they might.

Similarly in 1919, the War over and Laurier dead, the Union Government, predominantly Conservative, kept up a barrage on the Liberal rump, while the latter maintained a constant sniping as they gave way before the forces opposed to them.

I was, no doubt, incompetent to measure the value of so many words or the meaning of so many speeches. It is perhaps sufficient to write down Parliament as a necessary institution of government under Democracy with no greater proportion of stupidity and no more waste energy than there is in business or society. But, as a meeting of the national directors chosen to run the country, much of it was hard to understand. Decisions as to policy were made in cabinet or caucus. In the House in open debate some of the speeches, of the ruling or more logical minds, might explain or criticize with effect but many of them only muddied or obscured an issue. At least, not a speech, good or bad, ever seemed to change a vote. Only too frequently men spoke to their constituents rather than to impress their colleagues, which may have its necessity, of course, in a democratic state. It may be, too, that the freedom of any

Member to say what he pleased on a pro-party basis had its value in deciding the Government in regard to the legislation it might openly introduce.

Of course, it was impossible to tell when some rank and file Member might not say something that was pertinent and wise, even though anything in the nature of a really upsetting utterance was rare. Actually Members were voting machines, for or against. For the most part Government members supported a move or a measure and the Opposition attacked it, whatever its merits or demerits. There was no other plan. It was attack and defence, a game largely for goals or points like a hockey match. It was common to hear declarations of enthusiasm for Canada but most men showed themselves most careful of themselves and their party. It may be that party views were always for the good of Canada.

In the 1919 session the shifting times were indicated. For the first time Progressive Members from the West had seats to show that sections of the country felt that some change from the old parties was necessary. And the general strike in Winnipeg, with its local revolutionary threat, won heavy debate. It was the first sign of the ferment which Canada was to feel in common with the rest of the world though few men in the House or the Gallery realized that the Dominion they had known was slipping, as it emerged from the War, into a world whirlpool of swirling values.

Of course, the House of Commons held many able and convincing men and men of charm. Two gentlemen were outstanding, on opposite sides, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the white-plumed Liberal chieftain, and Sir Robert Borden, the sturdy, handsome, if somewhat ponderous, Prime Minister. The latter may have had to assume responsibility for some of the tactics of his party and for the measures like the War Times Elections Act, which loaded the dice by enfranchising the women relatives of soldiers and disfranchising alleged alien enemies for the sure return of Union Government to prosecute the war until the last available young man had been sent to the front, but in the House he was never anything but fair and courteous, even to opponents. He was somewhat laborious in manner, but no one could so lucidly straighten out a tangled debate. He may not have been a Lloyd George or a Woodrow Wilson or a Clemenceau as wartime leader of his country but he inspired by his character and calm. On one occasion, after returning from England and France where he learned all the secrets, he called the correspondents into his office and with no more than a word of caution that he was speaking confidentially he gave us, quietly and graphically, a *résumé* of the situation which was at the moment most grave for the Allies.

For the most part Laurier sat, a sad and tired wraith, seldom rising to speak,

while around him lesser men wrangled. The spirit seemed to have gone out of him and I often wondered wherein had lain the magic of the great minister. One evening he revealed it, when, on a threat of closure with the Liberals vainly trying to block the move, he arose unexpectedly and for fifteen minutes showed himself a king. Hands hard on his hips, he straightened up his slight, bent form until it was erect as in his youth. And he flamed. How he flamed! He spoke of justice, freedom, right. He spoke not of war or of politics but of abstract, ethical principles—and his Conservative opponents cowered beneath the flail of his argument. For months, on the defence against the patriots opposite, the Liberals had had little to cheer for. But that night they jumped up to salute the last flare of spirit from their dying chief. I have always been grateful for that flash of him.

Other men registered for some forthright quality of heart, mind or spirit: Sir Thomas White, N. W. Rowell, Thomas Crerar, James A. Robb, W. S. Fielding, Ernest Lapointe, Frank Oliver, F. B. Carvell, George P. Graham, Dr. Michael Clark, the orator; and individuals like Arthur Meighen, Solicitor-General and future Prime Minister, with his rapier brain and clinical coolness in debate, the sturdy Sir Sam Hughes and William Pugsley, suave and crafty, who won, if not warmth, at least respect. But for the most part the members were dull. The majority of the speeches were uninspiring, local in their outlook, more fitted to a county council than a national parliament. As a group the French-Canadians contained some lively minds and tongues, the vitriolic Lucien Cannon, the humorous Joseph Archambault, the solemn Thomas Vien, all young men, who more than matched most of their English-speaking colleagues.

W. L. Mackenzie King, now for the third time Prime Minister, was not then in the House but R. B. Bennett, recent Prime Minister, was in 1917 a back bencher from Calgary though a highly vocal one. Yet he was scarcely to be distinguished as a man of destiny despite his rather portentous bearing and his rapid-fire talk. One night in a debate under closure rules, limited to a speech of twenty minutes, on the Canadian Northern Railroad difficulties, he packed so much machine-gun oratory into his periods that the Hansard reporters failed to get him completely in shorthand. If anyone then in House or Gallery saw in him a future Prime Minister, he kept his opinion to himself.

Mackenzie King appeared in post-war politics for the first time at the National Liberal Convention in August, 1919, at Ottawa, as contender for the party leadership in succession to Sir Wilfrid Laurier. I witnessed its choice of him. The convention wound heavily through hot days and nights until the last hours when he won out on the final ballot over the late W. S. Fielding, the veteran Nova Scotian

who had been Laurier's Minister of Finance—the present Senator George P. Graham, former Minister of Railways, and the late D. D. McKenzie, House leader of the Liberals following Laurier's death, having retired after the first two ballots.

It was worth waiting for the climax. Mackenzie King sat on the platform during the final vote-taking, his face agleam with perspiration, his collar wilted, his eyes tell-tale under the strain as he fingered his chin before the barrage of eyes. Across from him sat the elderly Fielding, a little grey slip of a man, slightly paralysed from a recent stroke. He might have been Fate, graven, inscrutable. Even when word was flashed that King had won and pandemonium broke loose, not a movement showed that he was hurt or disappointed.

Scarcely had the cheers died before he was at the front of the platform, a frail old man in a moment of severe defeat. He did not falter. Holding to the table, in accents that trembled a little, he moved that the meeting make the selection of his young opponent unanimous.

Mackenzie King proved historically splendid when his turn to speak came.

That virtually ended my recording of party politics. In December, 1917, between the two sessions aforesaid, I was taken off reporting and made Telegraph Editor of *The Star*. That meant sitting "on the Desk" and reading, editing and heading copy arriving by wire from points outside Toronto. The desk was small then; the City Editor in charge of the staff and of their copy, with an occasional assistant, the Cable Editor and the Telegraph Editor handled all matter, except financial and sports, for all editions.

It was great experience for a green but eager editor. I was scarcely a week on the desk when shortly after nine o'clock on the morning of December 6, the flash came that Halifax, Nova Scotia, had been destroyed by an explosion. Wiped out! That was the first report that initiated a strenuous day. A flash over the wires, half a dozen words!—the top was off the world, and the office jerked into hectic action.

How to get news? Wires were down; only meagre and conflicting scraps came trickling in. Then there was the censorship, since this was a war disaster. Everyone on the Desk went at the job. The City Editor put men to the task of checking on every local interest that had a Halifax connection. Telegrams were sent to every conceivable point which might have word. Staff reporters were started by train for the scene. My job was to help handle incoming telegraph copy, correlate it, head it, get it into the paper. The office was shortly besieged with telephone calls from relatives. The Managing Editor kept pressing, pressing, pressing for details, the measure of destruction, the actual damage, the cause, the number of dead, the number of injured, the lists of names. In turn we kept clamouring down east for



news.

Nearly twelve hours passed, though we tried every source, before we had anything like an accurate toll.

We issued some ten extra editions. I worked in a feverish daze. It was the first time I had been caught in the hard, smashing charge of a big news story and gripped in the swing of *The Star's* desk organization that was to go full-out for victory so many times in the years to come.

In the months following the Halifax disaster, on that desk, I learned a lot about news. For the news then was war news. I helped to handle copy, write heads, assess the value of the vivid drama that came marching across the round table at which we worked from the various fronts at home and abroad.

What newspaper values were like before the War I do not know, but the War certainly produced new ones. Death, suffering, sacrifice, sorrow, tragedy, courage, history, on a gigantic scale, offered themselves in relentlessly poignant panorama—to be gathered as an overwhelming harvest, to be written, edited, featured. They came clicking off the wires as words, words, words—little flashes of six words or ten words spelling action that might mean the death and wounding of ten thousand men, long columns of words that described that action in detail. Words marching by platoons, battalions, divisions before one's eyes all day long as newspaper copy. And scarcely a word that did not concern the War. Such was the Desk in 1918.

In the old days a murdered man or woman might make a sensation of local interest, unless it was a Thaw shooting or a Crippen killing which excited the world. A couple of boys might drown; three, four or five people might burn; at odd intervals, a train wreck, a volcano or an earthquake might take sudden, shocking toll or a ship like the *Titanic* or the *Empress of Ireland* sink with startling pageantry and pathos. Such in pre-war times was death as the newspapers knew it.

Then came the War and death began to flaunt itself as daily, ceaseless, grotesque killing on a scale that made all the murders, fires, earthquakes and shipwrecks of recent history casual isolated episodes. Nations tore at each other's throats. Men became savages living in trenches and holes underground, hurling death in wholesale fashion by mathematics, creeping across No Man's Land like primitives to choke and disembowel. Civilization stripped off its veneer of a few centuries and stood forth as naked hate lusting to slay. Forgotten was Christianity, over and out went the teaching of the sages, as Europe was turned into a gigantic slaughter house. Canada sent a half million men to it. Everyone who stayed at home, even on a newspaper desk, was directly involved in this colossal affair of death.

Therefore, local as the Toronto newspapers may have been previously in their

outlook, for four and a half years the War was news. Big news. Compelling news. News with a thousand faces, all terrible, every one tragic. Ships like the *Lusitania* were sunk by torpedo. Hospital ships with wounded men were scuttled. Dreadnoughts locked horns in titanic battles. Submarines were blown up by mines. War fronts were not little Waterloos or Spion Kops but stretched across continents, around the Seven Seas, back into the factories and the homes of Canada. Vast battles were fought for days, for weeks, for months, in which thousands of men died for a shattered hilltop like Vimy Ridge or a broken town like Ypres or a strip of wood on the Somme. Poison gas became a recognized weapon. Tanks were born as fearsome monsters. Aeroplanes and dirigibles showered death from the clouds. Lord Kitchener was blown up at sea. Russia weakened and staged a revolution. London was bombed. Paris was shelled. Jerusalem was captured. Germany crumpled. The Kaiser fled. . . .

That was the panorama of news, with its accompaniment of Canadian action, war measures, orders-in-Council, conscription, meatless days, casualties, Victory loans, that flowed across the Desk.

Since there was war, what luck, in my early newspaper life, to have helped to handle the news of it! It not merely taught values, but speed, intensity, drive, the meaning of seconds in getting copy out to catch an edition.

I learned how to assess, slash, condense, rewrite, change a whole page at the last moment, working at such a pace, so hard, so concentrated, with every faculty and nerve on the task of flashing the cream of a startling fact in a heading of set size and shape, that for hours daily I was like a battling, punching boxer in a pinch. In peace time the rhythm of the news is much more smooth; only at sudden and irregular intervals do the fighting periods come when sharp, compelling breaks arise. But in the last year of the War, especially in the last months, every day was a rally, every hour a driving sprint. Seldom outside afterwards, gathering news, even when I was keyed to a high tempo to beat time or outwit rivals, have I known such a state of nervous and physical pressure as happened day after day in those War Desk days.

Work that is interesting, however fast and hard, never kills and I would have survived the War news period and gone with colours flying into the softer times of peace but that in October, 1918, just before the Armistice, I was struck by the 'flu, then in sweeping epidemic, and put out of action. When I won back to full work effort it was not on the Desk. I was sent back to get news at the source, reporting, which was well. It was to give me a lot more acquaintance with men and events than I could ever have gained inside.



## WELCOMING HOME AN ARMY

NEWSPAPERS emerged from the War to find themselves faced with the question: Now what?

What, after its vast drama, its graphic daily interest, its all-inclusiveness, could now be news? The commonplace murder, grist of the courts, Parliament, Society, books, sport, sermons, the Theatre?

That scarcely seemed possible. Would such ordinary things satisfy after nearly five years' surfeit of tumultuous emotion? What could conceivably grip the attention of the sated world and fill the void left by the ending of the carnage? There was always Prohibition, there was the Peace Conference and there was Reconstruction—pinochle after a bull fight! What would supply that excitement and suspense to which readers had been tuned by the now silent guns?

Living so much in the present, few newspapermen guessed how quickly the world would react and forget, swing into a Rainbow Decade and shout "Show us a profit! On with the dance! Whoopee!" Only the wise and very experienced could have sensed the coming of a multitude of new sensations, fabulous values, strange ideas, stranger ideals, crowd heroes and wish dreams to tread the stage—the crash!—the blind stumbling, revolutionary fumbling, national fears and mass despairs of the aftermath.

Babe Ruth and his home runs, Jack Dempsey drawing million-dollar gates, Bobby Jones and his bag of clubs, hockey in ice palaces, Tilden and the tennis circus, wrestling as melodrama, marathon swims, marathon dancing and contract bridge with its Culbertsons had yet to arrive.

The black shirts of Mussolini, the brown shirts of Hitler, the nightshirts of the Ku Klux Klan, like the loin cloth of Gandhi, the temple dress of Aimée Semple McPherson and the trousers of Marlene Dietrich, had yet to be woven.

Aviation loomed with post-war interest but threw no shadow of Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart, the Mollisons and Wiley Post, flights to the stratosphere, polar hops, dirigibles foundering and girls suiciding in couples by dropping from the clouds.

Rum-running, bootlegging, Al Capone, "Legs" Diamond, "Bugs" Moran, a Frankenstein of United States crime, gangsters and rackets, murder as a trade, the St. Valentine's Day machine-gun massacre in Chicago, and Dillinger, lay hidden in the future. So did the spectre of kidnapping and the Hauptmann hysteria.

Newspapermen did not foresee Stalin and the Five-Year Plan, Japan gobbling

Manchuria, the Florida boom, economic nationalism, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the N.R.A., gold standard chaos, Ramsay Macdonald as the friend of duchesses, Lloyd George in eclipse and revival, a new social theory for every day of the week, Canada shutting her door to immigrants, the rise of isms, the Bank of Canada, the King of the Belgians being killed mountain climbing, revolt in Spain, the assassination of the King of Jugo-Slavia, Samuel Insull on trial, Huey Long as a new white hope; and insulin, the Dionne quintuplets and the toe-pulling of Dr. Locke of Williamsburg as Canadian achievements.

They did not know that nations would burn wheat, coffee and sugar, kill little pigs by the thousand and plough down cotton because there was too much, though millions lacked food and clothes.

They could not foresee Rudolph Valentino and Rudy Vallee, shieks, crooners, IT girls and platinum blondes, Jackie Coogan and Shirley Temple, the Fire Chief and Joe Penner's duck—Father Coughlin talking from Detroit, Admiral Byrd from the South Pole and the late King George on Christmas morning and his Jubilee from Buckingham Palace.

They had no premonition of Couéism, relativity, the disappearance of Ambrose Small, psycho-analysis, the resurrection of Charles Dickens, the Oxford Groups, cosmic rays, babbity, radium at Great Bear Lake, Mary Pickford's divorce, nudism, Gertrude Stein, technocracy, Sir Malcolm Campbell's *Blue Bird*, Walter Winchell's column, relief camps, hunger marches, Rockefeller in his nineties giving away dimes, the Prince of Wales as a travelling ambassador, the Winnipeg or San Francisco strikes, the Tennessee monkey trial, Ethiopia or sanctions, and the reoccupation of the Rhineland.

What a diversity of values the world has known since the War! What a variety of figures and figurines! What a motley has been the passing show! Altruism and greed, science and quackery, liberty and reaction, luxury and want, super-speed and feudalism have marched cheek by jowl across the parade ground. Men have died for their beliefs while others swayed to the carioca. Women have sneaked to secret mass while their sisters had their faces lifted. Civilization has had a thousand guises in this feverish era as change has trodden on the heels of change in the dismal, merry goose-stepping of low, middle and high society. Whoopee indeed!

Such have been the unpredictable years of romance, action, revolution and discovery on which *The Star*, emerging quickened by its own intensive effort in the War to give a news service second to none, entered. It was not to miss much of the panorama at home or abroad; or fail, in its own way, to record and interpret the jigsaw kaleidoscope. It was on its news side that I was privileged to play a part.

When the War ended the paper was not content to swim along with the stream of the coming peace days. It decided to go outside the purely local field for news; to dig and delve into the more distant scene and show how it worked, high-light its prominent figures, seize on angles of human interest to expand and feature; to pursue interviews with the great, the near-great and the momentary oddity; to fling men up and down Canada and the United States on the least hint of pathos, comedy, queerness or sensation; eventually to send correspondents to Europe and wandering reporters to the far corners of the earth; to lay down a barrage of coverage when major news broke within its orbit, hurl men at a dramatic task on the home front in such intensive, planned fashion that nothing of interest could escape the draw-net and that such a spread of feature stories, human interest, explanation and pictures would result that people would have to turn to its sheer worth of enterprise, enthusiasm and colour.

Its methods were, on occasion, those of a fire department and a military attack combined. When bigger events happened, *The Star* marched automatically. That gave, for years, a glorious sense of action.

Dynamic, imaginative Desk organization in the office planned every move like an army headquarters. Men went to the news front to work, strive, fight for what the paper sought; tireless, sleepless as soldiers while the attack lasted. Aeroplanes, special trains, fast automobiles, speed boats, telegraph, telephone and radio figured in the swift garnering of news.

What travelling men did, in summer, in winter, by day, by night! What roaring down the roads to some rendezvous with events! Get there fast! Get there first! Get photographs! Miss nothing! Mop up! Get everything and get it in!

Many men played many parts in all this enterprise which had no parallel in Canada and was not surpassed by newspapers anywhere to win and display a news coverage that was fresh, vital, startling. They made a staff that had more than its share of nerve, vivacity and devotion. It is impossible to mention them individually. I must from now on keep to my own narrow path through these years and happenings.

Early in December, 1918, having recovered from the influenza which took me off the Desk as Telegraph Editor, I was ordered to Halifax, Nova Scotia, winter port of Canada, to meet and write of the host of Canadian soldiers returning from the War. Troopships were coming in three or four times a week with the men who had been as long as four years overseas and the heart of the country turned there as they disembarked by the thousand to entrain across the Dominion. What a moment it was for them! They had longed for it, dreamed of it, prayed for it, in muddy trench and

battered dugout—and now they were home. No longer boys and civilians, but veterans.

Arthur Chambers of *The Toronto Telegram* was companion and rival on the assignment. Except for local reporters we were the only Canadian newspapermen covering the home-coming of the Canadian army. We had it, therefore, very much to ourselves and took every advantage of it. Not only were we news gatherers but we represented to thousands of Ontario men, particularly, their first civilian contact. *The Star! The Telegram!* Now they knew that they were back indeed.

The troops came pouring home in a heavy intermittent flow. In a single week of January, 1919, three great ships, the *Olympic*, the *Aquitania* and the *Empress of Britain* disgorged 13,500 men, not as a mob, but still in the units in which they had served at the front.

The first docking of the *Olympic*, early in December with 5,364 soldiers on board, made an unforgettable incident. Halifax turned out to welcome her as if she were a living thing, as indeed she was. She was not only one of the greatest of ships but for three years she had been carrying troops, dodging submarines, trudging fearlessly back and forth across the Atlantic. Now, the War over, she was being welcomed back just as the soldiers were being welcomed home.

Fog overhung the harbour as she came in that morning but thousands of people lined the wharves and occupied vantage ground on adjacent buildings. I had taken up a position on top of the immigration sheds which served as clearing dépôt to obtain a full view of the spectacle before going on board to comb through the soldiers. I thought I was alone. Later I was to discover a band at the other side.

The liner stayed long invisible, though out of the fog thundered the roar of sirens greeting her progress. Then, suddenly, almost stealthily, she stole into sight, turning in the stream. First the tops of her masts, the spars, then the funnels, the bridge, finally her big hull became visible as she loomed slowly nearer.

That was suspense, as she came creeping until her camouflaged bulk showed clearly in its patchery of blue, white and black—and on her decks, swarming over her boats, over her bow, high up in her rigging, hundreds of soldiers might be seen waving, in khaki greatcoats, with steel helmets, rifles and field kits.

Soon came the mellow, fog-muffled rippling of their shouts and cheers. It drew closer and rose. Shortly it was a clangorous baying, hard, savage, joyous, that broke in rivulets and waves. All along the shores came an answering roar.

I stood spellbound by the sheer history of the moment. My heart was turbulent with emotion of this mass returning, as I thought of the War, the cruelty of it, the waste, the pity—of the thousands of men once able to wave, to shout, who would

never come sailing out of the mists. As I stood thus alone as on a mountain top, in an ecstasy of conflict, the band which I had not noticed broke into the national anthem *O Canada* and I found myself crying . . . . Then I hurried down. The *Olympic* was warping in. Gangways were ready. There was no time for tears, with a paper waiting two thousand miles away for words on the wires.

Fine organization was evident and great work was done by transport officers and railroad officials in disembarking these thousands of returning soldiers and moving them by special trains to their homes across the length and breadth of the Dominion. But bunglings and delays occurred, both at Halifax and also at Quebec City where redistributing took place. About these we wrote, several times scurrying to Quebec to report a blockage. It was perhaps inevitable in bringing back such an army that there should be miscarriages. But Chambers and I, through the newspapers we represented, played a considerable part in keeping slackness in check and in achieving good treatment.

Among the transports arriving were hospital ships, not laden with fit men climbing the rigging to cheer but with cargoes of wounded and broken men and of soldiers whose minds had given way, at least temporarily. Not a hospital ship arrived without its complement of mental cases who were led off under guard. Possibly the percentage was small, but it was a phase of the War toll of which little was heard.

A hospital ship, the *Northland*, arrived on Christmas Day, 1918, with nearly a thousand men. It docked but did not disembark them. Right on the threshold of Canada the invalided soldiers were held until the evening of December 26 because a case of smallpox was suspected on board. That was bitter, if necessary treatment, and they came ashore to a chorus of grievances. "Rotten" was the mildest epithet applied to the food. "Not fit for dogs" was the general refrain. Plates were allegedly not washed between table sittings. Accusation was made that the ship was verminous. Men swarmed around us charging overcrowding, saying there was only one bath on board. Some held up their hands to show the dirt.

The rank and file, they exclaimed savagely, were kept in the stinking below-decks while officers and their ladies returning from England paraded in reserved comfort. Their ultimate grievance was the Christmas dinner. It had, they said, been fat pork; and they had had to fight for it, as usual.

Later we went through the men's quarters and found them odorous, dirty and overcrowded.

Chambers and I sent despatches to Toronto that were picked up and carried across Canada by the Press Association. Indignation grew and within a week an inquiry was begun at Ottawa before Mr. Justice Hodgins. This cost the Government



\$100,000, for the ship had to be held, the crew examined and soldier witnesses brought from all over the country. It resulted, however, in a big change in the transporting of soldiers, especially in hospital ships.

Earlier we had described slowness in handling another hospital ship, the *Araguaya*, and last-minute scrambling to collect railroad cars to convoy the men, many of them sick and wounded, some of them cot cases. These were held on deck, armed guards blocking the gangways, for more than three hours in a chill wind while trains were made up.

Thus, constituting ourselves spokesmen of the returning soldiers, we kept the authorities on their toes. If troops were delayed in stepping ashore to touch the soil they were so eager to tread, if a train was late, if there were blunders in documentation, if congestion arose or the slightest hitch in handling a ship-load, we wrote of it. We two reporters were the Power of the Press and we wielded it lustily at Halifax on behalf of an army. Little escaped our eager eyes and ears, especially Arthur's, who had an X-ray faculty for discovering official weakness. Representing *The Telegram*, he felt that he had a special mission to make Ottawa sit up and take notice. He did. We both did, merrily, and had more fun than two dictators. Officials were sensitive to every word we wrote and it was all on the side of righteousness.

This, however, was only part of our task. We wrote reams of human interest copy about returning battalions. On every ship we sought interviews with generals, Victoria Cross winners, escaped prisoners of war and other heroes. Few evaded us who had done and dared or suffered. Invariably we were welcome. Toronto soldiers particularly, delighted with this first home contact, greeted us as friends. Only once, when we jointly approached a famous airman, his chest a rainbow of decorations, were we snubbed. And highly. It did not bother us. We ran off like good boys and found others more amiable.

One who remains in the memory was Major-General Victor Williams of the Canadian Cavalry. He had been for nearly three years a prisoner of war in a German *strafe* camp and seemed embittered and broken when we spoke to him. But he made a fine recovery once he got home and was in time appointed Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police, a post he still holds.

Months later, in August, 1919, during the visit of the Prince of Wales to Halifax, Chambers and I had the good fortune to be the first Canadian citizens to welcome the Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Corps, the late General Sir Arthur Currie, five years to the month from the time he had left his Vancouver home to win the fame that is his. No simple soldier could have been more cordial than he as he came out of his stateroom on the *Caronia* at seven o'clock in the morning and put his arms

around our shoulders as he towered over us.

“He is a giant of a man,” my despatch said, “not as soft-looking or as portly as his photographs would make him appear, but he has a good-humoured jowl and kindly mouth. His eyes are clear and gentle and his fresh, healthy face lacks wrinkles. He has the look of a Presbyterian minister with a touch of humour in his make-up, rather than that of a great general who has just come through the world’s greatest war.”

The return to Canada of one of the most striking soldiers the War had disclosed was indeed a peculiar one. If it had not been for a couple of Toronto reporters, he might well have wondered if he were back in the Dominion whose divisions he had commanded so brilliantly in France. There were no cheering crowds, no brass bands, no flags, no speeches. There were the usual officers, the usual officials, the usual kind-hearted women who attended at all times and in all seasons for months to make the returning soldiers comfortable. There was the vastness of the clearing *dépôt* and the air was chilly. That was how Currie came home.

There was not a soul to welcome him specially, save the pair of us.

True, he held in his hands a sheaf of telegrams, and the hour was early, still—if he had been George Young coming back from winning the Catalina Island swim, a Diamond Sculls victor returning from the Henley Regatta, or Clarke Gable or Claudette Colbert of the movies arriving on a holiday, there would have been crowds. The absence of warmth at the wharf-side has never been explained.

The big man in khaki with the blaze of ribbons on his chest did not seem to mind. If he did, he gave no sign as he gripped us almost affectionately by the arms, as if to assure himself that this was Canada. “What can I say?” he said. “What can I say?” And his voice was husky.

“What does it feel like to be back, after five years?” we asked him somewhat lamely.

“It is wonderful, wonderful,” and tears filled his eyes. “These messages from old comrades,” and he held up the telegrams, “they make me quite homesick.”

Of plans for the future, he said, he had none. And when we mentioned the charges against him which Sir Sam Hughes, former Minister of Militia and Defence, had made in the House of Commons, he merely said, “I have no wish to enter into a controversy with Sam Hughes.”

It was Sunday morning. There was a reception later at the South Terminal (station) to which Currie drove through deserted streets. Here were not more than a hundred people and a guard of honour. Lieutenant-Governor McCallum Grant of Nova Scotia greeted him. Mayor Parker of Halifax read an address of welcome and

presented him with a piece of silver plate. But we two reporters felt that something of history had been missed—which we happened to capture—when there was not more fitting welcome right on board ship. Canada should have come to Currie and not Currie to Canada.

Of course, Halifax was very excited about the Prince of Wales. His Royal Highness was perhaps as big a personality morsel as the city could swallow at one time. He was my own job just then, Currie's arrival being merely an early morning interlude. In his royal wake I was to spend during the next few years an aggregate of nearly six months.



## THE PRINCE OF WALES

AT ELEVEN o'clock on the morning of August 14, 1919, the guns of H.M.S. *Dragon*, lying in the harbour of St. John, New Brunswick, blazed in a royal salute as a naval pinnace with a canvas top raced through the rain to Reid's Point with blue-jackets standing barefooted in the stern. Five minutes later a slim, fair boy in sea captain's uniform stepped ashore and shyly hurried to grasp the hand of the Duke of Devonshire, Governor-General of Canada, bareheaded in the drizzle. Nervously hitching at his belt with his other hand, he held on noticeably as if he realized its friendliness in this test of his quality in a strange land—while thousands roared.

There, at that moment, the legend of the Prince of Wales was born. It was then that the man who is now King Edward the Eighth stepped onto his world stage.

Canada discovered the personality of the young prince and uncovered his value as a monarchical force. England up to then had given him little notice. He was the juvenile heir to a throne yet warm from Victoria and the elderly Edward. Stories were current of how he had pleaded with Kitchener to be sent to the Front. "I have four brothers, Sir." Yarns were told of his courage and his democracy in France. He was known to have spirit. But England had other things to think about than a king's son of whatever mettle. It was the part of Canada to give him a rôle and a significance.

The Canadian people, of course, created it but, for myself, I may take as much credit as anyone for the fostering of the sunshine legend of him which grew and spread until it encircled the world, making him one of its most publicized figures, for on the 1919 tour of Canada I wrote about him more copiously than any other reporter. Columns and columns, from St. John, N.B., to Victoria, B.C. I wrote him lyrically across Canada and back again. It was all honest writing, of the mood, the moment and the man.

Certainly no young man, plebeian or prince, ever stepped more auspiciously into a moment and a mood. The War with its tragedies was just over. Thousands of the youth of Canada had been sacrificed in Europe for reasons which were already less certain than they seemed. People sought something clean, honest, hopeful. They looked for a sign.

And lo!—out of the Atlantic mists stepped this blond prince as from a fairyland, shy, smiling, unspoilt, magnetic, in appearance and spirit young as the morning. To a

people groping he appeared a symbol of certainty, at once a resurrection and a promise; as if in him were reborn all those splendid boys who had been buried in France.

He was the exempt of a sacrificed generation, the heir of all. He had worn khaki. He had been at the Front. He soothed a national heartache. Men saw in him a lost lad come back. Women warmed to him as son, husband, lover. To mother him, to hold him, to be held in his arms—that was woman's longing. He was Romance in the highest terms of the time. To dance with him was to be favoured by the gods. That is not to exaggerate. In scores of processions I drove three or four cars behind his—the right interval to catch reaction—and it was a moving thing to see, to feel, the joy, the exaltation, which a glimpse of him provoked in long vistas of Canadians strung on the sidewalks or massed in the streets.

No other person—prince, potentate or priest—ever surely won a whole people's affection as the Prince of Wales did Canada's on that 1919 tour. Maybe Mussolini, maybe Hitler, maybe Roosevelt, has swayed masses since much more powerfully by his social, economic and national appeals to self-interest. He used no voice, he had no radio, he raised no selfish cry, he urged no reason; he appeared, smiled, conquered. In the response there was no sound of the mob baying for leadership and reward. Affection, loyalty and a kind of worship blended in pure and devoted tribute.

On his three later visits to this continent I was to see the glamour of him fade somewhat as the mood changed and as the fresh, untried lad merged into the travelled, crowd-tired man, but on that 1919 tour he was the Spirit of Youth royal and incarnate. To war veterans, floundering to find lost moorings, he was more than that, a comrade in the highest place. This was no stay-at-home politician. He had been *there*. He understood. To thousands of other Canadians who had never been able quite to reduce it to terms he was the symbol of Great Britain, the Throne, the British Empire. For *this* their men had died. Thus they claimed and acclaimed him.

My own protracted eye-witnessing of His Royal Highness' progress evolved from a ruse. The Government turned down *The Star's* request for a reservation on the royal train to cover the tour. A reply came that only press association men were to be carried, not representatives of individual newspapers. Anxious to have a man throughout, the paper tried a fresh tack by asking the United Press (Association) of which it was a member to make application for a place. This was given automatically and I was named to fill it. My letter of authority, issued by the Secretary of the Governor-General, was for a United Press representative. Officially on the tour I was an American; and I did serve the U.P. to the extent of sending them such an

excitement as H.R.H. donning a peaked cap and pitching a baseball at Edmonton. A yarn like that made most of this continent's front pages.

Although Canadian newspapers were denied places on the train except through a single Canadian Press Association correspondent, Francis Aldham, and a representative of the French-Canadian press, Joseph Barnard, of *L'Événement*, Quebec, six English journalists were carried throughout the tour, five of whom—the only exception being a Reuter's man—represented not news associations but individual London papers, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Morning Post*, *The Daily Chronicle* and *The Daily Express*. They were respectively Gerald Campbell, W. T. Massey, H. Warner Allen, Douglas Newton and Sir Percival Phillips, experienced and delightful men. They had been brought out on H.M.S. *Dauntless* to make the Canadian trip, under the aegis of the Colonial Office. Berths on the train awaited them.

His Royal Highness landed at St. John on August 14, but the furore began two or three days earlier when some forty newspapermen and photographers descended on this Eastern city which had arranged for the Prince but not for the press. His arrival on North American soil was to be whooped up as the most notable since the coming of Columbus and every one of them was determined to make good for the home folks.

In spite of rivalry, newspapermen on such an assignment, which is largely an affair of individual observation and interpretation, are usually coöperative. But not at St. John, where bribery was tried, double-crossing alleged, and at least two men came to blows. It was a case here of every man's wits against every other man's. Each played a lone or a clique game. Each sought to arrange exclusive advantages. Each tried to corner the few available taxicabs. Each planned to corral the few available telegraph wires to the outside world. Each broke in on officials demanding passes and favours. Every man and the odd woman, for ladies of the press were present, banged in on Premier W. E. Foster of New Brunswick, the Mayor and Chief of Police of St. John and made their lives miserable. The quiet city resounded with our wrangling.

The ten-way tug-of-war had become almost a free-for-all when, the day before the Prince landed, on official suggestion, we called a general meeting which called a truce and moved to agree on rational demands for accommodation for all. We even ironed out individual hopes of snatching a few words with His Royal Highness—an impossibility, nevertheless each man's dream—which was the prime cause of all the jockeying, by agreeing not to attempt personal chat, rather to use our united appeal to secure a general interview or reception.

Every man kept this agreement. Only a Boston woman broke it and, maybe, she did not really subscribe to it; even in newspaper work ladies make their own rules.

At a hospital on the second day of the Prince's visit she seized an opportunity to sidle up and shoot three questions before an equerry could thrust his body between. These were: "Prince, are you coming to Boston?", "What does Your Highness think of American girls?" (good old chestnut), and "What advice did your mother, Queen Mary, give you when you left home?"

Dear knows what intimacy she would have dared next if it had not been for the aide's quick footwork. As for the mere men reporters, we were mad! She worried not in the least about our chagrin. Hurrying to the telegraph office or back to Boston she poured forth her soul and had the thrill of winning a big type Page One splash of her signed article. It ran all of three columns and was tagged the first exclusive interview with the Prince of Wales!

To return to the general meeting: two of us were appointed representatives to ask for a special train to take the press group from St. John to Halifax the same night as the Prince. There was no regular train to suit; we felt the Government should provide a special and W. K. Whipple, representing the American wing, and myself set out to interview Sir Robert Borden, the Prime Minister, who was down to greet His Royal Highness the next morning. With us, self-appointed, went a young Maritime reporter who claimed local influence. Unfortunately he came along slightly tight.

Sir Robert was courteous, but all arrangements, he said, were in the hands of Col. H. G. Henderson, Military Secretary of the Governor-General. We drove, therefore, to Rothesay, where Lieutenant-Governor William Pugsley was entertaining the vice-regal party, and asked for Col. Henderson. He came to the door, a tall unyielding Englishman. His attitude was not promising: "A special train for reporters! Ridiculous—what!"

While we pressed our claim reasonably, our Eastern friend, about half Henderson's size, stepped forward with some direct talk. The Colonel replied with hauteur. The wrangle grew, penetrated within and drew Governor Pugsley. He appeared, bland and smiling, greeted the young Easterner by name, turned to Henderson and tried to oil the situation. His suavity was having effect when the Duke of Devonshire dawdled into sight, with his Ol' Bill moustache and air of puzzled aristocracy, curious about the rumpus as any plebeian.

Mr. Pugsley, no doubt seething behind his smiles, presented us in most courtly fashion, specially introducing the wordy Maritimer. The latter promptly stuck his hand out.



“Please’ to meet you, Duke. You know how’t is, we’d like to stay but we’re in a hell ’v a hurry.”

His Excellency shook hands. To do him credit, he did not even wince. . . . And, as a matter of history, we got the special train. . . .

It was not until the Prince reached Toronto and was leaving for Ottawa, to proceed north and west, that I joined the royal party officially. In St. John, Halifax and Quebec, I was merely one of the free news gang that trailed in his wake, bobbing up in platoons at receptions, at luncheons, on the golf links, wherever he appeared.

I shall not attempt to trace the tour’s progress but merely touch on some of its newspaper aspects. In St. John, Halifax, Quebec, Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver, in scores of other cities and towns right across Canada and back again, His Royal Highness paraded, received, shook hands till it hurt, smiled, waved, danced, golfed, showed himself boyish, ingenuous, charming. Always the same act in a setting that varied only according to the size and population of the place.

In Quebec we were given the interview we had so patiently awaited. It is said to have been the first ever given pressmen by ranking British royalty, but for that I cannot vouch. We gathered in a room at the Citadel. He entered, smiling, uncertain, fingering his tie, said, “Good morning,” and shook hands with everyone. As he moved along he remarked on the wonderful weather he had had so far in Canada, the wonderful view of the St. Lawrence from the window and how wonderful H.M.S. *Renown* looked out in the stream. We gave him little help, for we had been told not to quiz him and held our tongues. After an awkward moment or two he asked if the movie men had secured good pictures. Told Yes, he quickly said, “We want to see how ugly we look.” “How good-looking you are!” shot back an American, at which he laughed. Followed some general chat about his trip, the Prince talking freely now. Indeed, he seemed in no hurry once the ice was broken until his attention was drawn to the time. “I suppose I must be going,” he said. “Good morning, gentlemen. I am very glad to have met you all.”

“Good morning, Sir,” we chorused and the “interview” was over.

That was as closely as I ever came to speaking to him. I might as well have been recording the movements of Mars—so different was the plane on which he lived from that of the trailing news men. The latter might chat with presidents and prime ministers but not with the Prince of Wales. However, I fell very quickly into the technique of this travelling court and grew to acknowledge the value of this austerity. The power of a tradition affected the least sensitive among us and made us bear

ourselves strictly. While watching him keenly always as was our duty we made it a point of honour to keep out of his sight. There was a certain humour in it and I wrote more fervently than ever about the Prince and his democracy, how he shook hands here, received flowers there, chatted with a war veteran or danced in some western city with a section man's daughter. Thus I helped to build a public concept of a beloved figure.



Some of the newspapermen covering the Prince of Wales' 1919 visit to the Maritime Provinces snapped in a New Brunswick valley.

On the train the royal party proper, H.R.H. and his immediate suite of comptroller, secretaries and equerries, occupied the private cars *Killarney* and *Cromarty*. Officials, including A. B. Calder of the C.P.R., diplomat, raconteur, railroadman in charge of the train, occupied the other cars. The correspondents and photographers attached officially had a car, *Carnarvon*, to themselves. Then there were telegraphers, baggage men, porters, the uniformed police who were carried everywhere, and the royal clerks, valets and servants. Altogether over one hundred people were carried across Canada to Vancouver and Victoria and back again on a trip of nearly three months.

Our progress was not unlike that of a circus playing one-night stands, with longer stopovers in the bigger cities. Everything was on schedule, so many hours here, so many days there. Everything was arranged in advance. There were the inevitable processions from the station to the legislative buildings, city hall, town park or hotel.

It was impossible to arrive without a procession: three cars for the Prince and his party, the lieutenant-governor, mayor or other local bigwigs; a car for the plainclothes police and two cars for the attached journalists who were by way of being the “what is it?” of these parades.

We heard ourselves jibed at as body-guards, stared at as flunkeys and spoken of with awe as visiting functionaries. Occasionally we would halt on a street long enough to have someone ask, “Who are you guys?”—and, when we explained, hear, “Heck, they’re just reporters!”

But it was reporting in the grand manner. On the tour we were treated like grand dukes. On board the train fresh caviar, *pâté de fois gras*, imported game, succulent meats, choice fruits and other delicacies were our daily portion, cooked by the five best chefs in the C.P.R. service. We were guests of the Canadian Government and it nearly ruined our digestions. We were invited to every municipal feast on the itinerary, each city going the limit with crab cocktails, royal gumbos and milk-fed capons without end. It remained, however, for Edmonton to stage a lunch that was a Guildhall banquet. This was the noble menu: celery, ripe olives, salted almonds, fruit cocktail Belle Vue, *consommé Comtesse*, *suprême* of lake trout Dieppoise, marinated caribou Chevreuil, cauliflower Polonaise, peas French style, potatoes Lorette, breast of prairie chicken Bigarrade, salad Waldorf, hot English plum pudding with hard sauce, and *demi-tasse*. It was not a question of choice but of taking what the waiters brought and they brought everything.

By way of contrast there was the simple luncheon which H.R.H. gave to guests from the West at the Royal Alexandra Hotel, Winnipeg, on the return half of the tour when he announced that he had bought a ranch at High River, Alberta. The menu read: crab cocktail, chicken gumbo, mallard duck, Parisienne potatoes, baked alaska and *café noir*, plus cigarettes of a popular Canadian brand.

We correspondents were made guest members of every club from the Atlantic to the Pacific. We went to hotel rooms reserved in advance where we found fruit and flowers awaiting us with the compliments of the management. We had nothing anywhere to pay but tips. In hotel dining rooms we simply signed chits and hoped the resources of the country would cover them. Altogether we lived elegantly, with nothing to worry about, not even our laundry which was cared for en route, or our clothes which were pressed on board the train.

The tour, however, soon became a monotony of train riding, detraining, processions, crowds, guards of honour, civic receptions, presentations of medals to war veterans, speeches from mayors in unaccustomed high hats, groups of shrill youngsters in white bibs singing “God Bless



The Prince of Wales on his 1927 visit welcomed to Toronto by the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario and his lady.

the Prince of Wales”, royal golf games which we soon ceased to watch and endless dances which we also ducked with their fresh relays of local belles who hoped Providence would make them a partner of Royalty for one brief whirl.

It was hard enough looking on and listening to all this round of entertainment which grew so stereotyped. How His Royal Highness stayed smiling through those three months we never could understand. His was a fine act, he was young and a good actor, and he kept fit. But it was a mystery how he maintained the ingenuous bearing that endeared him to the throngs. He did, though. Only once did he appear peevisish and that was at Nipigon, in Northern Ontario. He did

not like fishing but he was taken on a three-day fishing trip; he caught nothing, it was cold and he came back in shorts, shivering and scowling. As he approached in the canoe huddled up, camera men stood ready as usual to shoot. He climbed out and chided them: “It is very rude of you to take photos when I look like this.”

He was often nervous, frequently impatient but that was the only time he showed irritation.

The dining-car was on a number of occasions as the train roared along turned into a little theatre in which H.R.H. saw the moving pictures of the tour. Entering informally, pipe in mouth, his attendants trailing, he would greet the rest of us with a wave, then curl in a chair and possibly exclaim “Watch me rival Vernon Castle as a movie star!” He was boyish and outspoken about the other members of his party if they appeared, chaffing Sir Godfrey Thomas, his Private Secretary, and Sir Lionel Halsey, grim admiral who was his Chief of Staff.

It was a pleasant flash of what might be called the domestic scene. Otherwise the trip ran with almost mechanical monotony, without a hitch on the surface, without an untoward incident. We were bored and yet we enjoyed the luxury of it and even to a degree were thrilled by proxy, and a sense of possession, by the mobs and cheers.

What mobs they were!—Toronto, Winnipeg and Montreal particularly. I acquired a useful technique on the tour: how to get

in and out of crowds, where to park a car for a quick getaway, which way one was going to surge or break, the last moment to linger before retreat was cut off, how to reach a point of vantage for seeing, and so on. It is surprising how alike crowds behave in their excitements.

Even in those days the authorities had their Red scares. But it remained for the officials at Victoria, capital of British Columbia, to stage a real fright scene. The Prince was staying at the residence of the Lieutenant-Governor. We correspondents were at the Empress Hotel. All went quietly until the third or fourth evening when he was to attend a grand ball there. Returning from a walk just before dinner, we went as usual to the front door, only to be stopped by a Mounted Policeman in scarlet coat who barred our entrance. We explained our status. He shook his head. We produced our special passes. No, orders were orders; no admission to anyone; go around to the back.

We went there to find more Mounties. They quizzed us, scanned our passes and let us in under escort who led us through basement corridors along which police and soldiers with rifles and side-arms were prodigally strewn. At last we were carried to our floor in a freight elevator in which rode a constable. In the hall leading to our rooms police stood at every corner.

During the dance that evening almost as many police and soldiers were present as guests. There was a plot afoot to shoot the Prince, or bomb him, or something. So it was whispered.

Days later the true story came out. An American girl in Seattle had telephoned a young fellow in Victoria asking him to engage a room at the Empress for the night of the dance.

“Close to the Prince’s,” she said, “same floor if you can. It’s important, you know.”

Police officials, checking on everything, heard of this mysterious call and decided it had a fell purpose. Hence the picturesque display of force.

I have often seen police act vigorously in moments of official nerves but the royal ride through Montreal from Lafontaine Park to the Art Gallery provided an odd



WITH MANY THANKS FOR YOUR  
HELP DURING MY TOUR  
IN CANADA

*Edward P. Fall, 1919.*

Edward P. Fall, 1919.  
*Toronto Star*

example. What a crowd that was!—over half a million people massed along the route. At Lafontaine Park, where H.R.H. reviewed war veterans and distributed medals, the masses got out of hand and surged through the lines of police. For several minutes they threatened to swamp the big parade ground but the situation was saved by traffic constables. They set their motor cycles with side-cars in line and rode stuttering at the insurgents, cutting into the mass like scythes into wheat. Followed a *sauve-qui-peut* as the shrieking people streaked for the sides while the motor-cycles, turning and reforming, buzzed at them like hornet tanks. That cleared the campus by a method ruthless but effective.

On the previous evening the streets of Montreal had been a tornado of *vives* and hurrahs as the Prince rode from the Ritz-Carlton Hotel to the City Hall reception. This had been a mere appetizer for the enthusiasm that greeted his drive next day from Lafontaine Park along Sherbrooke Street to the Art Gallery. It was the volcanic climax of the Canadian tour. Toronto, Winnipeg, Ottawa and Vancouver crowds had been quiet by comparison. Montrealers, French and English-speaking, with the many foreign-born, massed in the streets so deeply that they outflowed from the sidewalks into the roadway, leaving little more than enough room for the procession to pass. If the police had not been lusty, the Prince might have been suffocated or clawed to death. The police, frightened, had excuse for being brutal. Scratches on his neck showed where people had caught him with their fingernails in their eagerness to touch him.

His Royal Highness, held erect by attendants, stood in the first car waving in response to the roar that beat on his ears like the sound of ocean waves. A phalanx of snorting motor-cycle police rode ahead with a venom that swerved not in its course. They bumped and pitched to the ground enthusiasts who crept out too far. They flung them back in the crowd. Their sirens screeched as they mowed their way ahead. But gradually they lost speed. Backing up, they sought fresh momentum to charge. Slower and slower became the progress.

The noise, like breakers, rose and fell, and reverberated, until the ear refused to register its variations, and it became a monotonous thundering.

I had a close-up never to be forgotten for, sensing unusual action, I had forsaken the correspondents' car which was shortly cut off and had contrived a seat in an open automobile carrying six big plainclothesmen of the Montreal Police. This ran behind that of H.R.H., ahead of the other official cars. And I sat in it alone! The six detectives rode on the running board, three to each side—rode and ran. For most of the time they were on foot, charging, shoving, punching. Down one would drop as a man threatened to board the Prince's car, a short run—and wham! Back staggered

the victim, holding his chest or his jaw.

It was idle to argue that his impulse had been excitement or loyalty. There was no argument. The police simply hit where a threat showed. I saw scores of people shoved, hurled or walloped by the riding, running, jumping detectives who puffed and sweated like rugby plungers.

The jam grew steadily more dense. In the wide place between the Ritz-Carlton and the Art Gallery it became an impasse. Possibly 50,000 people were crammed into this space. A saluting platform had been erected to review a march past of troops but this and the gallery steps swarmed with sightseers held there by the mob.

We could not proceed. The car of His Royal Highness came to a stop; and for nearly half an hour he had to sit imprisoned in the heart of the throng while police battled to keep at bay fans who tried to touch or kiss him. The motor-cycle men essayed the Lafontaine Park plan of riding at the crowd but it was so dense that they could not start their machines. At any rate, so thick was it that none nearby could yield.

At last, however, enough reserves were mobilized to cut a lane through and the Prince was virtually carried into the Art Gallery. There he stayed until clearance was made to enable him to reach the hotel. The march past was abandoned. Montreal had proven its loyalty.

So much for mob scenes. It was not the crowds that gave good copy so much as incidental contacts at some wayside place where the train happened to stop. Then I watched keenly, if discreetly, for some really human note as country girls came up unaffectedly to chat with the famous visitor or children swarmed around shouting, "Hey! It's the Prince!" One of the most touching features of the tour was the reception on the Prairies. Sometimes at two or three o'clock in the morning, as the train rumbled along, I would awaken to hear the brief sound of a cheer from people who had driven in long distances and waited up, just to give their one flashing shout in the dark. I often wondered if the Prince heard such little loyalties of the night and how he felt about them. I wondered how he felt about the whole big parade. If only I might have interviewed him as non-royal folk are interviewed! I wondered what a Prince thought, who heard people cheering him every day and even at night.

The trip was a surfeit of cheers. The crowds have never been duplicated in Canada. The emotion was amazing. . . now, looking back on it. Much money was spent. Great shows were put on. Heavy luncheons were given. Beautiful dances were staged. People smiled, curtsied, shouted. And yet. . . the greatest thing of all came like the song of bird on the Saskatchewan prairie, as the train thundered by.

It was this, a man standing at the salute on the roof of his isolated farm.

We saw him by chance, out of the window of the train. Evidently an ex-soldier. For he had dressed up. He wore khaki. He had donned his steel helmet. He had taken his rifle. Alone he had climbed to the roof to stand at the present as the Prince of Wales passed.

We thought that was the most moving loyalty of the tour, that unknown soldier's lone salute. We wondered if the Prince had seen it and if it had stirred him as it had stirred us.





## CAVALCADE OF FLAME

THE early part of the Fall of 1922 was unusually dry in Northern Ontario, at least in that wilderness region patched with settlement along the railroad line which ran to Cochrane. Here were little towns, mining camps and scattered farms in a setting of woodland. The time of hazard was officially past and by the middle of September the fire rangers were withdrawn. But continuing rainless days saw the forest parch to tinder which seemed to need only a spark, a lightning stroke, to leap into flame.

Nevertheless, with summer gone, farmers throughout the bush settlements, eager to clear land, were seizing the opportunity to burn slash.

Having become a writer of magazine articles for *The Toronto Star Weekly*, week-end or Sunday edition, I had been up to the new Kirkland Lake gold field for a series on prospecting. I had sought copy by trail and canoe across towards the Quebec border and had found the topic of the dry woods on every man's lips. Everyone prayed for rain soon to quench the threat. Yet the settlers burned brush.

My job finished, I took the train from Swastika south. The sullen air was thick with the haze of smoke. As darkness came on, the twinkling embers of hundreds of small fires might be seen on all sides. The whole country was merry as if candles burned. But they held menace. Old-timers looked out grimly from the smoking-car windows.

"If a wind should spring up, God help the North!"

Three days after I had returned to Toronto, on the afternoon of October 4, that wind came, a sudden fierce squall, to whip across the region and fan those hundreds of isolated heaps of smouldering rubbish into a cavalcade of flame.

Within a few hours a patch of nearly 700 square miles just off the north-east shoulder of Lake Temiskaming, from Cobalt north to Englehart and from Elk Lake on the west to the Quebec border—a still frontier countryside of partially cleared farms and little urban communities—had been irregularly ravaged by a red horror which swept through the forest and bush areas with wanton, gale-driven speed, striking here, roaring there, burning, destroying, killing.

In its wake that night lay swathes of ashes and glowing embers where had stood the homes of pioneers of two decades. Forty-three people were dead. Ten thousand were refugees. Property damage amounted to nearly \$10,000,000.

Haileybury, a picturesque town of 4,000 people on the shore of Lake Temiskaming, was practically obliterated. At a moment's notice in mid-afternoon its

inhabitants had had to flee from the hurricane terror that came jumping across the railroad from the brush blazing to the west. They fled south along the tracks to Cobalt, the silver mining town, and north to New Liskeard. They took to the lake on barges and boats. Scores plunged into water to the neck to escape the heat and the showers of sparks from their doomed homes.

A dozen other villages and hamlets were either destroyed or considerably damaged: Charlton, the south edge of Englehart, Heaslip, Hilliardtown, Thornloe, Osseo, Brentha, Mountain Chute and the fringe of New Liskeard, a good market town near Haileybury which otherwise, by chance, escaped.

*The Star* met the challenge of this calamity 350 miles north of Toronto and sent ten men to cover it. Thus it laid down in principle that type of barrage attack, hurling men at a major news job not singly but in platoons, which was to develop until its shock-troop method became a byword of almost reckless enterprise. The aim was to mop up. Great staff work in the office calculated the situation, planned the campaign—and reporters were shot out in groups. Little was left to chance. If one man missed, send another, and another. Go here, go there. Try this way, try that. And interview everyone—*everyone!* That was the method. Such was the aim. It was newspaper work at its keenest and it was a joy to have had a part in it. There was duplication, possibly waste effort. That did not matter so long as its pages sparkled with display, description, interviews, interpretations, photographs, maps, drawings by the staff.

The paper was vibrant with ambition, eagerness, youth. Never in Canadian journalism had such things been attempted, such opportunities given for action, adventure and achievement; never had there been such leadership—the men jumped to the game and the battle, ready to suffer discomfort and hardship in difficult places, to go without sleep, to work until they dropped, to dare almost anything, to risk their lives, in order to win for *The Star* and for themselves.

Those were golden years and the men were a gallant crew of a gallant newspaper.

To this Northern Ontario scene ten reporters went north by the first available train on a trip which took some sixteen hours before reaching its south limits more than twenty-four hours after the destruction of Haileybury. Time came when special trains, fast automobiles—in this case there was then no road north of North Bay—and aeroplanes would, when the occasion demanded, be used for quick transport, but not yet. This squad left for the action front—and, to my disappointment, I did not accompany them.

For five years I had been pointing myself to cover such an incident. Now this

terrific drama offered and because I had become a *Star Weekly* special writer I was not to be used. Trained but left at home, not carried on the team, that was tragic. However, next day, the proportions of the disaster grew and the order came: "Shoot more men north. Send Griffin and Gregory Clark of the *Weekly* staff."

We went north that night. I should have been elated; instead, I insisted on being glum. Were we not going forty-eight hours late, twenty-four hours behind the main gang? "The fire will be out. Refugees will have gone," I groaned. "There won't be anything left to write."

"Oh, stop wailing, you banshee," said Clark. "There'll be more than you can write in a week."

At North Bay, gateway of the North Country, we ran into two *Star* men, Charles Vining—a tooth brush his only baggage as a result of his quick departure with the first contingent—and Bill Scott. The telegraph wires north of Cobalt were down. Both had been up to the fire zone but had come back to North Bay to file despatches. They returned north with Clark and myself. At Cobalt we ran into more *Star* men. They had all been busy gleaning, writing, telephoning reams of copy. Hiring an automobile, I drove to Haileybury.

There was no Haileybury. Nothing but a smear of ashes. No people. No action. No story. Fate had indeed played me a scurvy trick, sending me to write of tragedy two days cold. Cursing my luck, I wandered around among the foundations of vanished frame homes as I observed other aimless people who moved about.

The mood of the bleak October afternoon, threatening snow, was not more sombre than my own. One could not make a sensation out of ashes. I might as well not have left Toronto. And there was no time to find anyone who might have anything to tell. Shortly I would have to catch the downbound train to North Bay to file my copy. Copy!—it was to laugh.

On the train I joined Clark, Vining and two or three other men heading over a hundred miles south to reach the telegraph wires. Before midnight we reached North Bay, went into the telegraph office and, amid the clicking of instruments flashing the copy to Toronto, began to write. I wrote with a pencil. But I had nothing to write! No? Yet I found myself scribbling and this is part of what, curiously, evolved:

"Haileybury lies to-day beneath lowering skies, a blasted heath upon a barren hillside. All that remains of the fire are spirals of blue smoke that curl lazily from among the ruins, spurts of flame from the still burning docks and a hopper car on the rails near the waterfront, the coal in which still glows red hot.

"All that remains of the town is the north-east slice which miraculously escaped through a shift of the wind—that, and a few ghostly walls that speak of once fine

buildings, and many, many tons of iron in twisted mockery.

“Over it is silence. Not a dog barks. No child’s voice is heard in this place of desolation. Laughter is absent as from a land of lost hopes.

“Haileybury is as if it had never been, a town dead and gone, only that here and there through the ruins stroll small groups of its citizens who once were. They walk as if time were no object, curious figures seeking for nothing they may hope to find. Most strange of all, showing how complete was the obliteration, several failed to tell me immediately when questioned on what particular street they stood. Several even failed at first to fix the location of homes of two brief days ago.

“‘That was where I lived,’ I heard a man say, pointing to a patch. ‘No, it wasn’t either,’ he went on slowly, ‘it was further west.’

“Haileybury to-day might be described in terms of short nails, long nails, straight nails, fat nails, thin nails, screw nails. They lie in tens of thousands everywhere. Here a row in peculiar alignment, as if arranged by hand, marks where stood a fence. Hundreds of them, higgledy-piggledy, are all that remains of a frame house. Nails came through the fire with less change than anything I noticed except brick and stone. Yet so great was the blaze, so fierce the heat, that the grey walls of the convent are misshapen in places, as if something monstrous had been nibbling at them.

“Or one might tell of it in terms of fireplaces and chimneys. One notices repeatedly chimneys standing in fragile dignity, the vertebrae of homes, and fireplaces of many designs, the rooms, the houses gone . . . .

“Or one might write in terms of bath-tubs or melted glass or the fragments of sewing-machines, or overturned safes where once stood stores, or broken beds where people slept and the cots of children.

“Almost anywhere one might reconstruct a home. How eloquently some of the rubbish heaps speak of the woman who once dwelt there! Here is a furnace in the middle of a ruin; there is a stove upside down with a pot underneath. What pleasant meal was cooking when the fire came? In one corner lies the iron skeleton of a clothes wringer. In another sits the kitchen sink. The staves of a burnt barrel encircle the charred remains of potatoes, perhaps, or apples. . . . A knob is all that is left of a closet door, of a woman’s dresses, a man’s clothes. . . .

“A man among the ruins spoke to me. He may have been young; he may have been middle-aged. He wore a grey sweater and an old felt hat, and showed a three days’ growth of beard. Three days ago he may have been a bank manager, a storekeeper or a day labourer. To-day he is just a man without possessions or a home.

“That’s mine!” he began, pointing to a spot on the soot-black hillside. . . .  
‘That was the house,’ indicating a jumble of rubbish in a basement.

“I drew all my winter’s wood,” he continued with apparent irrelevance.  
‘This’—and he jerked his thumb at some white ashes, ‘is all I have left.’ He held up a zinc tub. . . . He lifted one or two relics, mechanically dropped them, hoping for something, calculating. He had ceased to speak. He stooped over and pushed a lawn-mower lacking a handle. He laughed grimly when it worked.

“The piano sat there,” he resumed and with a careless gesture threw a stone. He threw another: ‘A stove sat in that corner.’ He dropped a third on some melted glass: ‘That was the fruit.’

“He kept on casually throwing stones. There was something terrible in his lack of violence. This reconstruction of his vanished home for a stranger was fearfully pathetic. . . . He showed me where a bed, quite gone, had stood. He explained where the sideboard had adorned the dining room. All without a question on my part. He just talked aloud as if in conversation there was relief from his loss and his memories.

“There’s a cup!” he exclaimed. ‘I bet you it’s good.’ He jumped down and retrieved it, and a saucer, fire-blackened but unharmed. They and his zinc tub were possessions. . . .

“He told me that \$400 in cash had been burnt there . . . . Worse still, for seventeen years he had carried insurance on the place—but the annual policy had lapsed three days before the fire. He had meant to renew it, but had not done so. He reckoned his total loss at \$9,000.

“At last he started slowly away. ‘Must get a shave,’ he said, ‘must get one somewhere.’ He had lost his home. He had lost his bathroom. He had not a razor, not even soap. He had lost his home town and there was no barber shop. . . .”

Such was the two-column story which wrote itself at North Bay. I had made no notes and had brought away from the scene no apparent feeling of tragedy. That black, bleak patch of hillside had seemed so impersonal and aloof; I had not yet learned that the aftermath of disaster is always unreal, that agony and blasted dreams leave no sign manual. Neither had I learned that it was possible to let myself soak in an atmosphere quickened by a charge of stark emotion, without other effort on my part than a keyed sensitiveness, and come away with a brimming record that only needed the essential facts, a few bits of human colour, little jabs of spoken pathos, to make a story that unwound itself. I was yet to learn that it was possible to move by a simple recital and that words, as mere words, had little value.

That story, my first essay at handling tragedy, took the matter out of my hands

and saved me from ruining it with too many words. Almost by revelation I found a mysterious other self which later was to become a trained and obedient servant which invariably arose out of nowhere in an emergency, to sense and interpret. Not once since then, despite many sharp, sudden tests and many a long, wracking effort, has he ever failed. Good old vest-pocket Jeeves! When I first began to be aware of him I used to fear that sometime he might vanish for good, my genie of the pencil, but he never failed to spring to action; and for years I have taken him for granted.

Time was, too, when I used to woo him by seeking to put myself in the proper mood for his conjuring by a kind of devotion, a flogging of the spirit, which would ensure his response, but that has passed and now he bobs up from scratch, after a plate of porridge or an afternoon's gardening. In other words, it is only necessary to measure clinically the set-up of a task, note the taste, colour and proportions, ask a sufficient number of questions and then make the words parade. That does not mean that atmosphere and contact with place or person no longer count. Of course, they do, don't they, my little Jeeves? I hope they will till, you and I, we meet St. Peter.

That story made me once more a news writer for *The Star* and changed my own story. From that time on I was to be more than a leisurely magazine performer. When larger news broke within the paper's orbit of immediate interest which was wide it was to turn me loose to write as I liked without check or space limit. Few news men anywhere had the frequently exultant power to write as they wished such as *The Star* has given me for years.

To return to the covering of the North Country fire and get away from this however necessary self-analysis, *The Star* scored a *tour de force* of current journalism in which my article was simply a decorative incident. Over the week-end, while other reporters stayed to handle the Cobalt end, meet and check refugees on the downbound trains, seven *Star* men set out on the first real survey of the stricken area. They went north by train and got off at New Liskeard, Earleton Junction, Englehart and other points and on foot, in canoes, by automobile and in wagons, spent Saturday and Sunday touring the various districts, totalling up exactly the casualties, measuring the damage as well as they might, assessing the calamity generally and unearthing stories of pathos, heroism and escape.

I went alone in from New Liskeard and rode and tramped about the countryside. Rain had come to turn the burnt-over swamps into the last acme of desolation. Vining and Scott paddled up the White River with a guide, penetrated into sections which had been isolated, and garnered a vivid narrative. Gordon Hogarth pushed with the first relief party into Heaslip where nineteen deaths had occurred, one entire family of ten being wiped out, and brought out a moving tale of

a little girl, sole survivor, who saw her father, mother and two sisters buried. Gregory Clark toured lonely farm spots and, with sympathy, learned of their terror and losses.

On Sunday evening each of us boarded the southbound train at the nearest available station and headed for North Bay. We were wrecks, unshaven, lacking sleep, rain-soaked, muddy, but elated, as we reunited and found what a harvest we had. We reached North Bay by midnight. There Charlie Vining, with that capacity which was to make him one of the ablest journalists in Canada, collated precisely our findings and made a composite sketch of the exact sweep of the fire which *The Star* published next day with an illustrative map. It was the first complete analysis of the disaster and came before that in process by the Ontario government.

Then each man wrote his individual article of human interest and adventure. Altogether the result was a coördinated spread of graphic, reliable reporting which proved that the paper had indeed hit its stride.

Two or three days later Gregory Clark flew in a government aeroplane across the desolated area and confirmed the results of our leg-work. That capped and completed the men's survey. We were all as knights who had won their spurs. That is a great feeling for a group to have. The office vibrated with a sense of power.





## SNOWSHOE INTERLUDE

THE search that year for article material led yet more deeply into the Canadian background. A ten-day winter trip of 150 miles through Northern Quebec forest opened the door of another world. It was my first and almost my last time on snowshoes. Going in a tenderfoot, I emerged a broken-down sourdough, the muscles of one leg completely played out and with holes in the knuckles of my middle toes, cut by badly tied thongs, through which one might see the bone.

That taught me all I wanted to know about snowshoeing but it gave a crammer's course in dog travel, bush camping with the temperature 48 degrees below zero, breaking trail, the silence of the woods, frozen bread, beans three times a day and a lot of other elemental matter.

My hosts were Charles Townsend, a forest engineer, and Ernest St. Pierre, a French-Canadian woodsman. It was to have been a leisurely excursion but some necessity changed their plan and it became a forced march. Getting off the train at Ste. Elizabeth, half-way between Montreal and Three Rivers, we drove by horse sleigh for the greater part of two days through snow-bound villages, St. Felix de Valois, Ste. Emelie and St. Michel des Saints, and a rude country in which lumbering was still a pioneer task, stopping at *habitant* inns and government construction camps to rest and eat. Every mile of this Quebec drive was a fresh experience; this was merely a prelude to adventure in the forest proper as we pushed through the Manouan district, up Lake Wabashkontyun, along ice-cased rivers and through morose woods deep in snow to Casey, a station on the Transcontinental railway.

After leaving St. Michel des Saints we tramped, dogs pulling our heavy sleds. First day out the tenderfoot, like the others, walked eighteen miles on snowshoes. Though it was extremely cold, there was no discomfort in the woods. In fact, the unaccustomed exertion under thick clothes bathed me in sweat. This ran from under my woollen toque to make a fringe of little icicles which had to be torn continually from before my eyes. Tiny cakes formed around the eyelids as well. Only on the lakes or a wide river sweep did the slightest zephyr cut through to my body.

I learned how really cold it was when a wayside halt was made for lunch. Metal seared like hot iron. Fingers stuck to the frozen pan in which the beans left from breakfast looked like concrete. Marmalade and condensed milk were solid. The bread was a stone. Heated food congealed before we had downed half a dozen mouthfuls and scalding tea was cold before our cups were emptied.

That first night we camped in a grove of spruce. It was already dark and I felt weak and useless fumbling to unload the sleds, while St. Pierre hacked through four feet of river ice for water and Townsend cut and trimmed poles for the tent. This seemed meagre shelter in which to spend a below-zero night on a snowbank but when the floor was carpeted with balsam and a fire started in a small boxstove, it was more than snug. Beans, bacon and pancakes soon restored morale and a sleeping bag presently brought oblivion.

Next day a change had come. The day was mild, the trail soft and uneven. Shortly developed a bad dose of *mal de raquettes*. Devils lodged in my thighs. Legs and loins shrieked, muscle after muscle taking up a chorus of protest. Aches came in unexpected places, between the shoulders, in the neck, the arms, the kneecaps, even in the fingers. A stitch stabbed at the groin. But I kept on. There was nothing else to do. The agonies passed in time and progress became a wearied plodding.

Ten miles proved the limit that day. We camped early in an old lumbering stable piled high with frozen manure, in the bunks of which we pitched our sleeping bags. Presently a lamp, a fire and food converted this forest slum into a place of cheer.

But the third day out I did more than twenty-two miles on a trail that will always remain a poignant memory. Every mile of it was covered with a curse or a prayer, which is not melodrama. There was horror in that long march. From the start the way led through burnt-over swamp filled with drifts. It was like walking on treacle. The snow caked in a ridge beneath the toes and had to be constantly hacked away. Shortly an intolerable claw tore at my left ankle. That passed, but a great tiredness succeeded and I had to climb hills pushing on my knees to force a lift to the feet.

At five o'clock, when it was already dark, we stopped a second time to make tea. We had come just thirteen miles since morning. Should we camp? Seven miles ahead lay Lake Manouan and a Hudson's Bay Company's post. A storm threatened and Townsend advised trying to reach it. "Can you keep on?" he asked. I answered "Yes", with mental reservations. In pitch darkness we resumed our march. The wind was rising. The trees creaked and groaned viciously.

To start at all was an effort for stiffened muscles were locked by the rest. But I managed it and took after the moving blurs from whom came no sound except an occasional "*Marche!*" to the dogs as we slid eerily along a groove in a black void of bush. The forest closed in as we passed, merging in a wave that kept coming in to swamp us, but never did. I had an impression of invisible rollers winding, winding, as I lurched and fell, again and again. My legs seemed to have no volition. My mind argued against keeping on. In a short while I lagged. Men and dogs disappeared. All

sound ceased except the wind's vague melody. I felt alone, absolutely alone, in a world in which there was no form, no life. I had a dreadful inclination to lie down.

Suddenly realization came that I must keep on. Strange energy welled up, muscles unlocked and legs, unaccountably, found surer footing. Within ten minutes I had caught up with the second sled. But soon fatigue came back in a new guise. It was as if I were outside myself in a conscious coma. Legs did not seem to belong as they plodded, plodded. My mind was crowded with horrible thoughts of the forest. Monsters and ogres of childhood beckoned from the dark.

There was no respite. The dogs were urged on and on as the men, weary from the harsh soft trail, felt they must keep on to reach the lake. It would be impossible to make camp now. The lake! The lake! Somewhere in that dark infinity ahead it beckoned like a phantom. . . . The air was chill but bodies were dank with sweat. For the first time St. Pierre, sturdy *habitant*, cursed jaggedly. We stopped for breathing spells but always we went on again. When we halted I felt sane; only when we resumed did the delirium return. On and on—and at nine o'clock we reached Lake Manouan, vaguely grey in the darkness. Across it, somewhere, lay the trading post. We started out, groping with our feet for the packed, invisible trail on its snow surface. The wind now lashed. Its full sweep quickly chilled us.

In ten minutes a driving blizzard broke. We moved slowly, hopelessly. Townsend halted. "I'm going to camp," he said, "here."

"We can't!" St. Pierre said. "We got no dry wood to make fire."

"To hell with fire! D'you want to walk around all night? I'm going to crawl into my sleeping bag."

I said nothing. It came to me that we should die if we did that, but I was past caring. However, the others decided to push on a little longer. We came to a point, a rising drift. Knees sagged, and I fell. Just then, "A house!"—it was a yell from St. Pierre. I lay, snowshoes twisted, face half buried in the snow, unable to move. I heard the others shouting but could not answer. St. Pierre came back, pulled me to my feet. I stumbled up the drift and into an empty shack. Here was shelter. Then, for a moment, the storm lifted. A light showed across a bay of the lake. A lighted house! . . . . Ten minutes later we were in the trading post.

In a short time, stripped of our outer clothes, we were eating, smoking, talking. Outside the storm roared and the snow sifted down. . . .

After being stormbound two days during which I had a chance to rest, we travelled north for two more days to a camp on the Manouan River where we had to stay through another day of storm; then we set out on the last day's trip of thirty miles to Casey. I was anxious to reach it, to catch a train to civilization that night

since there would not be another for two or three days.

The day was fine for travelling, about 28 degrees below zero, but the trail was soft from the fresh snow. By midday we had done thirteen miles when we stopped for lunch at an empty lumber camp. Here was a country telephone and Townsend tried to raise Casey, to have horses meet us. The connection was poor and he was not sure that he was understood. We started out to cover the last seventeen miles on foot.

The night of the blizzard on the Manouan was a mild constitutional compared to that final hike. The tote-road was buried in fresh snow. The others took turns at breaking trail; I plugged along behind. We were all in distress by nightfall. A leg of St. Pierre's which had been hurt in the War weakened and he could no longer lead. Townsend broke trail alone. We made scarcely a mile an hour. But we could not stop. We had no tent, no sleeping bag, no food, no axe to make fire, for the men had left theirs at the lumber camp to travel as lightly as possible. We had to keep moving or freeze in our tracks.

To make matters worse, my left leg at last gave way completely. Agony tore at the muscles from knee to ankle. I had to stop every twenty yards. No longer was it an affair of will; it was physically impossible to proceed. Still there was no sign of horses.

We hallooded. There was no response. We hallooded again. No response. We fired four shots from a revolver. No response. We tried to go crawling on. St. Pierre and I kept stumbling and falling through exhaustion, helping each other up in turn. (It was, you see, a struggle in the grand Antarctic manner. The best explorers could not have done better.)

At 8.15, with Casey still eight miles away, we thought we heard a shout. We listened—how we listened! Yet, a tiny shout. Townsend sprinted away. We stood and waited.

Ten minutes later two horses came plunging towards us. Men stripped off my mackinaw, wrapped me in a fur coat, cut the frozen snowshoe thongs, lifted me into the sleigh and piled me with rugs. The horses had taken four hours to plough through from Casey. It took them another four hours to plough back. But it was the most satisfactory ride of my life. I caught the 3 a.m. train, limping. My left leg was temporarily useless.

Not news, of course, but colour of the country giving material for articles.

Very different was a three weeks trip on freighters the following June on Lakes Superior, Huron and Erie. One of the ships, on which I spent a week, was the *W. Grant Morden*, 625 feet in overall length, at that time Queen of the Great Lakes and

the greatest bulk freighter in the world. Once in her holds she carried 503,516 bushels of wheat or the yield of over 25,000 prairie acres. That was in 1919. Two years later she carried 780,000 bushels of oats. On another occasion she brought down 16,302 short tons of iron ore, enough to fill 300 railroad freight cars. These, it is true, were record cargoes but not unusual.

I journeyed on the *Morden* to Ashland, Wisconsin, watched her load ore there, then came south to the steels works at Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

Similarly on the *Midland Prince* I went to Fort William and Port Arthur at the head of Lake Superior, through whose battery of mighty elevators the wheat of the three Prairie Provinces funnels seaward. It was my first contact with wheat as well as with the sweep and romance of the Great Lakes.

Strange how little people seemed to know of the swarming sea life and the vast transportation of these inner oceans which mean so much to Canada! Very little had been written about them. They had figured scarcely at all in poetry or romance. Yet freighters, long as ocean liners, trudged up and down them in hundreds and Georgian Bay sailors of inland Canada had built up a seafaring tradition as fine as any on the open waters of the world.

From that trip I learned much that was to be of value later, writing sudden, sharp news stories about lake disasters. For they have their tragedies, too.

Later that year, in October, 1922, I made a trip to Peribonka on the north shore of Lake St. John, some two hundred miles north of the city of Quebec. That was the country of *Maria Chapdelaine*, the beautiful book of Louis Hémon which was then having its vogue. Hémon was a native Frenchman who came to Canada, went north to Peribonka, lived as a colonist and wrote this novel which the world hailed as a masterpiece. In France at that time it had run to nearly 350,000 copies. It was translated into English and proved a best seller for months. That was a period when Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* and A. S. M. Hutchinson's *If Winter Comes* were riding a high tide of popularity but this almost idyllic story of Quebec pioneer life with its simple lyric style and severe, moving interpretation of the colonists' fight to conquer the forest won a place in readers' hearts.

As everyone knows, Hémon did not live to learn of its success. He was deaf from catarrh. One day in 1913, when he was only thirty-three, he was killed at Chapleau, Ontario, by a train he did not hear as he walked along the track.

It became known that Hémon had built *Maria Chapdelaine* out of a real place, Peribonka, and of real characters. It was them I went to seek and I found the originals: Samuel Bédard, innkeeper of Peribonka, who was model for *Samuel Chapdelaine*, Mme. Bédard, model for *Laura*, the wife, Eva Bouchard, model for

*Maria* herself and many others—as well as the house in which Hémon lived as hired man, the dog he had played with as a pup, the church in which he had worshipped and other things of literary interest.

With a feeling that explanation was necessary I wrote at the time: “When one says model, one wishes to impress on readers that none of these people one met at Peribonka is a living photograph, either in appearance, character or behaviour, of the principals of Hémon’s book. The author lived with them, studied them, dreamed of them; then, with the creative skill of the artist, used this, rejected that, changed and transfigured, to achieve the picture of life as he saw it.

“One hesitates, therefore, to walk with rough footsteps into the land of his romance. . . . One fears disillusionment for oneself or the shattering of beauty for others. Neither need be feared if we remember that these people in these (*Star Weekly*) articles were merely the models for the author like the common woman whose features the painter may transpose into the face of a Madonna.”

Such was the mood in which I went prying into the secret land of Hémon. To reach it I took train from Quebec City north to Roberval on the south shore of Lake St. John. From this junction point of the region, in which there was neither a policeman nor a moving picture theatre, a small steamboat ran twice weekly across the lake to Peribonka on the north-east corner. Now it was almost winter and the boat had stopped for the season. As the train then went only as far as St. Félicien, a little beyond Roberval, I hired a car and drove around the west side of the lake and across the north to my destination.

There I found that Bédard, with whom Hémon had lived, model of the rugged *Samuel Chapdelaine*, was no longer a farmer but a lean boniface who sang tenor in the choir of the village church. That was disappointing; however, I stayed three days in his inn and learned much lore of Hémon. Bédard had been a pioneer and had cleared land. He and his wife, original of *Laura*, had lived in a shack on the fringe of the woods which a decade earlier had encircled the place, and had slashed and stumped, cut and burned to win land. That was how Bédard had happened to meet Hémon and to become, dry man that he was—more like a priest than the ideal of a farmer—an heroic character in a moving book.

One June day in 1912 he was returning on the packet from Roberval with a number of other settlers from the new clearings along the Peribonka River, unshaven men in boot packs and coloured shirts. On the deck were cattle, pigs, ploughs, provisions and material for the settlement. The *colons* discussed affairs.

To one side, aloof but interested, anxious to hear yet diffident of intrusion, was a slight man of thirty-two, a stranger, obviously not a pioneer. This was Louis Hémon,

journalist from Paris who was writing articles for *Le Temps* on the country of Quebec. It is not known how he happened to come to Peribonka. Undoubtedly he was interested in seeing a new region in the process of colonization. But did he intend to stay? Had he at the moment thought of a book? Was his masterpiece the result of a chance meeting with Bédard, his decision to remain simply the sequel to impulse?

Bédard, curious, inquisitive, strolled over and began to chat. The Frenchman turned eagerly to question him. The latter offered, slyly, to sell him his farm.

“No,” said Hémon, “I do not seek to buy land but I have a proposal, my friend. I should like to work for you.”

“You mean, help on the farm, clear land? But you are not a colonist, not a workman!”

“I am willing, and if you agree I will come with you for eight dollars a month.”

The bargain was quickly made and thus was planted the germ from which grew *Maria Chapdelaine*. Hémon came to Bédard as a labourer, not as a guest or tourist. He did not ask, did not seek, favours. His desire was obviously to live as a pioneer, to struggle, to feel. He said nothing about writing a book.

Only one condition did he make, that he should have Saturday afternoons free. At other times he played the rôle of hired man but then, free of all chores, he would slip to the shores of the Peribonka. There he would linger along the high banks, alone in the solitude of the forest, his imagination quickened by the murmur of the river on its way to Lake St. John—and there, amid “the birches, aspens, alders and wild cherries scattered on the slope”, he conceived the Chapdelaine story.

There he evolved his characters and the spiritual, wistful quality of his tale, straight from the scene as he felt it, all around him the mood of the earth and the forest and the elemental forces against which the settler pitted his will to carve a home from the wilderness.

*Maria Chapdelaine* was thus created on the spot though the author’s final writing was done in the village of St. Gedeon, some distance away, and in Montreal.

I attended church with the Bédards and visited the house, three miles out of Peribonka, where he had lived with them, a place of three small rooms and a tiny lean-to behind the three-decker stove where he had slept. Here was also an attic, bedroom of two adopted children of the Bédards whom he had immortalized as *Alma Rose* and *Telesphore*.

He found it droll that Bédard should farm in this stern way when he might have lived otherwise. He found it droll that he (Hémon) should try to harness a horse back-side front. Never did he quite learn to drive. People laughed at him. He



laughed back at them for he was going to make them immortal. One got a picture of the young Frenchman as a whimsical fellow, already shadowed by an early death. He was never well; catarrh was his constant affliction; he was deaf. Yet he was gentle, patient, kind.

It seemed strange, in view of the sympathetic, almost affectionate interpretation he made of the life of these people, that apparently the only person with whom he felt really at home—except, to some degree, the Bédards—was Eva Bouchard, sister of Mme. Bédard. It was she who was the basis of *Maria Chapdelaine*, his central character.

Mlle. Bouchard was then a school teacher, twenty-eight years old. Educated at a convent, she had a culture higher than that of the countryside—and Hémon spent many hours in her company. From her he learned many local tales which he incorporated in his story. From her lips, as well as from his own observations, he undoubtedly arrived at the psychology of the people and acquired their philosophy, and his own, towards winter, the forest and the harsh work of making land.

“No,” Bédard assured me, “Hémon did not love Eva Bouchard.”

But I like to think there was romance, if not on his part, on that of the backwoods teacher to whom this Paris writer must have appeared charming.

I tried to see her but failed. She had gone to Chicoutimi on the Saguenay River which is the real metropolis of the Lake St. John country, where she had become secretary of the Abbé Delamarre. She had turned *religieuse* and was much given to prayer. Reasons of health had prevented her taking the veil of a nun. All this since Hémon’s death. I saw in it a sequel, unfinished, to his story. Who knows?

Mlle. Bouchard was ill at that time but her employer, the Abbé Delamarre, a frail old man, student, historian, cleric, willingly discussed her.

“Yes,” he agreed, “she is *Maria*. But she is a clever, cultured woman. As a girl she spent five years in a convent of the good Ursulines at Montreal.” He smiled and paused. “You see she is not just the simple country girl.”

The book *Maria Chapdelaine* he called true, yes, but fiction and *trop douloureux*. His view was that Hémon, accustomed to Paris, had found the life at Peribonka too hard and sad. It was not hard and sad for the people, and the old abbé smiled again whimsically.

This trip enabled me to catch the savour of the Peribonka region before it was quickly lost for all time. Less than seven years later I went on a flying trip to the north shore of Lake St. John to obtain the tale of three trappers lost in the bush, a father and two sons, one of whom had died of starvation while the other, alone, had stayed for seventy days guarding the disintegrating corpse.

It was a dreadful episode of the wilderness, worse than anything Hémon had heard or imagined, but it had taken place much farther north. For the district had changed. The railroad now circled the west and north shore. At the point where previously the Mistassini River mentioned in his tale had come pouring masterfully into the lake had arisen a power plant, a pulp and paper mill and a model town called Dolbeau of 2,000 inhabitants.

Already, so quickly, had come people, pavements and electric light where in his day had been a virgin forest along the edge of which colonists nibbled with axes to carve out homes. He had arrived in time, receiving his cue and playing his part of a recorder at just the right moment.

Then, his work finished, his book written, he had been killed. His was a strange chance.



## AEROPLANE CAPERS

CANADA seemed ready-made for the aeroplane. Montreal and Toronto were only an overnight journey apart but land travel to its more distant cities was long and tiresome. Virginal spaces uncut by highways, accessible on the fringe only by roundabout steamers which had to dodge the Arctic ice floes or internally by canoe or dog team as in the days of Mackenzie or Fraser, stretched for a thousand miles beyond the railroad. Moreover, it was a natural aerodrome. The Rockies in the Far West formed the only real mountain hazard. The Prairies were one large flying field. In the East and North forest areas and tundras were fretted with lakes and rivers in such abundance that seaplane navigation was possible hither and yon to their farthest depths.

Add the fact that Canadians, forming over 60 per cent. of the British Air Forces in the War, had proven superb pilots, and it would indeed seem that the Dominion was quickly to spread heavenward with the arrival of human flight.

Yet comparatively little has been done by governments to foster aviation or to develop national airways. The United States, criss-crossed by railroads and highways, has a network of commercial air services carrying mail and passengers, and even modest cities have well-equipped landing fields. Scarcely a Canadian city, except Montreal, has an airport worthy the name and there is little or no provision anywhere for night flying. True, emergency flying fields are being laid out as part of a relief project to serve a future Trans-Canada Airline but the work proceeds obscurely. Mail flying was begun in the East but this was cancelled during the depression, and such mail contracts as exist are almost entirely confined to gold mining areas and remote points lacking speedy ground transport; any attempt to link the Dominion with the air-web which begins at the border and spreads down over Latin-America has been abandoned. Britons and Americans have discussed and made tentative surveys of a north overland air route to Europe but Canada has until recently shown little active interest in the idea. No doubt there is little need of hurry.

While the country has been hesitant about the value of aerial transport over southern belts which have land facilities, yet great enterprise, both government and private, has gone into the use of the fast-winging plane at once for the conquest and protection of frontier regions. The mainland rim of the Dominion has been brought within almost a day's flight of civilization; that is all that separates the once far distant Aklavik at the mouth of the Mackenzie River, 200 miles inside the Arctic Circle,

from the end of steel in Northern Alberta.

During the past decade wilderness fliers have written a gallant chapter of aviation history that is fit sequel to the record of Canadian pilots in the Great War. Much of it was done almost by stealth, receiving little of that publicity given to distance and speed flights, but their work has been of great economic importance. Some of these new *voyageurs* have been War veterans like "Punch" Dickins, "Wop" May and Flight-Lieut. R. S. Grandy, all three recipients of the Order of the British Empire for their peace flying; others are of the post-war generation but they, too, have been contributing to the building of a sturdy, if unspectacular, tradition of duty in the waste spaces. In the Northwest the airman has replaced the Mountie as an outrider of civilization.

The Royal Canadian Air Force has carried out surveys of the ice conditions in the Hudson Straits and has maintained for years forestry and fishery patrols in the western provinces. Eleven years ago the Ontario Government created a Provincial Air Service to protect its timber-lands from fire. This organization, flying over bush areas in watch and ward all summer, has set up a record of efficient performance surpassed by few civil aviation companies operating over settled territory. The use of planes by exploration and carrying units has made possible the discovery and development of mining fields whose existence and yield would otherwise have lain hidden in the future. The highly potential value of Great Bear Lake, up near the Arctic Circle, as a treasure-house of copper, silver, gold and radium has been made possible by the aeroplane which during the past four years has brought it within commuting distance of Edmonton. Mineral finds in the northern parts of British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec have been advanced a generation by the aerial transport of men and materials.

If Canada is to-day the second gold-producing country—or third with Russia now in the picture—that fact is in considerable part due to the unsung pilots who kept nosing their aircraft over rivers and lakes that had, in very many cases, never felt the touch of a white man's paddle.

In a general sense the twenties had scarcely begun before the aeroplane loomed with sustained news interest. That was inevitable in the post-war quest for colour and fast, sharp drama. It offered them aplenty in terms not only of human and scientific conquest and of commercial development in a brand new industry but of sporting risk. To ascend in one, it appeared then, was to flirt with death, and airmen were invested with an heroic aura. In an age of money-making and sophistication here were knights errant willing to risk their lives over an ocean or a pole for little more than a Page One headline, for there is no proof that any pilot except Lindbergh

acquired a butler.

Piloting a White Bird or an American Girl was indeed a quick way to glory or the grave. Men with no more mechanical skill than a taxi driver, and no more culture, had only to learn to handle a joystick and start for the Atlantic horizon on however ill-conceived a flight to find themselves heralded as daring fellows.

This was not to be wondered at. The aeroplane flashed on the twenties with virgin news force. Before the War this novel contraption, a kind of mechanized crate which soared, had been an experimental oddity in despatches. The War forced hothouse development of a scout and attack weapon of the air. The War also gave pilots homeric value. Among its epic figures were such Canadian fliers as Bishop, Barker, Collishaw and other young paladins who swooped, zoomed, immelmaned and dived with death on their wings; and the aces of Great Britain, Germany and France. Hundreds were not only killed in action over the fighting lines but in the training camps before they got there.

With this heritage of slaughter, after a lull of a year or two, the aeroplane began to appear as a peacetime sensation. Aviation interest grew rapidly and shortly it was producing ocean and polar flights, non-stop attempts, endurance contests, altitude climbs and such figures as Lindbergh, Byrd, Cobham, Kingsford-Smith, Chamberlin and Levine, Nungesser and Coli, Ruth Elder, Amy Johnson, Amelia Earhart, Bernt Balchen, Floyd Bennett, von Huenefeldt and Fitzmaurice, Wiley Post, to snatch just a few names from the roster of an air-avid decade.

Some have enduring records while others are scarcely remembered to-day, so fickle was this aviation fame, but they, and many other meteoric celebrities of the new air trails, crashed Page One almost daily. Many of them I met but here I merely seek to touch on flying as it brought an occasional thrill to the life of an aspiring, if none too heroic, reporter.

For flying during those years was news and *The Toronto Star*, more than any other newspaper in Canada, whenever possible linked the aeroplane with stories and stunts. A lot of its use was to give a romantic suggestion to the covering of events but no one was hurt and it was excellent stimulation which the public relished and which added to the newspaper's reputation for enterprise. I had the good luck, in this as in other things, to be a newspaperman during the period of aviation's commercial birth and to figure in some of the earliest newspaper flying. If to-day it seems trifling compared with the sky hops of the Mollisons and England-Australia derbies you must remember that it took place in an era of heavenly pioneering.

War pilots had, almost to a man, folded their wings, content to lapse into obscurity, seeing no future at the moment in business aviation, when, in September,

1920, I was given the chance of a first flight to Moose Factory, ancient post of the Hudson's Bay Company on James Bay which is the south arm of Hudson Bay. At that time James Bay rated almost sub-Arctic. How odd that seems to-day, with the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario railroad running, however futilely, to Moose Factory and with the Canadian National line carrying unwanted wheat to the far north port of Fort Churchill! But in 1920 the railroad terminated at Cochrane in Northern Ontario and Moose Factory was buried in 185 miles of wilderness. To reach it took a week by canoe down the Abitibi, Mattagami or Missinabie Rivers in summer, a week or ten days by snowshoes or dog sled in the winter.

We flipped there in a slow flying-boat in two hours; which epitomizes what the aeroplane has meant to the Canadian hinterland.

Since then pilots of mining companies have criss-crossed the Barren Lands from the Thelon River to Coronation Gulf and forest ranging planes have travelled hundreds of thousands of miles. But that flight of 1920 was the first bush flight, the first northern flying, so far as I know, done in Canada.

The pilot with whom I flew was W. Roy Maxwell, a young civil engineer who had been a wartime instructor. He was one of the few army fliers who turned immediately to civil aviation as a career. He was a trail-blazer of the post-war days and may be credited with pioneering the first technique of wilderness operation of craft using floats for landing on forest waters and skis for landing on snow and ice. He evolved the system of aerial fire-ranging which was gradually adopted all over the North Country and became director for eleven years of the highly successful service maintained by the Ontario Government.

At that time, eager for opportunity, he was barnstorming with a moving picture company which had the idea of securing the first photographs of life at Moose Factory. He came into *The Star* office one day and offered to take along a reporter. The job was handed to me and it proved an exhilarating adventure. It was my first northern contact, living in the bush, sleeping in a tent, meeting Indians, moose and muskrats, riding in a canoe—and in one swoop to the south tip of Hudson Bay I was established as a Far North expert. Thus are values quickly, if often superficially, achieved in newspaper work. For *The Star* printed my photograph with a map showing the extent of my two-day odyssey. Later I wrote a series of articles on our experiences which made them seem thrilling indeed. We should all have been knighted!

The flight in from Remi Lake, about forty miles west of Cochrane, down the Mattagami and Moose Rivers to Moose Factory was uneventful. Indians in the forest, we learned later, fired ineffective shots at the weird bird soaring high

overhead. We stayed two days as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Sherman Thorpe at the Révillon Frères Trading Company's post on the mainland and visited the historic fort of the Hudson's Bay Company on Moose Island. The trip out on a warm September afternoon promised as little excitement as the one in but it resulted in a forced landing. Forced landings were to become a habit of mine; whether I was an air-Jonah I cannot say.

Our plane was a heavy HS2L flying boat with Liberty motor, a clumsy ship bought as post-war scrap from the United States Navy. Maxwell, with George Doan, mechanic, was at the controls. Harry Blake of the Ontario Government Motion Picture Bureau and I squatted in the front cockpit, which was merely a round hole which permitted us to crawl into the canoe-like bow. All went well; we were humming along in the dead air when, without warning to us passengers, the ship banked and swung back north. A glance at an altimeter in the bow showed we had lost height. The ship banked again and turned south.

Raising myself out of the opening, I looked back, only to have the pilot motion me down. I crawled back beside Blake. Neither of us could see out and the roar of the engine did not permit talking. Once more the ship banked and turned. We made some dumb show, pointing downwards. Something was wrong, we were going to land and the pilot evidently sought a suitable place in the river which, though wide, was at low water that was thick with rocks and shoals. Our forward quarters, should we hit anything and crumple, would certainly not be pleasant; and there was the threat that the engine, high amidships, might come crashing down.

That was a bad three minutes as Maxwell shut off his motor and came gliding down. However, he made a perfect landing and shortly we were nosing the shore.

A mishitting engine: that was the reason given for our unscheduled descent on the Mattagami River a hundred miles from Cochrane. Maxwell decided to stay the night and overhaul. We had neither tent nor sleeping bags and in this northern latitude there was already frost. "At least," he said, "we have some emergency rations. Get them out, George, we'll eat."

George produced the chocolate bars, hard tack and other stuff from a box, but we did not eat. Gasoline had spoiled all but a small parcel of rice. Building a fire, we started to cook that but one cook too many upset the pot. We went to bed supperless.

It was not much of a bed. Rigging the ship's tarpaulin as a windbreak, we built a big fire by the water's edge and lay on a carpet of balsam boughs without other covering than our flying suits. When the sun went down, the temperature dropped below freezing. Sleep was impossible.



Yet it was a beautiful night. The swish of the Mattagami against the stones and an occasional crackle of the fire were the only sounds to break the silence of this complete isolation. The Northern Lights danced gossamer cotillions across the sky. The moon, a golden orb, hung clear and close. Once a mink came swimming to the shore to look us over. His eyes reflected the firelight with stabbing jets. Then he whisked away. . . .

Nothing for breakfast. Doan shot a partridge. Cooked, and split four ways, it only served to multiply our appetite.

Towards noon, after adjusting the engine and making a lengthy shore survey to find enough run to taxi and for a take-off without hitting a rock, Maxwell decided to start for Remi Lake. He was afraid he might have to leave Blake and myself behind to ensure a light, quick lift, a plan which did not fill either of us tenderfeet with enthusiasm. Pushing the plane off, he and Doan drifted downstream, observing, sounding, while we walked along the shore abreast feeling like Babes in the Woods as our only link with civilization floated away on the Mattagami.

Finally, to our relief, we heard a hail: "We're coming in for you. Looks like a fair run—I'll take a chance on lifting. Better than having to come back."

There was little time to speculate on which was a worse risk, another foodless night in the woods or a rock-dodging take-off. "Hop in!" said Maxwell as he worked in close.

We stowed forward and in a short time heard the engine contact. The next few minutes called for self-control as the clumsy ship surged through the water gathering speed while we crouched inside, out of the pilot's line of forward vision, unable to see anything. At any moment the light bow in which we sat might hit a stone—and then! It seemed as if the rise would never come; then, quietly, we were off the water.

But the banks were high, with tall spruce, and the river wound; Maxwell could not make a direct climb. He had to twist with the stream until he won enough height to clear. It was tricky flying but he managed it and we headed south high over the Mattagami. Soon we ran into haze and heavy smoke from forest fires which clouded vision. That meant fumbling through by compass. But the pilot overcame that difficulty. We descended on Remi Lake with less than half a gallon of gasoline left in the tanks.

Such was my flying baptism. Subsequent jaunts with Maxwell bred a degree of familiarity with the aeroplane. Once we carried a black bear from below Montreal to Toronto for presentation to the Riverdale Zoo. Great interest was aroused in the first untamed denizen of the wilds to travel by air and thousands turned out at Sunnyside Beach, Toronto's Coney Island, where we landed, to cheer it and us.

On another occasion Fred Davis, a staff photographer, and I flew from Toronto to Buffalo, N.Y., with the late Eddie Stinson of Detroit, a well-known airman, to bring back an account and pictures of the funeral of L. R. Steel, an early chain-store magnate whose death had local interest. The journey was short but it was in November, a bitter day, and we had a trying return trip, bucking a heavy storm all the way. We had light clothes on. Half-way back, the wind tore a mica pane out of the cabin door and we were nearly frozen. But we got back in time to make the day's last edition, as a waiting automobile rushed us from the airport to the office. Photographs and story went from our numbed fingers into the paper and our little jaunt to and from Buffalo was hailed as a journalistic feat. Such was flying in the early twenties before anyone had crossed an ocean.



The author meets an old-time prospector in the Northern Ontario gold fields.

*Toronto Star*

In March, 1926, winter of the Red Lake gold rush when hundreds of prospectors took the trail of over one hundred miles from Hudson and Sioux Lookout in Northern Ontario to stake claims in the snow, I flew there from New York with Maxwell, a distance of 1,500 miles. His job was to deliver a new light-plane for transport work between Sioux Lookout and the camp which had sprung up in the bush. This was the beginning of that part which the aeroplane has increasingly played in the new mining areas of Canada. My part was explainable only

in terms of the linking of aviation with the current gold rush, for Paul Reading of *The Star* had tramped in earlier and described the trail.

As a flight from Manhattan to the untamed frontier, the long trip was a failure; we could have made the journey much faster by train to Sioux Lookout and thence by dog team to Red Lake over the snow road which the sourdoughs had used all winter in their eagerness to stake. Bad weather was our undoing, but the travel was interesting. It was spring when we left Roosevelt Field, Long Island, and headed north, but by the time we reached Toronto we had caught up with retreating winter. At Sudbury we changed from wheels to skis and proceeded with what was really a pioneer winter flight, however tortoise-like. For one thing, we used one of the first air-cooled engines built and we used it under severe conditions. We suffered these in an open cockpit. That was before the luxury of cabins, at least on light-planes. Unprotected except for a small mica windshield at temperatures that went to 30 degrees below zero, we had to wear goggles and leather face masks, with mere slits for eyes, nose and mouth. Our flying suits, boots and helmets were heavily lined, but, no matter how airtight I thought myself, the cold seeped in. Always it found a tiny opening or loose seam and gradually I froze until the bones threatened to crack. It was cold!

On the journey from Sudbury along the shore of Lakes Huron and Superior, then north up Lake Nipigon, we had four forced landings. The first was about forty miles from Sudbury when frost gradually choked the intake and pressed us down almost to the tree tops before the pilot found a suitable lake, Pogamasing, on the frozen surface of which he glided down. That evening the weather broke, holding us two days. We took off again on a day of bitter cold.

It was bright but windy, the upper air filled with trailing clouds. What bumps! The light plane rocketed so hard that at times we had to catch the cowling to hold to our seats. Oil from the engine, slapped up by the pitching and caught in the wind-stream, smeared our bow. The pilot, his arm aching from his fight with the joystick, was forced down on Lake Como.

An empty shack was the only habitation in this winter desolation. Entering, we cooked a meal and that night slept there in our eiderdown bags. Starting again next day, we reached Lake Nipigon but ran into a snowstorm which again hurriedly brought us down, fortunately close to a trapper's cabin where we stayed. Snow fell throughout the next day but the day following broke clear and we started for Sioux Lookout, 150 miles to the north-west, heading along a trail of white lakes which gleamed in the infinity of blue-black forest.

Before long my goggles fogged. A handkerchief failed to clear them; they grew

worse. Beside me in the front cockpit the mechanic, his head down, was also working at his. I peered around at the pilot. He too was in trouble.

Terror caught me, the fear of fire. Gasoline, I thought, knowing little about engines, is being flung back and we may burst into flame! A dreadful impulse drove me to jump up and shout, but I crushed it back and sat still. Vision was now cut off except for an opaque blur. To raise one's glasses was impossible; the icy wind-stream cut the eyes like a whip. How could Maxwell possibly land blind? I held tense as he shut off the engine and prepared to glide.

As the plane banked, I fumbled to raise the goggles and peer from the shelter of the cowling. It straightened, banked again, curled around—I had a glimpse of black horizon sweeping up, a flash of wide white lake, then the dark bush again in a fantastic jigsaw.

We were turning over! I braced myself for the crash!

Bump! Bump-bump!

The skis hit the snow, the machine swept to a stop—we had landed level in a perfect three-point. A superb example of piloting, when one knows how difficult is landing under the best circumstances on an unbroken, dazzling, snow surface. That was art, and courage, with Maxwell's eyes bare to the bitter wind-stream.

The trouble was, not gasoline, but oil. A pipe had loosened or broken and the oil had flung back in our faces. That was a task to fix, on the surface of a frozen lake, with the temperature 30 degrees below zero. However, pilot and mechanic managed it, while their useless passenger tried to keep from freezing in his tracks. When we climbed aboard at last I was chilled through and the flight to Sioux Lookout reduced me to a point of complete congealing. We reached it, and a day or two later, piloted by Harry (Doc) Oaks who took Maxwell's place, I hopped the hundred-odd miles into the Red Lake Camp, flying two or three thousand feet above the trail made by men and dogs. On foot that was a journey of four or five days. We did it in an hour and a half.

Here one found a gold settlement in its first state. As the plane banked over Burntwood Bay half a dozen tents might be seen along the shore, behind them the rock formation, site of the original discovery of hidden gold which had during the winter brought men trudging there by the score to seek a problematical fortune. But where were these men? As the machine glided towards the ice, dark figures came running from their burrows. One found out later that hidden in the bush all along the east shore of the bay were the tents of prospectors, most meagre of shelters, primitive in many cases as the homes of the earliest nomads, in which these treasure seekers lived harsh, monotonous lives while they waited for spring to disclose the

claims they had staked.

Red Lake, an Ontario mining centre in embryo, was then an unorganized collection of individual anchorites, without women, without amenities, without amusements, without liquor, without even gambling, as they withstood a siege against cold, isolation, boredom. They were human termites hibernating. They had staked for miles in this first rush, each overlapping the other, not knowing whether underneath lay sand, muskeg or rock in which there might or might not lurk gold scattered in flecks. There was nothing to do but wait soberly, meagely, moodily for the spring break-up to disclose what each had drawn in the geological lottery which the gods aeons before had set with whimsical hand.

This was mining. This was the frontier of Canada back from a railroad. I had contact with it in a hundred ways and it was always the same: bleak, harsh, relentless, overpowering, in which a northern breed of men ventured and pioneered and would have no other life than that of the limitless spaces. It was to this country and to these men of the long and lonely trails that the aeroplane brought revolution.

It has, for me, been always an effort of will to ascend in one. The earthbound pull has been too strong to make flying as easy as land travel. My imagination before and during a flight has invariably kept thoughts of sudden death lurking just around the corner. A curious confession to make, but at least I have never run away from a necessary or even avoidable flight, which may be counted unto a reporter for righteousness. Which serves to introduce the last flying episode which has journalistic point. It was in connection with the total eclipse of the sun on January 25, 1925.

A week previously the Managing Editor sent for me and said he had arranged to have a machine of the Royal Canadian Air Force from Camp Borden, a military training ground about seventy miles north of Toronto, take a *Star* man up to view the phenomenon from the air.

"It will be a great thing," he declared, "if it works—the first time, so far as I know, it has ever been done."

"You know," he went on, warming up, "it may be that you," for this was an invitation or command, "will be the only human being to view the eclipse. Suppose it's an overcast morning! You will be able to climb above the clouds and see the whole thing, alone, from this unique vantage point, and describe it, of course."

"In fact," and he rubbed his chin meditatively, "one could almost wish that it might be dull that day. That would be a great story. Will you go?"

Of course, yes. But I spent a sad week; I guess I made a will. The more I read of eclipses the less I liked the idea of going aloft in pursuit of one. If one were on a height, one book said, the spectacle of the darkness sweeping across the face of the

earth was especially terrifying. We would be on a height for sure; what effect would that have on the pilot? Suppose he were stupefied by this sweep of darkness and lost control or fainted! Suppose. . . .!

The evening preceding the eclipse I went to Camp Borden and slept there the uneasy sleep of a man who wished this visitation had occurred in some other man's lifetime. The call to duty came long before the first sign of a chill January dawn. With trembling fingers I buttoned on my clothes. I shaved after the fashion of a condemned man. The eclipse! Who cared, but a few scientists? Spectacle of a moment—but suppose I died! Ah, but suppose I did not?—why I might be made a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and the tale of my exploit would live for ever in the annals of journalism—for at least a week!

Breakfast with Flight-Lieut. R. S. Grandy, one of the finest pilots in Canada who was to take me up, cheered me but little. He announced that we were to fly in an ancient Avro used as a training-machine in the War, long overdue for pension.

“You've got your clouds,” he said gloomily, “a pile of them two miles thick. And there's a head wind blowing up from Toronto at forty miles an hour. We'll have to leave here at eight o'clock sharp. Maybe you'll be the only person in the world to see the eclipse, maybe, if that Avro has a climb left. Get some breakfast anyway. It will be cold.”

After breakfast we went out to the hangars and donned heavy flying kit. It was bitterly cold, with snow on the ground, and I had put on a leather face-mask to endure the open cockpit. Clouds lay with thick certainty across the heavens. Not a sign of a break anywhere. “I bet they go up to 10,000 feet,” said Grandy. The light was poor and a storm seemed imminent. I could not have felt less enthusiastic about an execution.

Grandy climbed into the control cockpit, myself into the bow. It was about an hour to the scheduled time of the eclipse but we aimed to view it over Toronto to give it the right local setting. “When we hit Newmarket,” said Grandy, naming a village north of the city, “we'll start climbing. Then, if this old crate has it in her, we'll have time to break up through.” He spoke through a tube with earphones connecting us.

Flying low, at about a thousand feet, over the murky winter terrain, the trip was uneventful until we were just north of Newmarket.

“Now,” said the pilot, “we'll try for a lift. Here's hoping.”

He had scarcely spoken when—whang! crrrrk!—a sudden bang, then an awful tearing.

The machine twisted, shuddered, limped for a couple of minutes as if about to

fall apart; then the nose sagged and it began to fall.

In the flash during which I had time to think I thought we were going to crash; then I felt control and it pulled into a bank. With a jerk it came around on one wing. Two, three, four quick spirals, then a sudden flattening out, all much too quick to figure—and we were making a perfect landing in a field little bigger than a quilt. A stone fence lay ahead. We came to a dead stop just ten feet short of crashing; then climbed out.

“Well!” said Grandy. “Well! Behold the eclipse!”

“W-what h-happened?”

“Connecting rod broke. See, torn clean through the cylinder. Bad. We’re lucky, with horseshoes. And what a place to have to land! However—let’s see, where can I get a ’phone? There’s a farm. I’ll go call Borden.”

He got word through and was told a relief plane would start south at once. I called my office; it was in the throes of handling the story of the eclipse and much too busy to waste time on a stranded reporter. I went outside and watched the phenomenon from the middle of a field, a vague darkening that seeped from behind the clouds. There was nothing to write about.

But *The Star’s* aviation enterprise was not the failure this personal narrative would imply. Another R.C.A.F. machine, a much better one, which I did not mention purposely until now, left Camp Borden at the same time as ours, with Flight-Lieut. G. E. Brookes as pilot and Flying Officer A. M. Morfée as photographer. It managed to break through the clouds which piled in three successive layers, and snatch two or three excellent shots of the eclipse. These the paper published, a rare achievement, and carried the personal account of the airmen, which was not mine. It was almost the only time I have not had the breaks on a story of importance. But I had luck being with Grandy.

Flight-Lieut. David Harding flew down shortly from Camp Borden with a couple of mechanics, dropped them by the injured machine, then taxied me to Toronto, landing on the frozen bay. I crept back to the office, ignominious but delighted.

Such was flying in the name of news a decade ago, before aviation grew commonplace and then fell into a slump during the depression.





## DUDE RANCHING

THE Prince of Wales returned to Canada in September, 1923, but incognito under one of his minor titles, the Baron Renfrew. This second visit was by way of anticlimax to the 1919 tour and rather upheld my contention that the previous mood and moment, plus publicity, had had much to do with establishing him as a beloved and romantic figure. He had still his slight figure of an Eton schoolboy, still his fresh complexion, still his nervousness, his air of unprotected royalty, all the adjuncts which had previously endeared him—but the people paid little attention to him, just as he paid absolutely none to them. His aim on this occasion was to have a holiday, neither to exhibit himself nor to please the populace, and he made very little pretence at trying.

He crossed Canada in a fast train from Quebec to the ranch which he had bought at Pekisko, beyond High River, Alberta, almost without stirring a leaf or disturbing a pebble. Not once did he arouse or seek to evoke emotion. If crowds came to a station to see him go by, that was their hard luck for he did not appear to satisfy either their curiosity or their loyalty. This was in contrast to the mobs and maffickings of his official tour when he behaved as a young and smiling democratic demi-god and tens of thousands all but worshipped him.

I learned this at second hand as I followed by the next train and everywhere sought human interest evidence of his passage. There was none. The prince had become a phantom.

Once more as in 1919 I had sought to journey on his train. At Quebec on the day of his arrival from England I had tried to persuade his private secretary, Sir Godfrey Thomas, that history demanded I should be taken along, but Sir Godfrey regretted pleasantly but adamantly that his view of history and mine did not coincide. But *The Star* had ordered me to go, if not on the royal express, on the next train and to take along Lorne McIntyre, a young reporter, and Fred Davis, staff photographer, to ensure a full coverage of the visit of His Royal Highness to the West.

True, the plan of the Baron Renfrew was to spend a quiet week or two on his ranch. He thought there was no reason why he should not slip in and out of Canada like an unknown Englishman or as he was in the habit of going week-ends to Scotland. Canadian newspapers thought otherwise. The Prince though incognito, they reasoned, was heir to the British throne and therefore news in a country where a prince of any kind was almost as rare as an archangel. In spite of a lessened

interest, people wanted to hear about him, to know if he had changed. It was not that anyone wished to intrude on his right to a holiday but no art or artifice could make him a private citizen. Suppose something happened to him in Canada, an accident, a train wreck, a shot!—the eyes of the world would focus there automatically. Perhaps in the older countries where conventions are stronger and where pressures of more than one kind may be exerted to insure the fiction of privacy, he might come and go in undisturbed incognito but not on this continent with its democratic interests and its free-ranging press. At any rate, a great deal of newspaper work of this kind is precautionary. It is not always because such and such will happen but because so and so may happen that reporters receive many an assignment. Reporting resolves itself into a watch for the unexpected as much as for the expected.

In this case reporters flocked to Quebec to meet Baron Renfrew but *The Toronto Star* was the only paper to send men after him to Alberta. Indeed, with that thorough technique which it was evolving, *The Star* sent a staff man out there several days ahead to set the layout for the three of us, while obtaining an advance article about his coming.

Our instructions were explicit: “Cover H.R.H. Become his next-door neighbours. Find lodgings, if you can, close by. If you can’t, get a tent and camp on the foothills. Hire a car and anything else you need.”

In an effort to catch the train west from Montreal ahead of him, Davis and I, on instructions, hired an aeroplane and flew from Quebec up the St. Lawrence, but one of my inevitable forced landings at Sorel delayed us. Although we waded through swamp to the knees going ashore, got a taxi and made a dash for it, we missed the connection by about ten minutes and had, with Lorne McIntyre who waited for us in Montreal, to take the next regular train following Lord Renfrew’s special. When we reached High River in his wake he had, of course, disappeared into the privacy of his E.P. Ranch along the Pekisko Creek, in its grove of Balm of Gilead trees among the foothills. We might as well, it seemed, have stayed in Calgary, or Toronto, for all we might hope to see or hear of the vanished Prince.

The worst of it was that our advance agent reported no lodging was to be had within miles in this grazing region where distances rolled unbrokenly to the horizon. Alongside His Royal Highness’ modest holding of 4,000 acres ran the Bar-U Ranch of nearly 100,000 acres, a principality, one of the greatest ranges in Alberta. It belonged to George Lane, since dead, a colourful Westerner from whom the Prince had acquired the Pekisko Creek corner in 1919. Without Mr. Lane’s permission there was no hope of staying in the immediate vicinity.

Driving out to the Bar-U, I went into the ranch yard to see what accommodation, if any, might be secured and there met Neal Olsen, the manager. To him I explained our mission and asked if we might not find berths in his bunkhouse, nearest habitation to the E.P., three miles further along the road.

“Sorry,” said Olsen, “can’t do a thing without George Lane’s permission. He’s not here, he’s in Calgary and he’s not very well. Oh sure, you may call him up if you wish.”

I did, telephoning long distance from his ranch office to the Pallisser Hotel. This must be made plain: he did not know me; he had never seen me; he had never heard of me. As concisely as possible I explained that I was a representative of *The Toronto Star* out on assignment to cover his neighbour the Prince and asked if my colleagues and myself might rent beds for a week or so in his bunkhouse as the only available quarters within a day’s march in this land of space.

“Bunkhouse, hell!” came a drawling voice over the telephone. “What’s wrong with my ranch house?”

“You mean——?”

“I mean I got a ranch house that nobody’s livin’ in and a Chinese cook there without a damn thing to do. You sleep there an’ get that China boy to fry you some steaks. How long you figure on stayin’? A week? Fine, longer, if you need to.”

“Mr. Lane, that’s great. Why, you don’t know us from Adam!”

“That’s all right, young feller, you sound honest. Poor thing if you boys come all the way from Toronto and can’t find a place to sleep in the foothills, with that ranch house o’ mine idle. And now, let me talk to that manager o’ mine, Olsen.”

He did, briefly. In ten minutes were found ourselves installed as guests of the Bar-U and next-door neighbours of the Baron Renfrew. Talk about Western hospitality! We were given ground floor bedrooms alongside the room which H.R.H. had occupied on his 1919 visit. That was kept inviolate; otherwise we had the run of the pleasant house and we had the best food, cooked by the smiling Chinese. We stayed there a week and did not once see the Prince, for, of course, we made no attempt to trespass on his property or privacy.

It was a holiday. There was little to write about except scenery. I would sit on the verandah, looking out across the rolling hills of green to the snow-capped Rocky Mountains, and type lyric pieces about the view he was having, the champagne air he breathed and the kind of hunting he might have if he went hunting, which he did not. For the rest, we tramped the hills, shot rabbits and partridge, looked over the Bar-U Percherons with an air of temporary ownership and scooted about the roads in our hired car. Fifteen miles away, in the little hotel at High River, three or four

news-reel photographers from New York shot endless pool while waiting for the day when the royal rancher would send them an invitation to drop out and make camera shots of him wearing chaps and a Stetson hat, while riding a bucking broncho. Sometimes they drove out humbly to visit us in our dude state and find out if our exalted neighbour had dropped in, and we would show them George Lane's horses on a hundred Bar-U hills.

This simple-life assignment ended abruptly when the Prince, tiring of rural monotony, headed for golf and gaiety at Banff Springs Hotel in the mountains. We went there ahead of him, not that there was much promise of copy but because going was indicated. Next morning a telegram from Toronto ordered me to Vancouver to meet the liner *Empress of Australia* which had come through the destruction of the Japanese city of Yokohama by the recent earthquake and was arriving with survivors.

Here was action, and I left for the Coast. Boarding the vessel as it entered the harbour, it did not take long to secure a mass of personal experience of the catastrophe and, rushing to the telegraph office, to begin pouring a flood of copy directly into the wire room of *The Star*, three thousand miles away. The three hours handicap in time between Vancouver and Toronto was a severe one but nearly three columns arrived in time to feature in that day's main edition. It was graphic narrative, well worth garnering. Captain Samuel Robinson of the *Empress* yielded a fine yarn, for the ship had been tied to the wharf when the pier sank before his eyes and the city crumpled to rubbish and dust. He told of standing on the bridge and seeing the land undulating in eight-foot waves, while a gale arose that blew at seventy miles an hour.

After that he had to fight to save his ship from the flames that swept the waterfront and crept out on the oil-laden sea. Later the *Empress* became a casualty clearing station through which hundreds of injured passed. The liner's part had been a gallant one.

The tragedy must have been overwhelming. A former soldier said, "God did more harm to Yokohama in three minutes than British and German shells did to Ypres in three years." A woman passenger spoke of the city "not toppling over as you might have expected, but just slipping down like a great feather pillow." A Swiss electrical engineer told of coming on a standing street car five days after the disaster. Five people sat in it motionless. He went over. They were dead.

He told of a friend showing him an envelope in which were a few charred pieces of bone—the remains of his wife!

All this gave a feeling that life was still worth while. I went back to Toronto to

thrill to the voice of Lloyd George on the City Hall steps as he moved thousands of people to post-war tears, thanking them for their sacrifice, as four years earlier the Prince of Wales had moved them to post-war cheers. Another man. . . . another meaning. . . . a fresh emotion.

That year a couple of local incidents called for spurts of energy. One February afternoon ten men were killed in a valve house of the Toronto Gas Company. They were working on an auxiliary booster, with a mere two lengths of hose to connect—when a torrent of gas came pouring into the chamber. Swift, sinister, spreading death made a narrative of pathos.

This was followed by a yet more moving tale: the inquest, when Hugh Thompson, general foreman, a gas worker of twenty-five years experience, assumed blame for the accident which had cost ten lives. In the history of inquests there has possibly never been a more tragically brave figure than that of this overseer who stood on the witness stand and answered thus:

“You shut number six valve?”

“Yes.”

“You shut seven?”

“Yes.”

“What about eight?”

“That was the valve, sir.”

“Why was it not closed?”

“That’s what I overlooked.”

“You were looking after the gas going out and it slipped your mind about the gas coming in?”

“Yes, that is how it occurred.”

“Any explanation as to how this valve was overlooked?”

“It slipped my memory altogether.”

Tears stole down the face of Thompson but his low, clear voice did not falter. He looked directly at the Crown-Attorney.

“You told Brooks to close six and the booster valve and you overlooked telling him to close eight?”

“Yes.”

“You did not know it was open?”

“I did not. I was asleep. . . . I did not know it was open for a week afterwards.”

“Was it any part of Brooks’ duty to see that number eight valve was closed?”

“No, he only acts on orders from me.”

No equivocation. No subterfuge. No attempt to shift even the shadow of blame

to another man. No plea, no play for sympathy. A few quietly-spoken words, a brow damp with sweat, lips that trembled, eyes that mirrored the agony of a soul in torment—such were the only visible signs of Thompson’s Gethsemane. He had made a slip. Just one slip but it cost ten men’s lives. We often forget little things. . . . To put a stamp on a letter. To lock a door. To switch off a light. . . . He forgot to close a gas valve.

The pity of it was that his was not the hand that closed or left open the valves. His was merely the voice that ordered, the voice that forgot to order. His was the responsibility.

A gaunt, tall man with grieving eyes, he climbed into the witness box as if his legs were limp but he responded firmly. The Crown-Attorney was very gentle, speaking as to a child. The eyes of onlookers filled with tears at the pathos and courage of him. It was as moving a thing as I have ever seen. . . . in the drab inquest room over the city morgue, smelling of decay. I never hope to see a braver man.

The second event gave an unusual experience when one July day the biggest hold-up in the history of Toronto took place and I almost witnessed it. Never have I come so close to realizing the dream of every newspaperman of actually seeing some such unscheduled event and then writing it from first-hand knowledge.

Toronto up to that time had not felt the necessity, like most United States cities, of specially protecting the movement of money in the downtown area. Every morning armed messengers of the banks walked on foot carrying packages from the clearing house as they had carried them for decades. But this morning a band of thugs in a well-planned, fast and ruthless manoeuvre ambushed a group of them in a side street within half a block of the hub of Toronto, the corner of King and Yonge Streets. They opened fire without warning, wounded four of the messengers, snatched three bags and escaped with \$82,000 in little more than three minutes. It was a murderous attack of a type common enough across the American border but not expected here.

The coup took place at 9.45 a.m. at the corner of Melinda and Jordan Streets, just south of King, at a point almost visible from the building then occupied by *The Star* at No. 18.

Like scores of other people in the district I was sitting at my desk, close to an open window on King Street, when I heard—Bang! Bang-bang! Bang!

It might have been an automobile backfiring but there was an unmistakable spite to the sound that spat up between the buildings.

“Shooting!” I yelled, jumping to the window and receiving a photographic impression of action down Jordan, before starting out of the office down three flights of stairs. As I ran I could hear the shots continuing. They ended as I reached the

street and there seemed a momentary suspension of all activity. There was an effect of people flat against walls and crowded into doorways.

A number of men, sheltering behind the corners of bank buildings on the opposite side of King, were peeking down Jordan. I slipped across and followed suit, in time to see a Studebaker car careen around madly at the narrow intersection of Melinda and Jordan, while two men with short guns jumped on the running boards, still firing; then lurch forward and move comparatively slowly as it made its getaway.

A policeman in a waterproof slicker went sneaking down Jordan behind a line of parked cars, pulling out his revolver as he advanced to battle. He was too late. The bandits were gone! Their car was now out of sight. The quick escapade was over.

Scores of people rushed from hiding and from offices to surround the bank messengers as they lay on the corner bleeding and to examine bullet marks in the telegraph pole nearby and on the walls.

*The Star's* desk had already initiated action and reporters were pouring forth to gather the facts, interview spectators, obtain the statements of the bank messengers, check with the police in their futile hunt for the robber's car.

Within ten minutes, while other men kept feeding a supply of detail, I was sitting at a typewriter pounding out the sensation literally hot as it happened. Frequently one wrote of an event as it occurred but this was the rarest of close-ups of a news break from the blue of such tense value. Only too often when vivid action or tragedy happened it was a case of coming along when there was nothing left but débris as a sort of "X marks the spot". But here was the biggest Canadian story of its kind ever staged, right at the paper's doorstep and in nice time for the main edition. The only thing the robbers missed was not giving us time to take their photographs.





## BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND

THE Battle of Long Island was the name given by New York newspapers to the high society action which centred around the Prince of Wales during the month he spent there in the Fall of 1924 when he golfed, hunted, danced, dined, played polo and otherwise vacationed in this palatinate of American wealth. It might as aptly have been applied to the jousting which went on between what may be called the holiday court and over a score of newspapermen and women assigned to report their doings.

The Long Island courtiers sought privacy in which to show the future King Edward the Eighth a good time. The reporters came in a platoon to view the goings on. An issue was created which might have been avoided by a little tact in recognizing newspaper interest and arranging for press seats at the social ringside. But this was not the aristocratic view. Fear evidently existed that in the striving for close-up study of the royal visitor the more abandoned journalists might generally play havoc with the intimacies. It was therefore decided to keep them at bay.

Actually, the American newspapers had for him a feeling of respect and goodwill. The more sensational papers, including the youthful and feverish tabloids, treated him with restraint. *The New York Times*, *World* and *Herald Tribune* were as uncritical in their reports as the most correct of English journals.

Long Island's attitude to the Press was indicated before His Royal Highness landed from the liner *Berengaria* when Major Oscar N. Solbert, appointed his American equerry, called assigned correspondents into conference at the Pennsylvania Hotel, New York. He had formerly been United States military attaché at the Court of St. James and it is said he knew the English. The accusation was subsequently made that he did not know his own countrymen.

He declared at this meeting that it would be quite impossible for those in attendance on the Prince to deal with the whole group of news writers. It had, therefore, been decided that only agency men would be received at the Burden house near Syosset where he was to stay. Twice daily, morning and evening, correspondents of the Associated Press, United Press and International News Service might call for information. Representatives of individual papers would have no standing.

Everyone protested. Sorry, said the major, that was the arrangement; there was no appeal from it. As the only Canadian present I felt moved to suggest a

relationship that was different from the American interest.

“Should not a British subject,” I said, “be entitled to a first-hand approach to the Prince’s officials?” All’s fair in journalism and if one could score an advantage over the New Yorkers at the start so much the better.

But Solbert saw through the plea. “Sorry,” he said, “we can make no exceptions. The Association men will pass on to you as to the others the information they receive when they call.”

Thus began an assignment that was a blend of the magnificent and the trifling. We set up press headquarters at Syosset, within a mile of the Burden estate. This was a hamlet without hotel accommodation other than a rooming-house for railroad men. In this we lodged.

On all sides were fine demesnes, palatial homes, country clubs of exclusive membership, private polo fields, golf courses and swimming pools, exquisite gardens. It was a hedonists’ paradise in the heyday of prosperity. Our task was watching from the sidelines their gambols by day and their frolics by night. Yet we were living under conditions of acute discomfort, sleeping two, three and four in a room, unable to take a bath except by arrangement, eating lunch-counter meals except when we found time to drive to roadhouses miles away. From these diggings we turned out a stream of copy about the Prince and the Gentry. Most of it was written in the waiting-room of the wayside railroad station into which the telegraph companies had looped extra wires and sent operators to handle the glut. Its only furniture was three or four chairs, two or three deal tables and a couple of packing cases rustled in the neighbourhood. Men frequently squatted on the floor to pound typewriters on their knees.

Gorgeous dances, garden festivals, drag hunts, polo matches and other elegances were our daily interest but we covered them from our village dugout. That was nobody’s fault. Our accommodation was our own affair. It just happened that the location did not suit. Some of the morning newspapermen, with no day editions to catch, lived miles away at a Garden City hotel and drove over in the evenings, but the afternoon correspondents, including Lucy Doyle of *The Toronto Telegram*, the only other Canadian, suffered the inadequacies of Syosset to be on the spot. For most of us unfortunates it involved twenty-four hour work. We had to keep up with the dancing, hunting, polo-playing Prince; then write about him when and if he took time out from the pleasure marathon.

Lack of liaison with the royal circle made our task difficult. The aim as often as not was to throw us off the scent. That made it a game of tag and we had to cover much unnecessary ground. Seldom in bed before 3 a.m., we had on occasion to

arise at five to hurry to a drag hunt, sometimes to find that His Royal Highness had decided to stay abed. That was again our sad concern, but the presence of a single official on the staff who could think and act in North American terms and would have answered telephone calls would have been a godsend to us peripatetic journalists.

Once again I am not arguing the former Prince's right to a holiday, or a spree, for that matter. But he could never be a private citizen on this continent, particularly in the United States where from the President to the movie star everyone lives on parade and where Mr. Roosevelt does not go yachting without an accompanying barge carrying the White House press troupe. Lindbergh fought for years for his right to privacy and succeeded only in antagonizing newspapers which, however each might seek individually to grant his desire, had to yield to the mass compulsion of his news interest. The Prince of Wales on his Long Island visit could not hope to escape American newspaper notice. He did not seem to try. It was his hosts who sought to put a blockade around him. They wanted him for their exclusive possession.

At that time a United States presidential election was imminent. The Republican Party, from straws in the wind, grew nervous lest the royal carnival on Long Island might have a prejudicial effect on their candidate, the late Calvin Coolidge, who could certainly not be accused of jazz tendencies. An emissary arrived from campaign headquarters, gumshoed about with newspapermen and implied that he had made representations which eventually led to the Prince visiting New York and viewing newspaper plants, a couple of schools, a museum, an exhibition of natural science objects—when he might have been holidaying!—in the hope that this might counteract the effect of revelry which had flowed from the Long Island reports. Some day, it was emphasized, he would return to visit farms, motor plants, steel factories, mines and the American people.

This serious visit to New York was his second. His first, an unheralded afternoon's shopping on Fifth Avenue, fooled the watchers in the Syosset trenches. The programme given us officially billed him for polo practice—and a group of us were trying to arouse enough energy to fare out and cover it, when the telephone began to ring. New York calling! City editors calling! Managing editors calling! Reporters answering, and gasping!

“The Prince—what! In New York! On Fifth Avenue! But, he's here!—he's playing polo! What! Oh, migod!”

At the press meeting that evening indignant newspapermen faced a royal aide who was undisturbed in the English manner. The trip was unexpected, he said, quite; it had been decided on the spur of the moment. It had been necessary to hurry lunch.

“But heavens, man,” snapped a reporter, “you might have given us a buzz on the wire.”

The aide looked hurt. “If I had telephoned,” he said severely, “I might have missed my lunch, you know, and I wouldn’t go without lunch for comparative strangers.”

However, it was arranged that notice would be given us should the Prince again visit the city. The New York men gave their word that, while they would warn their offices of his going, nothing would be printed in advance and they would not follow him on the drive in. From that time on a better understanding existed.

One of the peculiarities of the assignment was the number of guards encountered. The social status of people entertaining the Prince was to some degree set by the number of operatives they hired from detective agencies to keep intruders away, including newspapermen, while some of them engaged press agents to see that they got adequate notice in the society columns and private photographers to make sure they figured in the rotogravure sections. A quaint set of values! We had little interest, as a rule, in functions where guards figured thus, since there was little copy in them, and stayed in our dugout, quite content. But the news photographers were often under the necessity of having to outwit them to secure a camera shot. McEverley, red-headed camera man of *The New York Daily News*, a fast, clever lad, made a number of coups right under their noses.

He made up his mind one day to attend a luncheon being given for H.R.H. at the Pratt house near Glen Cove. Private photographers had been hired to record the event in sepia tints in the Sunday supplements but Mac decided he’d upset everyone with a shot in that day’s *News*. But the place was heavily patrolled and the gates had steel cables strung across sufficiently strong to have kept out a tank. He used strategy. Making his driver whizz past the main gate, then slow down, he jumped out of the travelling car and drove in among the trees to make his way through the demesne to the house, his camera hidden beneath his coat. Here he mingled with the guests on the lawns and won surreptitiously a dozen snapshots before someone gave the alarm and angry guards clustered, threatening to lynch him. He coolly dared them to try. They did not dare. Instead, with much show of cunning, they destroyed his plates.

At least, they thought they had, when they let him go.

His two best he had previously slipped into his pocket. They were splashed in the next edition of *The News*.

The general group of news writers, as related, were only too glad to pass up such private events but one of them took a delight on certain occasions in gate-

crashing as a species of diversion. He was Shannon Cormack of *The New York Times*, most formal of American newspapers. Shannon had an elfin spirit. An Australian by birth, he had served with the Canadian Army in France, rising to the rank of major. He was suave, sophisticated, nervy and, when he wanted to be, monocled English, assuming in a twinkling the manner of a London johnny.

One evening he decided that a stag dinner to the Prince at the Piping Rock Club, a haunt of millionaire sports, demanded his attendance since the late Will Rogers, the comedian, was to be there and promised copy. It looked a tough crib to crack, but our Raffles cracked it easily. Dressed immaculately, bareheaded, wearing a monocle, he drove in a big limousine, without anyone daring to halt him, to the club-house door. So much for appearances. A flunkey dashed down the steps to receive him, and Cormack, with the air of a Cholmondeley, strolled inside. There he chatted with a number of guests he knew, listened to Will's wisecracks and the Prince's laughter and, when he had had enough, strolled languidly out and had the footman call his car.

His supreme act was crashing the ball given by Clarence Mackay, the cable and telegraph magnate, at his Harbor Hill mansion near Roslyn, which was called one of the most magnificent dances in United States history. Certainly it was the most vivid episode of that Long Island fantasy.

Here was wealth *in excelsis*, colour and contrast. During the Revolution bonfires had blazed on Harbor Hill to warn of the coming of the English ships. Colonist settlers lived here then. Now, along the avenues that wound through six hundred of the most luxurious acres on Long Island, festoons of electric lanterns, lighted by a man who controlled great message systems that flashed far beyond the range of signal flares, glowed in honour of a future British King.

At the dinner preceding the ball eighty-five guests ate from a silver service made from Nevada ore dug from the Mackay mines. Later, when night settled and a Versailles note was struck, a magnificence was disclosed which cost, so it was calculated, \$100,000 just for a night. The cost was incidental; there was really no money limit.

When darkness fell candles in coloured glass containers, a mere three feet apart, flashed electrically alight among the trees and made the winding mile-long avenue a fairyland. This was beautiful but bizarrely in bulbs, like a Broadway sign transplanted, a coloured Stars and Stripes gleamed from the highest turret of the house. On the terrace, silhouetted in white against the dark grass in the blaze from a dozen searchlights, splashed a fountain fifty feet high, duplicate of that in the Place de la Concorde. Rose arbours and gardens, bloom-laden, heavy with scent, twinkled with lanterns and glowed with cunning effects. A yacht riding at anchor in the Sound

showed beyond the sloping pleasance to the rear. On each side of this two great trees were so trickily electrified that they seemed aflame.

Such was the setting of superb, if studied, luxuriance for an evening of romance in a somewhat Hollywood manner. It was a mob scene, a gorgeous, excessively refined mob scene. More than a thousand guests, the cream of United States society and notables from other strata, attended. Dancing was in a room of baronial proportions. Armour stood around the walls on which hung tapestries worth a king's ransom. From the balconies drooped replicas of the banners of Chivalry, as if to pretend that knighthood was still in flower in a republican democracy and the Mackays were a mediaeval clan—while Paul Whiteman and his thirty-piece orchestra ground out the latest jazz.

Among those present were Vanderbilts, Astors and Biddles, Harrimans, Havemeyers and Marshall Fields, Roosevelts and Morgans, August Belmonts and Perry Belmonts. There were Spanish dukes, a French marquis or two, Lord and Lady Mountbatten, cousins of the Prince of Wales; the Marchioness of Milford Haven, the Duchess of Westminster svelte in a sea-green dress, the Earl and Countess of Airlie, Lady Diana Duff-Cooper straight from the theatre where she was playing in *The Miracle*; and General John J. Pershing, Secretary of War Weeks, and artists, authors and dilettanti without end.

The guests arrived in \$2,000,000 worth of automobiles. . . . The gems worn would have paid the debt of many a small state. . . . Cut roses were spilled in banks. . . . Flowers generally cost \$20,000. . . . Orange trees brought from Florida with the fruit on stood in pots. . . . The supper allegedly cost \$30,000 to serve in the specially built salon. . . . A buffet groaned beneath the weight of a salmon so large that its cooking was a secret known only to the chefs. . . . Champagne ran freely. . . .

I wired two columns about this regal frolic, got a message from the Managing Editor demanding every extra word I could squeeze forth, and oozed a couple of columns more. All because Shannon Cormack crashed the ball for a story he did not write but merely to make company for Grace Robinson of *The New York Daily News* who had, at the last moment, been ordered to get one.

None of the Syosset correspondents was bothering about the Mackay affair. The New York newspapers were treating it formally in their society pages. We did not think of it as news but as just another party for H.R.H., if on a somewhat grander scale than the other nightly romps; in which we were wrong. That Saturday evening, knowing the Prince was dining and dancing at Mackay's, we were feeling free of all care when the telephone rang. It was her city editor calling Miss Robinson. Awakening late to a realization of the news value of the ball, he ordered her to attend

and give him a brisk account of plutocracy at play. There was no chance of arranging at this late hour for an invitation or ticket. But she must go. She turned from the telephone and asked us “How can I?”

Feeling that she had been given an impossible assignment, we began to murmur sympathy. Then Cormack spoke up. “My dear,” he said gallantly, “a girl cannot go to the Mackay dance alone. I shall escort you.”

“Oh, Shannon! But you have no card, either. We couldn’t get in, could we?”

“We shall. You and I are going to be among those present and without cards. Go and make yourself your prettiest, my dear Grace.”

She had been working hard on the assignment, living at Syosset, and had had little chance to worry about dressing up. But in due course, however she managed it in our rooming-house, she appeared *en grande toilette*. Shannon emerged as a Bond Street blood, his English accent working to perfection.

At midnight we gave them our blessing and they drove off in a limousine with a liveried chauffeur, the inside lights of which Cormack had turned on to proclaim their gentility. Such open diplomacy, we learned afterwards, worked easily. Not a guard stopped them at the gates of Harbor Hill or along the avenue; only when they were held in a traffic block near the front door did an operative step forward, possibly to demand their cards. Cormack was ready for him. Opening his case and extracting a cigarette, he leaned forward and drawled, “I say, my good chap, have you a-er match?”

“Yes sir, certainly, sir,” and the good chap nearly burned his fingers in his anxiety to serve, while Cormack tossed nonchalant thanks as the car moved on.

No further snag occurred, and he and Miss Robinson walked calmly into the great hall to be received unknowingly by Clarence Mackay and his daughter Miss Ellin Mackay, who was later to make a sensation by marrying Irving Berlin, the song writer. They danced, wined and supped without question.

Grace Robinson on her return wrote only a brief tabloid yarn and Cormack did not write a line for *The Times*, but they were bubbling with details of the party. These were so gorgeous that I thought them too good to waste and asked them if I might wire them to Toronto. They were only too glad to have me use them and gave me a full description.

Such was this strange assignment on this unreal Long Island with its Oppenheim note of high society adventures on which a group of news writers found themselves. There was even a jewel robbery to give it the full romantic savour when one night gems, allegedly worth \$250,000, were stolen from the Sands Point home of Joshua S. Cosden, oil multi-millionaire, where Lord and Lady Mountbatten were guests.

Incidentally his estate had a bijou golf course that was the last word in suavity, the traps, for example, containing white sand.

We might not write all we wanted but we always sought to know what was happening. Our lives, though, were made miserable by rumours which we found it hard to check because of lack of liaison with the staff.

One evening we were taking matters easily, believing that H.R.H. was dining quietly at a favourite haunt, the home of Harrison Williams at Glen Cove, when someone came in excitedly to announce that two Rolls-Royce cars with the royal group had been seen heading to New York for a night on Broadway. The tip, seemingly authentic, demanded running down, and we drove to the Harrison Williams house, to receive there the word of a charming woman that His Royal Highness was at that moment chatting in front of the fire preparatory to going on to a dance at the Roland Trees.

So much for that. It was raining heavily and Long Island was a labyrinth of roads. As we emerged from the dripping avenue, we made a wrong turning. In a few minutes we found ourselves on a narrow causeway with water on both sides so that the chauffeur could not turn. He kept on until stopped by gates from which lanterns hung. At that moment two men in waterproof slickers stepped from hiding, their hands on revolvers slung openly from belts.

“Who’re you?” they demanded. “What d’you want?”

“Newspapermen,” we said, “covering the Prince of Wales.”

“All right,” one said, “back up!”

“Oh, for Mike’s sake! Open the gates and let us turn inside.”

They were inclined to demur, but we persuaded them we were what we said and they finally gave in, though one of them, revolver in hand, stood on the running board as we made the turn.

“Whose place is this, anyway?” we asked, mystified by the precautions against intrusion.

“This,” said the guard, “is the estate of J. P. Morgan.”

All of which had no connection with the visit of the Prince, since the banker was not involved in the social whirl, but was evidently part of a routine. It gives a flash of the unrealities with which we were in contact.

At Belmont Race-track we saw Zev run against the famous Epinard in a threesome won unexpectedly by Wise Counsellor on as warm a day as any of us had ever experienced. The paddock into which the Prince ventured was an inferno. He looked hot and helpless as the crowd milled around him, demanding a speech. Mrs. August Belmont, the former Eleanor Robson of stage fame, a beautiful woman,



wife of the President of the Westchester Racing Association, was so warm, in spite of her fresh look, that her lovely, flame-coloured frock was wet as a footballer's jersey from the waist to the shoulders. State troopers, Pinkerton detectives and track police had to form a flying wedge to rescue the royal party who were glad when they got back to the members' enclosure.

Almost the only other mass contact of the Prince's stay on Long Island was at Meadow Brook during the International Polo Games between the United States and England. That was a spectacle, the most brilliant society sports event ever held in America, a pageant of the high world and horses staged on a beautiful field.

In the heart of a rich landscape of trees and pasture lands sat this great playground of greensward, mellow as an English lawn, around it low, uncovered stands of a robin's egg blue filled with the most luxurious people in the United States and aristocrats of Great Britain and Europe come for the games. At one end of the field there was no stand; here massed the populace.

Of this setting the Prince of Wales was the human keypiece, in a spacious box adorned with rugs, lounge chairs and tables on which cigars and refreshments were laid out as in a club.

Here took place a display of matchless horsemanship as the eight finest English and American polo stars rode the cream of the world's ponies for a supremacy which the United States four quickly established. It was a breath-taking tourney, fast and gallant, fit indeed for the eyes of kings. Louis Lacey, Canadian-born Irishman of the Argentine, rode for England, rode like the wind, rode like a centaur, the greatest player of them all, light, lean, devil-may-care, free-hitting, loose-sitting, tireless—but Louis Lacey alone could not match a team that contained the mighty Devereux Milburn and young Strawbridge, Hitchcock and Webb. The Americans made the score a statistical report.

It was after the second game, which the Americans won as handily as they had won the first, when the Prince presented them with the cup, that he received a mobbing reminiscent of the Canadian scenes of 1919. Eager thousands of Americans surrounded him, laughing, jostling, joking, cheering, even singing, imprisoning him with goodwill, until the police cut a way through almost by force. He enjoyed it, laughing back with his old boyishness, and I wished that he had been given opportunity for other popular contacts during the month. The Americans were quite as eager to be affectionate as the Canadians had been five years earlier.

Thus we followed this remarkable King To Be with his power at every open opportunity to draw all men and all women unto him. We trailed him even to early morning hunts, for in those days his falls were news and there was always the chance

that he might return from the chase on a stretcher. Most of us were content to attend the meet in cars, see him start away and keep casual track from convenient roads, but young Woodford of *The Brooklyn Eagle* turned up on a hired nag, took all the jumps in the wake of His Royal Highness and generously brought us back an exact account.

He was not the only newspaperman who rode cross-country in the wake of the Prince to win a first-hand view should he stage one of his famous spills. A week or two later when he visited Toronto and rode to hounds with the local hunt at a meeting held from the house of Sir William Mulock, then Chief Justice of Ontario, at Aurora, Paul Reading of *The Star* took to horse after him.

So much for reporting in the higher reaches of society. It had its excitements, but there was many more satisfying aspects of newspapering.



## THE STRANGE CASE OF JACQUES RICHTOR

A TALL, blond boy of eighteen, hungry, grimy and almost frozen from riding blind baggage, entered Toronto from the Bathurst Street railroad yards one December evening in 1923 and was taken by a policeman to St. Michael's, a downtown hospital. Here, his spirit returning, he told doctors and nurses an odd tale. This might have been lost in the busy routine had not one of the doctors mentioned it to a reporter of *The Star*. The latter interviewed the boy who repeated his yarn which the paper printed. Thus began The Strange Case of Jacques Richtor.

That was the name he gave himself. This was the story he told. His father and he lived on the north shore of the Great Slave Lake in the Canadian Northwest from which two months previously he had set out alone for Fort Henry, 740 miles south, with a sled load of furs drawn by twelve husky-dogs. The first 500 miles passed without incident; then, one morning, events happened quickly when, between a ravine and a clump of trees, he came on a human body in the snow. It looked dead, and halting his dogs, he bent over to examine it.

As he did so, two men jumped from hiding, clubbed him before he could defend himself and left him on the trail unconscious.

When he came to, dogs, sled, furs, and the corpse, were gone. The robbers had even taken his white sealskin coat with its silver fox collar, leaving him only his buckskin shirt and pants, fur underclothes, cap and mitts, plus what he called his skinning knife. Thus he listed his remaining effects.

Maybe they had thought him dead. He might as well have been, for he was 250 miles from settlement. But, far from regarding himself as doomed, he blazed with a desire for revenge and set out after the miscreants, reaching Fort Henry by an almost epic trek. He existed on rabbits snared with his moccasin strings. He made fire by rubbing sticks and a bow. He burrowed o' nights into a snowbank to sleep. So he said.

When he reached Fort Henry it was to find the furs sold and the men gone allegedly to a distant Toronto. Though he had never seen Civilization, but still driven by a thirst for vengeance, he decided to pursue them. He managed to reach Edmonton, Alberta, then hoboed his way to Toronto, where the policeman had played Samaritan.

A most unusual story, as anyone will admit. *The Star* featured it in several instalments, for Jacques in his act of seeing Civilization for the first time behaved with

satisfactory *naïveté*. His father he described as a recluse of ingenuity, giving the impression of a Robinson Crusoe of the Far North. An elderly English chemist deserted by his wife, he had fled with his son to the shores of the Great Slave and there settled as a hermit who despised the world. The boy Jacques was fifteen before he saw a white woman at a frontier post to which the old man brought him. There he tasted for the first time strawberries, ice cream and pie!

But he had not seen a street car, an automobile or a telephone until he reached Edmonton two weeks previously.

At five his father began teaching him to use a rifle. At nine he helped the patriarch kill a grizzly. He told circumstantially of shooting contests at faraway Fort Henry which he did not claim to win, being invariably beaten in the final round by a trapper named Jim Connolly.

Overnight Jacques became the mystery boy and *Star* reporters were given the task of escorting him into big stores, restaurants, movies, supposedly for the first time; and this untutored child of the almost-Arctic played his rôle sturdily. "Why is the place dark? What makes them move?" he said when he saw moving pictures. At that time they had not yet talked, or he would have been astonished indeed.

"What's that?" he asked when a cow showed on the screen.

"What is married?" he said on another occasion.

"How are autos driven? What is gasoline?"

Such was the type of question he asked, and nothing seemed to trip him. If he let slip an expression which showed knowledge out of keeping with his background—he had learned it on his hike across Canada. Besides, his cultured father had taught him to read books of poetry and chemistry. He credited much to his learned parent. For example, he spoke once of a woman as artificial. A *Star* reporter pounced on the word: "Where did you hear that?"

"My father taught it to me," said Jacques with simplicity. "He taught me a lot."

"He sure did!" agreed the reporter.

The paper, taking him at his face value, featured him for a few days; then, interest waning, sent him to a job in a lumber camp. At the moment there was little thought of trying to solve the mystery of him. Was he a mystery? Perhaps. Was he lying? Maybe. He was an amusing story.

Then, unexpectedly, Alberta police wired a request for his photograph, seeking to know if he were a missing trapper named Perry whose partner they held on suspicion. Followed a report that a second trapper called Jacques Richter (his name) had vanished from Lac la Biche in Northern Alberta, presumably out of his mind.

Was the lad Perry? Was he the Lac la Biche man?

No, answered the boy to both questions.

But *The Star*, now interested, decided to sift his queer tale. Was he, like the shipwrecked children of *The Blue Lagoon*, in truth a wilderness youth brought up in ignorance of the civilized world? If not, who was he? Was he a fake and, if so, why? How did he play his character so well, if he were shamming?

To do him justice, he had not sought to broadcast his story. He had told it originally without apparent thought of publicity, then stuck to it when a reporter questioned him.

It was suggested to Jacques that he return from the lumber camp and submit to tests that would solve his case. He came, willingly agreeing to a scheme which *The Star* had planned to entice public interest: a series of experiments in the woods to find out if his bush lore measured up to his claims, with due reports of the proceedings. This was done cleverly and circulation jumped several thousand during the next week as people become more and more interested in the developing mystery. Rivals accused the paper of knowing the real story all the time and of using the boy simply as a ramp. That was not true, as this narration will show. Possibly no one in the office believed his fantastic tale, but if it were not the truth, what was? Who was he then, with his simplicity and yet with frequent contradictions of speech and behaviour to hint that he had sophistication? That was the question.

He went, therefore, to the inn at Kirkfield, some seventy miles north of Toronto, with Arthur Heming, artist and author of *The Drama of the Forests*, well-known authority on the North. The plan was that he should test him in the bush and question him on his frontier knowledge. A reporter and a photographer went along to record developments.

Up to this point I had not worked on the story. If I had feelings about it, they were probably sceptical. But two or three days after the Kirkfield experiments began the Managing Editor instructed me to go there, hasten a solution and get rid of Richtor. He was worried, implying the paper had become involved in an affair which it might well end quickly. His concern was made acute by the fact that the boy had that day, while attempting to demonstrate his skill with an axe, slashed his foot and gone to bed under a doctor's care. It meant a postponing of outdoor tests and, at the best, a lag in public interest. At the worst, it might have serious consequences.

On Thursday, January 11, I saw him for the first time in his bedroom at the inn and greeted him with a pretence of accepting him for what he said he was, a manner I sought to maintain until the mystery was solved, in the hope of disarming him into a trap.

At Kirkfield opinion was divided. Lorne McIntyre and Fred Foster, the two *Star* men, strongly doubted him and offered incidents to prove that he was not a child of nature. On the train he had exclaimed, "Hot dog!" On entering the inn, after looking critically around, he had said, "Some swell dump!" Constantly seeking to trip him, instead of letting him run along to net him, they had jumped at these sayings and demanded where he had learned them. Jacques answered easily. One he had heard in Toronto, the other at the lumber camp.

As against this scepticism there was the opinion of Mr. Heming, Father Patrick Kelly, parish priest, and Mr. Mitchell, the innkeeper, all men of Northern experience. While they could not persuade themselves of the whole truth of his story, they had no real reason for disbelieving it. He showed an evident, even striking, acquaintance with bush life. Not only did he seem to know the Northwest but in airing this knowledge he spoke always in his character of hermit boy.

That day and the next Arthur Heming carried out a testing of him in bed, while I watched, listened and wondered. Given a piece of moose hide, he proved that he could make moccasins. He showed a familiarity with Northern animals and with methods of hunting and trapping them that was technical to a degree. He knew the difference between the horn of a woodland and a Barren Lands caribou, a tricky point.

For hours he bore himself under this examination with the manner one might expect from a lad of his background. His square face with its high forehead seemed a mirror of truth in which there was no guile. An occasional frown testified to his concentration. For the most part he answered quickly as if speaking happily of familiar things; then listened with cherubic air as Heming explained some point of our civilization.

He had more than a general knowledge; in many instances he showed a localized knowledge of the wilderness from which he said he came. For example, discussing a birch bark canoe, Heming asked, "When did you build it, Jacques?"

"May is the only month, when the sap's running and the bark comes off easily."

"What length would you build?"

"My father always measured twenty of his own feet." A correct answer, giving the length of a two-man hunting canoe, according to Heming, with phrasing aptly suited to the character of himself and his hermit parent.

"Do you build just the one size?"

"No, smaller ones also. My father builds them twice my length when I am lying down." Another correct and ready answer, giving the twelve-foot size of a one-man hunting canoe in words peculiarly fitting to his alleged life. Such answers, with their

unusual phrasing, came without pause or constraint.

He was asked suddenly, "When you were young, how did your father manage about hunting trips?"

At once he replied, "He left me in the cabin, with food, and with the lead dog for company. I can cook as long as I can remember. In those day his trips were short, never more than two or three days."

Pictures of monkeys were flashed but failed to catch him. "None of those up north," he said. "What are they?" Informed seriously, "Those are monkeys, Jacques," he remarked with equal gravity, "They're too small to shoot." Another remark in character.

Asked to repeat his tale of the alleged hold-up, he told it with face lighted, eyes flashing, voice sparkling, hands gesturing, as if living it over again. It showed changes and discrepancies but we gave no sign of noticing them. One of the robbers, he said, had slashed him with a knife across the left hand and the left thigh. That was new. "If I could only have got out my revolver in time," he ejaculated, "they would never have robbed me!"

"Did you carry your revolver on the sled?" asked Heming quietly.

"Naw," said Jacques pityingly, "here!" and he patted his hip like a movie gunman.

A bad slip but we gave no sign though from that moment we doubted him completely. But we could not prove a thing and decided to maintain our attitude of complete belief in the hope of a break soon. We had an almost eerie feeling of him as a dual personality, a case of hysteria, a boy Jekyll and Hyde. He acted differently, seemed to speak differently, with older people and those who might be classed as inquisitors than with others younger or less interested in solving his enigma. To us he spoke slowly, carefully. Off guard, with others, he showed a trace of an American accent. When girl guests at the inn entered his room, curious or romantic, his voice came along the hall like that of a city boy "kidding 'em along".

My articles those two days, narrating the experiment indoors, gave no hint of our doubts. The Managing Editor telephoned, demanding action. I told him what we had found but he insisted on a solution quickly. Saturday came with one no nearer. I felt worried and helpless. The boy was undoubtedly a fake, if he were not some queer mental case—a thought that kept persisting—but how to prove it!

Then someone in the office had a bright idea: send up a psychologist!

On Saturday afternoon I was advised that J. W. Brydges of the University of Toronto, Associate-Professor of Psychology, an authority on intelligence tests, was coming to try them on Jacques. I sighed with relief at this interjection of science. At



least the Professor should clear up all question of the boy's mental state.

That evening, in sharp fashion, doubt of him was finally fixed. A sympathetic lady at the inn had made him a suit of pyjamas. Up to that time he had been sleeping in woollen underwear. It gave us a chance we had awaited of seeing him nude. As Heming brought the gift in, I said, "Better change now, Jacques, you'll be more comfortable."

Our aim was to view the thigh which he said had been slashed; there was no hope of other discovery. But his vanity made him slip. He had a fine physique; inflating his chest, he whipped off his undershirt—then, remembering too late, he hid his left forearm. But we had caught the flash of a dark mark there. Restraining a shout, I asked in my rôle of innocent believer, "What's that stain on your arm, Jacques?"

"My father called it a tattoo mark," he replied blandly. "I had it done at Fort Henry four years ago."

"What is the picture?" I said, leaning over.

"Don't know exactly. I've often wondered." And he looked at me straight. "The man had a lot of pictures and I chose that one. He painted on a kind of ink, then pricked it in with a needle."

"Let me see," I went on, and he showed the forearm. On it was tattooed a kewpie doll with the letters "U. S. N." across the breast, naval trousers and an American sailor's cap.

"What do the letters mean, Jacques?"

"Don't know," came the reply. "I've often wondered."

We left him for the night. Professor Brydges arrived shortly but put off his tests until the next day. The boy could not escape for we had taken away his clothes. It sounds melodramatic, but we had removed every conceivable weapon, smuggling out a hunting knife and the large scissors with which he had been cutting out moccasins. We were anxious. He had become more of a puzzle than on the first day.

After Sunday breakfast we set out to pit our joint brains and will, with those of a psychology professor added for good measure, against this boy's whom we could not fathom. Heming, McIntyre and I led Brydges into his bedroom, introducing him by his correct name and title with the explanation, by way of necessary subterfuge, that he sought to examine him to find out how his mentality compared with that of a city boy.

Smiling confidently as if it were a game, Jacques said, "Go ahead," and Brydges, very professional in manner, began his intelligence tests. After lunch he tried simple performance tasks such as fitting blocks together and finding the way out of a maze.

The boy emerged with evidence of a mentality slightly below average. Inconsistencies in his performance hinted at either a mental quirk or a deliberate failure to respond but did nothing towards solving our problem.

Could he be a case of arrested or tangled emotion? we argued after leaving him. Might he not be a boy familiar with city and wilderness life who had received a hurt or shock which permitted him to recall bush experiences, or an elaboration of them, while blocking his urban memories? Was he the subject of an hysteria?

The Professor, as puzzled now as the rest of us, cited instances of jangled people who had played strange rôles. In this case we were convinced the boy was not what he said but hesitated to accuse him of faking and demand an explanation lest, by chance, he should be the simpleton of the wilds he maintained he was, or a victim of amnesia.

That evening, as a last resort, Brydges gave him an association test. This calls for explanation. Two lists of equal length were made out: the first of words which could have no particular relation to him, such as table, moon, picture; the second of selected words which might have relation to his actual history or to some possible block in his emotions. For example, we chose such words as buddy, fan, base, safety and Dempsey as likely to relate to American city experience, and words like robber, seal, trail and knife as having an obvious connection with his alleged bush life.

The plan was to fire a word at him and he was to answer with the first word that came to his mind as quickly as his reaction permitted. The answer might not have any tie with the word given, but a stop-watch was to be used and the time of each response noted. Hesitancy, according to Brydges, might signify that a word bore on past experience. On the other hand, concentration on fast replies made him liable to let slip words which might yield a clue to his past or his emotions, without his being aware of the degree to which he was revealing himself.

After preparing the double list with deliberation, five of us filed into his room for the inquisition, Brydges, Heming, McIntyre, Dr. Ross of Kirkfield who had been attending his injured foot, and myself. We were on edge, baffled by this bland lad. Would this trickery unmask him or should we emerge once more defeated? The question was important to me, at least; I had to have a solution for the next day's paper.

The cosy bedroom in which lay this boy, his unperturbed face surmounted by a shock of strong, fair hair, who smiled in such a disarming fashion, seemed an odd place to stage a Sunday night drama which linked him and us, a newspaper and the distant Northwest. Undoubtedly he sensed a climax. Jerking himself up, he watched

our faces as we ranged solemnly around. Deliberately Brydges seated himself on the side of his bed, his dark eyes peering almost hypnotically through dark-rimmed glasses.

“If you don’t mind, Jacques,” he began, “we are going to make another test.”

“What, another!”

“Yes, the last,” and he smiled reassuringly while he explained the game of matching words. The boy said he was willing to start but his eyes never left the Professor’s face.

“Boy!” said the latter, snapping his stop-watch.

“Hat!” shot back Jacques, breathing like a runner.

“Good enough, one and two-fifths seconds. See if you can’t do better than that—Base!”

“Home!”

“Buddy!”

“Pal!”

“Dempsey!”

“Fighter!”

The contest of wits, for that is what it had become, went on, the dark, searing eyes of the psychologist crossing the light, questioning eyes of the boy. This joust of words was thrilling to the onlookers as a duel of swords. The unequal combatants were well matched. One’s heart pounded as at a hockey game.

The odds were on the psychologist. The boy did not know what he was fighting, and that is how he was caught.

For the first time he showed strain. His tongue crept to his dry lips. Sweat ran down his face and his pyjama coat showed wet beneath the arms. But he fought to the end and held some trace of his wonderful poise.

“Bet you can’t throw ’em that fast yourself,” he clipped out once with a grin, his eyes ranging in search of approval.

Shortly the examination ended and we filed out.

Check of the answers pointed to a knowledge of boxing, baseball, the United States army or navy and an urban boy’s sophistication.

“We know now,” said Brydges, “that he is not what he claims to be, and he is not a psychopathic case. The time has come for a show-down.”

We debated the form it should take and it was finally decided that Brydges should enter the room alone and put the case to him, the rest of us waiting outside nearby lest the powerful and strange lad should react violently. Maybe, again, we were being melodramatic but he had won until now and we were not sure yet whose

would be the final round.

Brydges closed the door behind him, without latching it, and we grouped quietly outside. Along the hall a number of guests, sensing action, clustered. Presently came the Professor's voice: "Son, I have to hand it to you. We have been using tests on you which show absolutely whether a person is lying or not. Did you know that?"

We knew he was bluffing somewhat as we waited for an answer. None came. His voice went on, now crisp and hard:

"I came up here to find out if you are a faker. The tests prove you are."

"I'm not a faker!" We heard him spring up in bed.

"You are not telling the truth!"

"I am telling the truth!" He was shouting now.

"I say you are not!"

"I say I am!"

"I have found out positively that your whole story about the wilds is untrue. What are you going to do about it?"

"Listen, Professor,"—this more quietly, with emphasis, "I can prove for a fact I am what I claim. Get me an outfit, send men with me—I'll lead them to Great Slave Lake and prove what I said about my father and all is absolutely true."

"That's enough. Are you going to——?"

"Say! There's somebody at that door!" Jacques jumped to the floor and jerked it open.

Without a word we went in and grouped around his bed, to which he had returned, and Brydges resumed his questioning. "Are you going to——?"

"Look here!" Jacques yelled, jumping up again, "some son of a dog is going to pay for this. You'll pay!" and he pointed at the Professor. "And you, and you, and you!" He went around us all. "I'll make you pay, you scum!"

"Where did you learn that buddy was a pal? How did you know that Dempsey was a fighter? Why did you——?"

His face grew livid as Brydges went on as if he had not interrupted. Grinding his teeth, he gathered himself to spring, shouting, "I'll get you now, you——!"

"Lie down!" one of the group snapped. "Lie down and shut up, or I'll trim you!"

That ended it. He sank back on the pillow.

"Now," said the Professor implacably, "let's have the truth."

"All right, I'll tell you; you beat me. The rest get out."

We brought him back next day to Toronto and I wrote a brief notice for *The Star* announcing the case ended and the mystery solved but without giving the solution. With this went a box saying:

“Sensational Developments in the Richter Case. Events have occurred which seem to us to offer a complete solution of the Richter mystery. Details need to be verified, but there is every reason to believe that by to-morrow the story can be told in full. See Tuesday’s *Star*.”

On Tuesday the story, ten columns long, appeared under the heading: “Jacques Richter Sheds His Mask; Never Saw Canadian Northwest.”

Lorne McIntyre wrote an additional three columns giving in full the tests of Professor Brydges.

The papers were sold out to a public as excited as over a declaration of war.

Who was this Jacques Richter, romancer magnificent who kept us guessing for two weeks and aroused so much interest in a lone boy of the wilds who did not exist except in his own imagination? This is what I wrote then:

“Here is the story he told Professor Brydges as he lay sobbing from the strain of the last day’s fight and from the racking of the last test and the rage of the final ten minutes. He repeated it next day to representatives of *The Star* as we were bringing him to Toronto.

“His real name is John George Richter (not Richter). He is an American-born youth from Cincinnati, Ohio, of German descent. He said his father owns three shoe stores there and a fourth in Boston. He is an only son but has two married sisters. He has never known want, he said; he has never known hunger until he ran away from home last November on account of trouble, when the wanderings began which ended in his adventure of the past two weeks.

“He left home with \$150, wearing expensive clothes and silk underwear, and went to Indianapolis, then to Chicago, where he lost his money in a poker game which ended in a fight which was ended by the police. Beating his way to Detroit, broke, he parted with his fine clothes and silk underwear to a pawnshop for \$40 and continued wandering. He went from Windsor to Toronto and North Bay, riding ‘blind baggage’, actually beating his way as he related in his romantic story.

“He was looking for work, he said, preferably in the bush, but could not find it and had no money. For three days he had had nothing to eat. He was sick and his feet were badly frozen because of too light socks. Arriving in Toronto cold, dispirited, ill, . . . he asked a policeman the way to a hospital. He went to St. Michael’s, where the doctors found nothing wrong with him, except hunger and exposure. They asked him where he had come from.

“He declared in his ‘confession’ that he was afraid his father might hear of him and had concocted his now famous story for the benefit of the doctors and nurses.

When a *Star* man interviewed him, he thought he might as well tell it again.

“In all fairness it must be pointed out that he had, according to his own account, only one object when he first told the story: to conceal his identity. He also thought it might help him land a job, he said. He had no idea such publicity would follow.”

The paper verified this revised version of young Richter by telegraphing Cincinnati. The reply came that he had “left five weeks ago, with the knowledge of father, mother and sister”. According to the special despatch:

“The boy is described by a relative as being given to wandering and having a powerful imagination. Of an adventurous disposition, he has left home several times on trips to various parts of the country. He has always had a disdain for school, his mind being filled with ideas of the out-of-doors. When he left home in December, relatives say, he had a revolver and a hunting knife. He was imbued with a desire to reach the Canadian wilds which he said was ‘God’s country’.”

The question arose: How did he acquire his apparent knowledge of the Northwest wilderness if he had never been there? In reply, he insisted that he had got it from books and from visits to Oregon, Arizona, Nevada and the Rockies. On trips there he had learnt to make moccasins, snowshoes, canoes, deadfalls, fire with a bow, and to hunt, fish and tan leather.

Further knowledge, he claimed, came from an old man of the Great Slave Lake region who had visited his home and taught him much of its topography and natural history. He insisted this veteran woodsman was the “father” of his yarn, keystone of his entire fabrication. He still lived, he said, up there.

Indeed, he was determined, if the Professor of Psychology had not broken down his story, to lead doubters to the old fellow’s cabin, having written him, he maintained, warning him of the situation and asking him to play the father rôle and claim him as his missing son should he unexpectedly turn up some day with a group of Toronto sceptics.

That was his second story, and he held to it. Whether it contained much more truth than the other I cannot say. *The Star* kept him for a day or two, away from newspaper rivals; then paid his fare to Cincinnati, with money in his pocket.

And that was the last of Jacques Richter until May 9, 1930, when he once more turned up in Toronto—a full-fledged knight of the road, *genus hobo*. He did not visit *The Star*, which was most ungrateful of him, but went instead to *The Globe* which gleefully recalled how he had hoodwinked its afternoon contemporary.

Apparently he bore no grudge, according to its report. Crossing the Border, he said, he had told Canadian immigration officers that he was “a Toronto boy coming home”. But he did not stay.

He passed on, a hero become a tramp, which seemed a poor ending to imagination.





## DANCE OF THE BOOM DAYS

**D**URING those years at the command of *The Star* I ranged Canada seeking life and colour for special articles—and frequently crossed the Border when copy offered. Some of it revealed wholesome human effort, nature and mankind at work; at other times it touched on some spectacular or bizarre exhibitionism or mass enthusiasm of those feverish, unbridled times.

During a decade unparalleled, following the War and the uncertainty of the first two or three post-war years, before my eyes passed the panorama of the Dominion changing, growing, developing under the urge to create, achieve and exploit its natural and mineral wealth. It was great while it lasted and gallant, too. Men, imbued with the same dreams as the earlier Imperialists, aimed at making the last wilderness that stretched from Labrador to Alaska and into the Arctic pay tribute and dividends from its forests, mines and water powers.

Cochrane was the north limit of steel in Ontario and Moose Factory on James Bay was distant hinterland when I flew there in 1920. By July, 1924, over the railroad now running north of Cochrane, I was able to travel forty-odd miles to Island Falls where a power plant was being built on the chutes of the Abitibi River. By January, 1931, the rails having crept onward, I could take train to a much mightier power development arising at the Abitibi Canyon, thirty miles yet farther north, and from that go on to the Moose River where a million-dollar bridge was being built to permit the railroad to reach historic Moose Factory and open the Province of Ontario to the sea by Hudson Bay, which it did shortly.

In parenthesis, it may be stated that the Abitibi Canyon venture had since to be taken over by the Government of Ontario. The James Bay railway was also, in effect, declared an extravagant gesture of the boom period.

In the Fall of 1929, within nine years of that pioneer flight to the then distant James Bay, I chased an air expedition called the MacAlpine party, lost seeking minerals in the northern reaches of the Barren Lands, as far as Fort Churchill by rail. The Dominion had run a line there through five hundred miles of wilderness to give the Prairie Provinces a Hudson Bay port.

Thus I saw the frontiers march.

During those years of commercial adventure and financial conquest the lakes and rivers, the forests and the far horizons, the very soil and air of Canada throbbed with the promise of Laurier that hers would be the Twentieth Century. There seemed no

limit but the sky, with mining stocks soaring, the wheat pools riding high and arrogant, farmers buying combines, automobiles and radios and the cities pluming themselves on our onward, upward cresting.

In those days Calvin Coolidge was President of the United States, Germany was prostrate, Italy was an amusing Fascist state playing at having Caesar back, Japan was a small group of Pacific islands never heard of unless there was an earthquake, Soviet Russia was a distant experiment in unreality, and the gold standard was sound as the Bank of England.

While Canada was caught in the continental dance of expansion and while there may have been an accompaniment of fixing and even graft in attaining political acquiescence and coöperation, yet this country was singularly free of that breakdown of public morality during the period which characterized the United States and the flagrant uprising of crime and corruption in the form of an octopus which gripped in its tentacles business men, politicians, police forces and even the elected judiciary. I need only cite the Teapot Dome scandal of the Harding administration, the Seagrave investigation in New York and the Chicago assessment muddle to show that this generalization about American conditions is not just an invidious attempt to paint Canada white.

The fact is Canada, for various reasons, was spared this wholesale corruption of officials by the money of criminals and racketeers. Where police did fail to live up to their public duty there was immediate action when it became apparent as in the case of the Montreal Police Investigation conducted by Mr. Justice Coderre as Royal Commissioner in the Fall of 1924. It was an event almost unique in Canada to which I listened in for three days.

Sensational and lurid; it was, in effect, a probing, a parade, of the underworld. It was, above all, a show and crowds flocked to the grey court building to witness the unveiling of police characters, daylight glimpses of a protected district and the squalor of the so-called sporting life, and to listen avidly for hours. A rare collection of vicious and depraved types thronged the sidelines, men who looked like bulldogs, men who looked like rats, men who looked like weasels and like snakes, men with faces weak as sheep, florid women in fur coats, girls who were *filles de joie* with joyless eyes, and many others.

Their reaction was interesting. It was an inquiry into police behaviour but the listening underworld found itself favouring the side of the police. A constable said something about "not squealing on a pal" and the audience broke into handclapping.

A girl, a casual Madame X, gave evidence. She acknowledged, without shame yet without emphasis, having been for five years a professional Magdalene. But, and

she raised her head, she was redeemed, happy, married. Yes, she was prepared to rake into her past, not to make holiday for the underworld, but to make trouble for the police. Unmoved, emotionless, she told of paying a captain \$50 on behalf of the proprietor of a house where she had lived. Relating details of raids and arrests, she was emphatic about a date in 1918. Why so certain?

“Because,” she replied sharply, “it is the first year I work at this business.”

The crowd roared, hands clapped, as if this were vaudeville.

So much for a vignette. There was a sequel that evening when, walking along St. Catherine Street, I saw her again by a chance that seemed fictional. She was with a young fellow of bourgeois look and intuitively I knew he was her husband. Under his arm he carried a loaf, from his pocket stuck a newspaper with flaring headlines over his wife’s testimony a few hours earlier.

As they waited for a street car, chatting, I watched them. The girl was animated; the boy had a look of absolute contentment. A crowded car arrived and they helped one another on. I walked away wondering. So, I thought, out of the slime may sometimes arise love and happiness and the end of such girls is not always the river and oblivion, as a Montreal *curé* had testified that day.

That year in June I had paid a week’s visit to Father Point on the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where Canada’s sovereignty begins for incoming ships, made many trips on the pilot boat *Jalobert* and saw scores of vessels boarded. There was a fascination in swinging out into the Gulf, at this point forty miles wide, and holding up strangers from the four corners of the globe in the seclusion of the magnificent waterway until they should take on board a Canadian pilot and pass a Canadian doctor. My greatest thrill was going out in fog to hunt an invisible ship.

In January, 1925, came the abortive eclipse flight, already mentioned, and in February I went trapping with John and Larry Turner, Indians, in the Temagami district of Northern Ontario; so that I could not complain of monotony. This was a trip of pleasure which gave added knowledge of the winter bush. We trekked in with a toboggan and a team of four dogs from the Hudson’s Bay Company’s post at Bear Island.

The first night was spent with John Turner and his family in their one-room cabin. Its furnishings were a large bed for the parents and baby, a smaller bed alongside for two older children, a stove, a table and a couple of chairs, all home-made. The cedar floor was scrubbed to a whiteness. After we had eaten, John spread my blankets by the end of the larger bed and I crawled in, head under the table, feet to the stove. The Indian woman hovered in a corner. He blew out the light; there was a rustling as she slipped into bed, then silence. He dropped on his knees and prayed;

then, too, crawled in. Soon came absolute stillness, broken only by the breathing of the family and the crackling of wood in the stove. Outside it was bitterly cold but here was warmth. Shortly I dropped asleep.

In the morning we snowshoed across Cummings Lake, over a short portage, then south down Gull Lake, to the tent which was to be our home for the next week. It was deep in snow but the men cleared this away and we were quickly comfortable, with a fire going. It was altogether a much more enjoyable experience than the Quebec bush trip, giving a chance to absorb atmosphere without burning up energy in harsh travel and sheer keeping alive. I tramped miles with the Indians, visiting traps set for beaver, otter and mink and trailing the elusive fisher, most valuable fur of the region. It was a carefree life. The brothers could speak English, of course, but the monotonous of their native tongue were a delight. They fitted in with this barbaric existence of hunting, eating, sleeping amidst the snow silences of the lakes and trees. Not even birds were present to break the stillness. The world of my ordinary being was ten thousand years away.

Best of all was returning tired and hungry to the tent of an evening to see John squatting darkly by the side of the stove while, primitively, he sliced meat into a sizzling pan; or his brother Larry hunched on his bed of sweet-smelling balsam laid on the snow and, scorning knife and fork, eating with his fingers from a plate between his knees, his leather coat open at the throat, his black hair thrusting itself shaggily from beneath the edges of his rough cap.

Scents, eloquent of nightly comfort, quickly grew familiar: the attar of the trodden balsam, the fragrance of cooking meat, the pungent smell of wood burning, the bitter whiff of gas from the carbide lamp, the heavy tang of our damp clothes heating, the sourness of our bodies, the acrid, downpouring smoke. The tent became a cavern, savage, atavistic, the roof and corners in gloom, the strong, swarthy features of the men flame-tinged, their figures throwing grotesque shadows on the grey walls.

After gargantuan meals, eaten brutally, we would fall back where we sat, lie in the heat and chat if the mood was on us, Indian and white; or just remain silent, full-stomached, void-minded and content. It was completely satisfying, this existence of a caveman.

Shortly, with a feeling of infinite well-being I would slide into my sleeping bag; Larry would pour the water from the lamp, the light would die and almost imperceptibly the tent would become dark. Long before that would come sleep, until early morning when, the fire having gone out, the cold would come seeping through to chill me to wakefulness.

In May that same year, with John Bennett, a school inspector, I visited Manitoulin Island to write about the Jesuit missions to the Indians there. The priests were most hospitable, a particular host being the late Father Eugène Papineau. On this large island in the north corner of Lake Huron, so near to the mainland of the Province of Ontario, yet so remote, members of the Society of Jesus carried on their historic mission to the aboriginal savages of Canada. They walked in the footsteps of the martyrs Lalemant and de Bréboeuf, using automobiles; they still taught in the Indian tongue and the Angelus rang as it rang three centuries ago to summon the natives to prayer.

After service one evening in the school on Sheshegwaning Reserve, Father Papineau led Bennett and myself along the road to a frame church set in a forest clearing; then, striking a match, through the darkness to a small lean-to at the back, part sacristy, part bedroom. Lighting a lamp, he graciously bowed me to his bed in an alcove and showed Bennett to a couch beside the stove. Then the Jesuit Father in his black soutane got down on his knees, tore up papers and rolled them into balls that we might have the makings of a morning fire.

“It will be cold,” he said.

“But, Father, we can start one ourselves.”

“You have not had so much practice,” he remarked simply.

Thus he gave us his room while he went off to find shelter in the Indian village. He stood at a door leading into the church, his bearded face soft in the lamplight. “You’re sure you will be comfortable?” he said.

“Quite sure, Father.”

“Then good-night. God bless you.”

A night or two later I occupied another clerical couch, this time in the bedroom of the Provincial of the Jesuit Order in the boarding school for Indian boys on the mainland and next day had silent meals with priests and lay brothers in the refectory. Thus came glimpses of many kinds of lives.

In contrast to this simplicity of the North was Florida in January, 1926, where I was sent to report the extraordinary boom, then at its height, though shortly to die. Here was an exotic epitome of the Rainbow Decade, of the prosperity orgy that swept the United States. I doubt if the hectic spree of development staged in this state was ever duplicated. So many people from Canada, particularly from Ontario, had flocked to this Eldorado of sunshine and sand that it was practically a local story. This was the Wild South outdoing the Wild West’s most halcyon days of feverish enrichment.

At a Fine Arts masquerade in Miami I met a young gentleman who had made

\$1,900,000 in eleven minutes on his twenty-fourth birthday! Selling swamp lots along the seashore to profit-hungry customers. A paper millionaire. So many of his tribe committed suicide later! Jazz financing was evident on all sides in this mad wonderland. A real estate salesman, on 10 per cent. commission, by talking glibly, made \$90,000 in eight months. A bank which had considered \$50,000 big money when Miami was a village a few years previously now had deposits allegedly of \$50,000,000. Gambling buyers snapped up man-made islands before the crests of them, piled up by dredges, broke the surface of the ocean.

One such set of magic isles, existing at the moment only in a promoter's mind, fetched \$18,138,000 in thirty-one selling hours. An over-subscription of \$8,250,000 had to be turned back! So the stories ran.

A future development along the shore of Biscayne Bay was placed on the sales block while still pine forest and mangrove swamp, to find cheques to the enormous total of \$33,000,000+ arrived in advance, of which \$11,319,650 had to be returned to disappointed people. At that time or a little earlier anything under a million dollars was small change in Florida as land values soared to bonanza heights.

The situation was not altogether fictitious. Art, architecture, engineering and creative commercial forces had worked many wonders with this semi-tropical wilderness, turning sand and swamp almost overnight into garden cities, vast hotels, vivid mansions, palm-girt playgrounds and other masterpieces of real estate culture that lured on the money-hungry to spend and invest.

Ten thousand registered real estate men in Miami alone, twelve thousand in Tampa, thousands at every strategic selling point along the coasts and even in the Everglades, laid down a barrage on the inflocking Northerners. It was this continent's sales evangelism at its noblest and worst. "Buy!" bellowed newspaper ads, billboards, brass bands and steam calliopes.

To escape the ballyhoo the visitor had to have an impregnable will. It lulled and amused, entertained and irritated, fascinated and drugged. On many streets every second store was a real estate office. In the evening these palaces of buying compulsion, for many were luxurious as the reception room of a doge, put on vaudeville, lectures, high-class concerts. Many had orchestras. The very air of Florida quivered with seduction, Jack Dempsey, Fritzi Scheff, the late William Jennings Bryan with his silver tongue, Elsie Janis, the highest grade baseball players, golf stars and other popular figures were hired to perform.

Fifty night clubs in Hialeah. Open bars though it was Prohibition. A gaming house at Palm Beach smooth as a Monte Carlo casino. A social Gulf Stream. Greed with the shackles off. Suave bootlegging. Horse-racing daily for forty-five days. Dog

races every night. Jai-alai with Cuban professionals. Anything to keep gambling going. Limousines and tin-can tourists. Hotels overflowing at exorbitant rates and wayside camps swarming. Traffic jams without end. Cars end to end for blocks. Every second car with a bruised fender. Clatter all night long. The noisiest place in the world and the most unreal. . . . That was Miami, that was Florida, in the delirium of sky-high boom. It was a sheer case of auto-intoxication, like a dervish dance.

I did not need to have much penetration to write that it would not last, since the glow was already beginning to die and the ashes show, and it did not. Real values and real creation existed to make it a holiday resort but blue sky, blue sea, sunshine, sand and swamp were not sound enough ingredients with which to forge a pyramid. The hurricane that Fall blew out the flame and sent the ashes scattering.

Leaving behind this southern land of dreams, in little more than a month I found myself in a different country and climate where lay the promise of a different kind of gold, not in sunshine and sand, but in snow and rocks. This was the Red Lake mining camp, the newly discovered strike in the Patricia District of Northern Ontario, to which I flew as related earlier. Florida had been balmy as summer. In this wilderness it was winter. Here, too, men gambled but with hard patience, staking their time, work and privation against the chance of drilling into hidden mineral, deep down.

Then, in July, yet another view of the hopes of men: the Eucharistic Congress when Chicago lay for four days beneath the shadow of the Cross. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims came to bow the knee in adoration to the body and blood of Christ before the vast ceremonial altar which arose in Soldier Field, huge sports stadium—hard by the site of the Century of Progress fair of two years ago where Sally Rand fan-danced and the Streets of Paris surfeited with undressed girls. What contrasts!

What a contrast between the crowds that flocked to hear the Nazarene on the shores of Galilee and these swarms that gathered in His name on the shore of Lake Michigan!

In His day there were no newspaper reporters, no electrical magnifiers of His words, no movie photographers roaming over Golgotha as they clambered about this Chicago altar, no aeroplanes throbbing overhead seeking aerial snapshots when Christ died.

A Roman Catholic priest, sitting in the press-box, leaned over as Cardinal Bonzano, the Papal Legate, in his golden mitre and gold and white cope, mounted the steps—and whispered, “I wonder what would happen if a Man with a gentle

face and beard and worn, travel-stained garments tried to go up there, saying 'I am the Christ!' I wonder what the cops would do to Him?" I wondered.

Eleven cardinals in brilliant red robes, monsignors, archbishops, bishops, abbots, Jesuits and Christian Brothers in black cassocks, brown-cowled Franciscans, white-robed Dominicans, Trappists silent as statues walking, friars of orders grey, Passionists with white hearts embroidered on their breasts, secular priests in droves, chamberlains and clerical secretaries, papal knights in uniforms of white and gold, Knights of Malta whose white cloaks bore red crosses, Knights of Gregory in green uniforms and cocked hats, and Knights of Jerusalem, made a carnival of mediaeval colour—with Chicago detectives, their guns hidden, dressed in silk hats and morning coats to look like gentlemen in attendance on the cardinals.

The crowd that watched the first procession was America in essence, racially mixed, volatile, good-natured, a little cynical, noisy, loving a spectacle, but very reverent. It was at once awed and familiar, friendly as if watching a Shriners' parade or a gangster's funeral. Occasionally it broke into handclapping, even cheers.

As Cardinal Bonzano passed, the train of his scarlet robe borne by attendants, a roar arose as if he were an Atlantic air-conquerer rather than a Prince of God, and boys even uttered whistles and catcalls as if his were a theatrical appearance.

At the same time the crowd nearest him sank to its knees in waves and scores flung themselves before him, eager to kiss his ring, while he gave blessing ceaselessly as he walked.

The American and Irish cardinals, particularly Mundelein of Chicago and O'Donnell of Armagh, drew hurricanes of applause which they received benignly. If Christ had come riding on an ass at the tail-end of the parade, that crowd would have cheered Him.

Nevertheless, He came to Chicago, superlatively. He was honoured colossally. On the opening day of the Congress over a million people confessed their sins and received absolution in the city's churches.

On the following days services were held in Soldier Field, a circus maximus with its towered colonnades of Doric columns, its banked galleries, its surface paralleled with a multitude of seats, and at the end, on an artificial predella of green steps, a mighty altar under a gold baldachino raised on Corinthian pillars. Into this place, and in the open esplanade behind the altar, massed for each of four services between 150,000 and 300,000 people.

It staggered the imagination, so many people gathered in Chicago to worship God. The music of bands was lost in the immensity. A choir of 30,000 children sang. High on the green hill cardinals performed the ritual of the Mass and bishops as altar



boys swung censers. In the audience a block of a thousand nuns made a black and white splash. But in the press benches in the foreground facing the altar we worked as if covering a football game. Typewriters clicked. Reporters bent down to drag surreptitiously at cigarettes. Aeroplanes droned overhead. Photographers swarmed about the high altar. Amplifiers carried the Mass to the most distant bleachers but people munched their lunches. The sun beat down. Dust swirled in clouds. Over it all was Mystery. Here was God.

That was in the day-time. A night-time service for men only was surely one of the most moving and tremendous acts of worship ever staged.

Evening was falling. The dome of the sky paled. From the high altar a voice announced through the amplifiers that all should remember that the stadium had become a church. Fell a great hush and hats came off. Tens of thousands of men sat eagerly in reverence. Cardinals arrived in procession. Now it was dark. The crowd of allegedly a quarter-million men rose to sing *The Star Spangled Banner*. At that moment the scene was flood-lighted. Only the faraway dome of the tall baldachino was shadowed with night. Around the altar moved the acolytes and the gorgeously vested celebrants, mystic in the magic of the silver light. Vows were renewed in the Holy Name. Men's voices roared in waves.

Then came the marvel of the Congress.

At a signal, three-fourths of the congregation lighted candles. Lamps went out and all that showed was this field of living flame, nearly 200,000 points of golden, flickering light. The air, filled with the warm scent of wax, shimmered with the heat from these myriad tapers. It was as if thousands of stars had fallen to the ground.

That was the finale of the Church's pageant. Within three months I watched a different kind of glorification, that of the American girl in a beauty pageant at Atlantic City. That year Toronto had been caught by the craze of choosing a local young woman of shapeliness to run the boardwalk gauntlet in a bathing suit while thousands cheered, and I was sent along to see how "Miss Toronto" fared in this contest for "Miss America". It proved an affair of pitiless publicity, a seaside triumph in which the fair entrants were dragged on floats before the populace like captives in the progress of a Caesar. It was a good business idea and brought tourists and trippers flocking.

The girls, pretty unknowns, often immature, whose face or figure had caught the fancy of judges in a local contest, were treated for days as ladies of consequence, as indeed they were to Atlantic City: welcomed by the mayor, handed the freedom of the city, fêted, cheered as if they were cardinals or Babe Ruth, put up elegantly at ocean-front hotels, driven in limousines, with aides and equerries, as if they were

queens. In return, they paraded for miles in scant bathing suits before thousands of friendly enough, but extremely critical and often extremely vulgar people who, as often as not, shouted out loud what they thought of their charms or alleged lack of them. The crowd in the main mocked their beauty.

In three days one was surfeited with pulchritude, carrying away a mass impression of bobbed hair, wide eyes used to their utmost to move judges and the multitude, fixed smiles and a wearying procession of svelte young figures that might have been run from a mould. It was a cross between a burlesque show in the Minsky tradition and a slave mart, old Southern style, with refinements.

At least, all this gave variety and a chance to see some of the wilder forms of expression in those days of prosperity. But through all this panorama of riches and parades ran tragedy.



## DEATH ON PARADE

**D**ISASTER and sudden multiple death have stalked through my newspaper life but I have not discovered their meaning; there is no general explanation for tragedy, no common formula. Sometimes men erred, sometimes they had a blind spot, sometimes they were mad—most often it was just Fate. The shuttle wove, lines crossed, Time conspired with Circumstance, and lo! there stood Death. Nothing that man might do could have averted such events as the Japanese earthquake, the Florida hurricane, or the Georgia tornado, elemental in origin and stroke; in almost all the others a human factor entered. A ship should not have sailed before the threat of a late Fall gale. A captain should not have delayed an S.O.S. A canoe should not have set out overloaded with boys. A railroadman did something he should not have done or left undone something he should have done. A family carelessly washed clothes in gasoline in an electrical machine; came a spark, and disaster, faster than the winking of an eye.

Even in the northern fire which obliterated Haileybury and swathed a countryside in destruction, while it was due to the elemental chance of a mighty wind arising one afternoon, yet settlers should not have been burning slash in a protracted dry season.

The Haileybury fire suggests at least one common feature: the unreality of disaster's aftermath. Always some time elapsed, short or long, before I could reach a particular locale after being notified. In that time, almost invariably, a curtain dropped as if Nature, Time, Eternity, were wiping out already the scar—a curtain of repose, serenity, oblivion, as if to hide from onlookers the meaning, as if to snatch back from the curious the cause. Only in Florida was there an unescapable sense of destruction's reality for there, in Miami, at Miami Beach, at other towns, over the countryside, along the shore, spread a vivid panorama of what the hurricane had done in terms of royal palms uprooted as if they were zinnias, sewers ripped open, cars upturned into ditches, homes immodestly torn in two to show their insides.

At Christmas, 1935, after a day of peace, I was going to bed at 11.30 when the telephone rang. A train wreck at Dundas near Hamilton, 45 miles from Toronto. Fourteen dead and over forty injured. On Christmas night!

Cheerlessly I donned again my clothes and set out on a miserable drive to the hillside where, through the mistake of a brakeman who had opened a closed switch, an express train had smashed into the rear of a special parked in a siding. I arrived three hours afterwards for the highways were glare ice, it was raining and speed was

impossible. The dead had been removed; the wounded were gone; even the living had vanished. Salvage crews were working in the light of flares.

That is all there was—a wreck! Scrap, junk, twisted cars, bits of this and that strewn in the darkness along the track and hillside. That, and nothing more. Nothing to tell of that moment of hurtling smash, that moment in which death struck unexpectedly at men and women returning from holiday, that moment of horror when lights went out as human beings were crushed, cut, dismembered—those minutes, that half-hour of shock, struggle, terror, in which the living and unhurt found themselves.

In this, as in other wrecks and disasters, there was not to be found, even in survivors, visual evidence of their most awful experience, except for bandages and wounds on the faces I saw.

Of course, it was terrible, so very terrible in the morgue, but I did not go to the morgue.

But the survivors! Nothing was written on their faces to tell of their intensity of emotion a short time previously. Strained, yes, but faces show strained that have never looked on disaster. They smoked cigarettes and laughed; it seemed strange that they should smoke cigarettes and laugh. They spoke of the affair freely, each relating his or her experience, but none told just what had happened. No single survivor of this or that tragedy ever does tell just what has happened. To inarticulate people, shocked so woefully, it is over, and they are alive. That is all there is to tell. It is only by weaving and piecing that the story evolves.

On the other hand, disaster gives no warning, casts no advance shadow, has no press agents. Most newspaper necessity may be anticipated but tragedy strikes like summer lightning. At any hour of the night or day may come the flash by telegraph or telephone that speaks of a train crash, a shipwreck, a murder, an explosion, that will jerk a news staff out of the day's routine into instant, often terrific, action. Facts, interviews, description, drama must be caught hot. Photographs must be secured. I am speaking now of major tragedies and not of the mill-run of fire, assault, banditry and automobile collision which is the daily bread of the police reporter who takes everyday death in his stride like a priest or a doctor. But death in a big way, death in spectacular guise or striking with unusual ruthlessness, will crowd politics, economics, sport, princes and platinum blondes into the background.

The newspaper necessity consequent upon tragedy quickened me many times to fast, hard, battling, panoramic orgies of work that were finished only when they were done. In 1926, 1927 and 1928 disaster and other graphic breaks came in a sequence that called for instant action, concentrated rush, tireless hunting, marathon

plugging without stint or limit until the facts were cleaned up and the last line written.

There was the whip of my own eagerness, for a news story has always been an incomparable lure, and the flail of an inexorable edition. Not only did I have to fight against fatigue and obstacles such as the desire of interested parties to clamp down on the facts of tragedy, but against distance and the deadline. Get there, get the story, get it written, get it on the wire—those were the cardinal principles. Their very essence was speed, but there was the demand for quality of feeling and interpretation. The problem, if I hoped to achieve the results which *The Star* sought when it flung men forth, was to turn out articles packed with fact and explanation, splashed with colour, studded with human interest, hard with graphic writing, undercut with emotion, at the speed of a stenographer typing a five o'clock letter.

Fortunately, by this time, I had acquired speed. Once I had keyed myself, corralled facts, soaked in the atmosphere, measured the drama, satisfied myself as to the whys, whats, whos and wheres of a big news story, I could sit down and feed copy, without reading or correction, to a telegrapher as fast as he could send it. I might boggle the start a little, though there was often little time for hesitancy; I might flash an opening paragraph three or four times like a pitcher warming his arm, but once under way, words, phrases, paragraphs in adequate succession and arrangement streamed through my finger tips. Not that it was easy. Sometimes I was flat at the end of such a race against time as a sculler who had rowed a hard two miles but, under pressure, I could rip out close to 2,000 words an hour of descriptive, interpretive material and scarcely know what I had written until I saw it later in the paper.

This immodest baring of the mechanics of production may help to give personality to some memories of action that followed sudden death.

Just before dawn, June 9, 1926, Patrick Fogarty, a greenhouse man living at 65 Cavell Avenue, Toronto, arose and in five minutes, with a revolver, killed his wife, four children and himself. He left a note saying, "I am going off my head. I cannot leave behind me my children and my wife"; giving directions about Masses for their souls, bequeathing \$500 to a lad who had worked for him and asking the police to look after the place. Otherwise there was no explanation.

He was forty-five years old, good citizen, decent husband, kind father. The previous afternoon he had driven the family to a picnic in his truck. They had returned at 10.30 p.m., happy and laughing, and he had greeted a neighbour with apparent good cheer. Before morning had come this obliteration, and there was no explanation but sudden, bleak insanity and the fact that Fogarty had worried about a projected sewer which would drive him off the street, he said, by increasing his

taxes.

Had this been sufficient to drive him to this family killing? Where had he obtained the revolver and cartridges, since he was not known to own one? Did he write the farewell letter before he went to the picnic, seemingly well, or after his return with his family? Did he go to bed planning the deed or did the urge to kill grow in his disordered brain like a nightmare during sleep?

It was afternoon when the bodies were discovered. *The Star* printed the facts in a late edition, then turned loose a corps of reporters to mop up for the next day. I went to the house, fixed the setting in my mind, soaked in the atmosphere, talked with neighbours and returned to the office where all evening men came in with reports, interviews, tracings of this and that angle. Without writing, they recited the details necessary to a complete picture. Thus, gradually, I was able to build up a correlated sequence of tragedy.

It was 10 o'clock that evening when I began to piece together on a typewriter the jigsaw of known fact, speculation and feeling and, writing through the night, I was finished at 5 a.m., having completed eight columns, a full newspaper page, which left little untold that could throw light on the act of Fogarty. That made a compelling, clinical document, but the intense concentration and hours of writing at the end of a regular day's work frayed me and for two or three days I saw Fogartys at every corner. Men must be of sterner mould to be undertakers!

Less than six weeks later we were plunged into another local tragedy as unusual of its kind as this domestic massacre. One July evening fifteen young men of a brotherhood connected with St. James (Anglican) Cathedral, Toronto, left their camp at Long Point on Balsam Lake, some ninety miles north-east of Toronto and near Kirkfield, scene of the Jacques Richtor finale, and went out paddling in a thirty-foot war canoe. At 8.30, when it was almost dark, the canoe upset, throwing them into the water. All managed to cling to it, seven on each side of the overturned craft, their adult leader, Robert Shea-Butcher, at the end.

But one after another, as the chill northern waters numbed, they lost their grip.

Eleven drowned. Managing to right the canoe, the survivors climbed aboard. Drifting some time later to Grand Island, they stumbled ashore, fell exhausted and slept.

It was 2 o'clock the following afternoon when they got back to the Long Point camp. It was 5 o'clock before the news reached Toronto.

Immediately *The Star* despatched two carloads of reporters and photographers north. Having just left the office, as it happened without trace, it was nearly 11 o'clock before Jim Frise, staff artist, and myself, sought earlier, started after them,

with the vague knowledge that a number of boys had been drowned from a Balsam Lake camp. Not sure on which side it was situated, we decided to drive first to Kirkfield. Everyone was asleep when we reached the village. A fine place to hunt tragedy! Arousing a druggist, we learned the way to the camp by a bush road. We followed this and, just before reaching the lake, banged on a farmhouse door. The farmer, in his nightshirt, opened an upper window. Yep, he'd heard there'd been a drowning. Nope, he'd not been along. Naw, he didn't know nothing of what had happened, hadn't seen nothing of the survivors.

This seemed incredible, within half a mile of the scene.

We drove on and came at last to a clearing at the water's edge. Here were tents; this was the camp. It was deserted. We began to explore, lacking a flashlight, of course, but striking matches and peeking into the tents, with their blankets folded neatly, their shoes and other possessions of the boys as they had left them. Frise, a cool fellow, was unhurried; I wanted to get it over with and away. Tales of the dead had filled my Irish childhood and the empty camp made me want to run. Among the trees the wind whispered eerily and alongside lapped the water in which, somewhere, the bodies lay. Finally the curious, stubborn Jim was satisfied and we turned to drive back to Kirkfield—only to discover a flat tire. That was a personal calamity; we had to burn copy paper to gain enough light to change it.

Towards morning we returned to Kirkfield where, once more arousing the druggist, we used his telephone and through the county switchboard at Lindsay traced the other *Star* men to Fenelon Falls, a small town on the other side of the lake. We met at dawn at Long Point. There Athol Gow, Claude Pascoe and others of the first contingent turned over what they had learned earlier. Taking a boat, I followed the course of the canoe, its victims and the survivors, and about nine o'clock, without rest or sleep, sat down to pound out the story.

Jumpy from the night's racketing, upset from having traced closely the manner of the boys' deaths, blasphemous as a longshoreman to keep from breaking, I had to produce fast an article of fact and of pathos and, to a degree, of beauty, for the courage and self-sacrifice of these lads and their captain gave it that.

After an hour in the water the first boy had slid away to drown. Then Shea-Butcher, the leader, feeling himself a drag since he could not swim, had deliberately let go to lighten the canoe. Another boy, though weakened by immersion, had tried to swim ashore for help, to sink before he had gone a hundred yards. Eight others had chilled, wearied and died.

It was a tragic, dreadful but unselfish narrative to which it would have needed fresh vigour to do justice.



That, however, was only the beginning of a trying four days. The bodies were still undiscovered. A life-saving crew arrived to search and drag and an Ontario Government aeroplane to quest from the air. I flew in this and wrote about it, watched the general scene and wrote about that, wrote of relatives who sought their dead. It was not only harrowing but in these four days I did not have four hours sleep at any time yet kept going until the bodies began to rise on Saturday. On Sunday I drove home.

Disaster seemed to have a habit of running in series and in September came the third, the Florida hurricane. As already noted, the number of Canadians there made this, like the boom, a local story. The news broke on a Sunday. First reports were fragmentary since telegraph wires were down but gradually a big event loomed. In the afternoon I was ordered away and reached West Palm Beach on Tuesday. This was the north limit of the wind frightfulness which, on a hundred mile front, had smashed at the very heart of the paradise created by man, crushing, battering, even tearing homes; shearing off the upper stories of buildings as if with a giant knife; uprooting palm trees, overturning automobiles, turning parks into tangled swamps, buried in débris and filth, strewing reclaimed beaches with wreckage and broken boats, striking back in across the Everglades to devastate, obliterate and kill.

At Balsam Lake tragedy might curtain itself behind smiling water as at other places it hurriedly made itself unreal but this wind which had passed over Florida and was gone had left its horrible brand. Florida of the dizzy hopes, the inflated values, the hectic speculation, the furious ballyhoo, the artificial loveliness, had been hit savagely indeed. In what had it shown itself a Sodom above other places that destruction should have come so dramatically?

A detailing of my news effort would have little point. The area was under military occupation but a showing of Canadian credentials at once secured a pass. Followed a bus drive every day for five days to Miami or one of the intervening mushrooms like Hollywood which had been almost razed, and back again to Palm Beach, for the wires south of the last were down and only there might one file despatches. It was September, the heat was almost tropical and flies and mosquitoes were like an Egyptian plague. Smells from broken sewers and decaying carcasses abounded and I dared not drink water for fear of dysentery or typhoid. It reduced itself largely to putting up with fatigue and uncleanness until the job was done.

A considerable part of the task was checking on Ontario people, for *The Star* had thrown itself into the establishing of contact for local residents with relatives in the hurricane zone, and sent and received hundreds of messages, to give a service that would otherwise not have been possible.

News assignments of this general type of emergency invariably entailed a challenge to stamina. I have undergone extreme exhaustion many times on them, yet I am not sure that I understand fatigue; at least, I have never been quite able to decide whence came that flow of extra strength through which to carry on far past normal limits or the exact source of that nervous and spiritual “second wind” which made it possible to write balanced articles when I was tired almost beyond bearing. Rarely did I get a chance to write an article of panoramic news sweep when fresh. But in time such conditions of fatigue ceased to worry. Far from fearing that hours of hustling quest would bring me to the point of giving up or breaking, I began to find that such a state made for clearer perception and quicker, more mathematical thinking than normally. Without attempting further to analyse something for which I am not sure that either the physiologist or psychologist can account, I may, at least, narrate a marathon effort made necessary by a series of December wrecks on the Great Lakes as a result of one of the worst storms in years.

I never knew when ordered forth on an assignment of sudden tragedy involving distance and as often as not an unfamiliar setting, just what circumstances or obstacles I might have to face. Each was always an unknown task for which tactics, no matter how carefully the News Desk might plan, had to be improvised as I went along. This, of course, was what made such commissions adventures that gave a greater tang than most other phases of newspaper work. They were, in effect, sprees.

There was little hint of what would evolve when, on Saturday, December 10, 1927, I left on the evening train for Sudbury Junction in Northern Ontario as a jumping-off place from which to try to reach the freighter *Agawa*, ashore on a reef south-west of Manitoulin Island in Georgian Bay, a branch of Lake Huron, where for three days of such storm and blizzard that rescue was impossible twenty-one men had been perched in imminent clanger of death. I feared there was little hope of action, for *The Star* had thrown out a screen of men by other routes, several of whom had been gone two days. The odds were on a colleague, Paul Reading, who was on a tug which had for two days lain in a Georgian Bay port awaiting a break in the weather which would permit a trip to the wreck. I counted without that luck for getting the breaks on news stories which came from an early belief in fairies.

With me were Roy Greenaway and Larry Lawson, reporters, and Tom Wilson, staff photographer. On Sunday at 5 a.m. we left the train at Sudbury, found a Chinese restaurant awake and had breakfast. The next move was not indicated. Shortly I called Toronto by telephone, for we were isolated from news. Word came back that the storm having moderated on this, the fourth day, several attempts were

under way to reach and take off the crew of the *Agawa* and that it was hard to determine yet the right newspaper strategy. It looked as if the men might be landed on Manitoulin Island, but I had better wait until a more definite report was received.

How to get from Sudbury to Manitoulin Island? That was the question, since no train ran there on Sunday and the highway did not connect with Little Current, nearest island town. Of course, there was the midday train on the Canadian Pacific main line running to Sault Ste. Marie, which would take us as far as Espanola Junction, but none on the branch line south the seventy-odd miles to Little Current.

*The Star's* News Desk solved the problem in characteristic fashion by ordering a special train made up at Sudbury to stand by for emergency action—and about 10 a.m. I got orders to leave for Manitoulin. This was gambling, for word had not yet come as to where the men would land but the office bet that some of them were sure to be carried to the island when taken off the *Agawa*.

We left on a three-car special, reached Espanola and turned south through the bush on the curving single-track line. We had been chugging along thus for some fifty minutes when a section foreman flagged us to stop: I was sought on the telephone. Orders had gone up and down the line to catch me, sure, at the nearest possible point: it was the Desk calling from Toronto.

Get back, I was told, to Espanola on the main line and catch the through train to Sault Ste. Marie, the Canal port where Lakes Superior and Huron join.

The crew of the *Agawa* had been rescued—word had just come. A few had been taken to the island; detach Greenaway and Lawson and send them on down there. But the majority were on the rescue tug *General* heading up Lake Huron to Sault Ste. Marie. I was to get back and get to the Soo! Take Wilson with me.

Mine not to reason or argue. I was to have contact! This was action. Rushing out to the conductor, I shouted, “Start back to Espanola. I’ve got to catch the Soo train.”

He pulled out his watch: “Can’t do it. That train’s due in fifty-five minutes.”

“But we came down in that time!”

“Sure, but we can’t go back in it. We can’t turn around on this single line. It means backing up nearly twenty-five miles. And we can’t go more than twenty an hour with a light tail, or we’ll jump the track.”

“Then jump the track. We’ve got to make it!”

“All right,” he shrugged, “it’s your risk,” and he gave orders to start back.

It seemed, it was, an intolerably slow journey, but we reached Espanola with three minutes to spare. Wilson and I caught the Sault train, while Greenaway and Lawson chugged south once more on the special to Manitoulin Island.

Darkness had fallen when we reached Sault Ste. Marie, to find no word of the rescue tug. At 7.30 p.m. we learned it was not coming; the trip up Lake Huron had been slow, and it had landed the *Agawa* survivors at Detour, a point on the Michigan peninsula some eighty miles south.

But the story had to be secured that night; it must reach Toronto in time for Monday's first edition; waiting until the men arrived at the Sault some time next day meant handing it as a Tuesday gift to the morning papers.

I hired a care to drive to Detour. This meant hiring it for the night, for the last ferry crossed the river at 11 o'clock and return was impossible until morning. It meant taking my typewriter and transmitting the story from the American side.

It was 9 o'clock when we got away from the Michigan Sault and nearly midnight when we reached Detour, for two feet of fresh snow had made the road difficult. The survivors had been in bed for some time but I was not to be stopped by such a detail. Fortunately no lawyer had turned up at this isolated spot to guard them from questioning. I aroused half a dozen of them, tired as they were, and probed until I got the makings of a fine yarn of Great Lakes peril. They had been ninety-three hours on the reef. The after-part of the ship had sunk and for more than two days they had been held prisoner in the forward-rooms which threatened at any moment to slide or break off into the lake.

Water had gradually put the engines out of commission. Heavy seas, smashing the skylights, the ventilators and the captain's house, had snapped off the steel mainmast, battered the smoke-stack until it crumpled and poured through the broken hatches into 200,000 bushels of wheat which only partly filled the holds.

Though the crew had heat from three small stoves, they went for more than two days without food; they could not cross the deck to get it, for the ice had formed a glassy sheet and no man dared walk it in the waves which came sweeping over. They were held in a prison of ice which encased the ship. Tons formed on the forward-house in which they huddled and the roof sagged alarmingly.

Ice frequently covers ships running towards the close of the Lakes season but the men spoke of this as awesome, stupendous. Along the starboard side a wall formed six feet thick. This sheath barred all exit.

Fortunately they had two axes. When it finally became possible to venture aft for food, it took them more than two hours, in turns, to hack tunnels through this dreadful barricade. Even then the trip was dangerous. The lake still washed over the slippery deck. Railings were gone; steel bulwarks had been shorn away; the open hatches, filled with ice-caked wheat, gaped menacingly.

Yet throughout discipline had held. The captain had set the men to the odd task

of checking linen to keep them occupied. On a gramophone they had played Mendelssohn's *Spring Song*, the popular *Valencia* and other tunes, over and over again. No man had whimpered while the seas battered on the shell of a ship which might at any moment become their coffin. Truly, a great yarn.

It was 4 a.m. Monday when I got back to the Michigan Sault, entered a telegraph office and began to grind out a story of five columns. It was nearly 9 o'clock when I finished and I was dead tired; my back ached badly and I realized that I had not eaten since 6 o'clock the previous evening. Now, I thought, for the Canadian Sault: to eat, then to bed. I returned there, I ate, but I did not go to bed.

Just as I was finishing breakfast a telegram arrived from *The Star*. It announced that a second Canadian ship, the *Altadoc*, had piled on the rocks of Keewenaw Point in Lake Superior and foundered. The crew had been rescued and taken to Calumet, Michigan, but not a thing was known of their misadventure. They were on their way to the Michigan Sault. Would I please meet them there and wire a complete story.

Would I also—the telegram said—find out all I possibly could about a third Canadian ship, the *Lambton*, which had cracked up on Parisienne Reef in Lake Superior, the crew of which were missing, believed dead?

This would have been a heavy job for a fresh man, and I had been going now for almost thirty hours. I wondered if I could carry it out but I had no thought but to plug through. There were nearly two hours until the *Altadoc's* men arrived in the Michigan Sault station but I was afraid to attempt sleep lest I should not awaken in time or awaken in such state that work would be impossible.

Checking on the missing crew of the *Lambton*, I found there was no word. Shortly I crossed to the other side of the Boundary, waited for the survivors of the *Altadoc*, interviewed a dozen of them and obtained once more the makings of a good yarn.

Their long freighter, upbound from the Sault to the Head of the Lakes to seek the season's last cargo of wheat, had been hit, in weather forty degrees below zero, by a seventy-mile gale, so they said, and the mechanical steering gear had broken. Nine men at a time, they had manned the hand gear in ten-minute shifts for five hours and had managed, with a cross sea running, to keep the steel cockleshell of a light ship going.

But they had weakened—or Lake Superior proved finally too strong.

A wave, nearly sweeping four men to their doom, tore the wheel from them. The *Altadoc* swung, grated on a reef, lifted on a second wave and plunged. Came a fierce grinding as rocks cut through the lower plates. The bow held but the after-part

gave way as the long vessel cracked and parted between the seventh and eighth hatches. Every man managed to crawl forward to safety, though two men in the ruined after-part were hurt.

That was on the previous Wednesday night, and this was noon Monday.

Throughout Thursday and Thursday night they stayed besieged forward like the men of the *Agawa*. On Friday, however, four men, volunteering, launched a boat and reached the inhospitable shore on which showed no living thing. They walked eight miles over deep snow and ice-sheathed rocks and at last came to habitation. Saturday was passed in futile attempts at rescue, but the storm had increased. It was not until Sunday, as in the case of the *Agawa*, that United States coastguards from Eagle Harbor reached the wreck in a surf-boat and took off the remainder of the crew.

Loaded with the material for another story, I returned once more to the Canadian side, but I was sagging, in a fever; head throbbled and body ached from weariness.

Nevertheless, entering the office of *The Sault Star*, I sat down and began to type an article. It came laboriously. All zest was gone; writing was an effort of will. At 4 p.m. I had managed nearly two columns, but I could not go on. That much, however, I had put on the wires to Toronto. Laying my head on my arms at the desk where I sat, I thought I would sleep a little and finish when I awakened since it was now too late to catch that day's editions.

Sleep was impossible; my body twitched in a kind of dance and my throat felt choked. I got up and began walking around to ease the tension.

Within five minutes a man came running across the office.

The crew of the *Lambton* had been found!

Two sailors had been drowned, but the others had made their way ashore at Goulais Bay. They were now on their way into Sault Ste. Marie. They would arrive about 6 o'clock.

Thus the third story, the biggest yet, came walking towards me when I had been up for nearly thirty-six hours and was in a state of almost crazy exhaustion.

For minutes I felt despair as I tried to figure how I might manage this final task. It was mine entirely. There was no one to whom I might turn. Yet *The Star* must have the story. True, I had reached the limit, but I must go beyond the limit. That flashed on me—and quite suddenly, from somewhere came coolness and strength. All right, I would. *And how could man die better*. . . . for the honour of his paper! I would carry on until they picked me up gibbering.

Waiting quietly, all fatigue miraculously gone, until word came that the crew of

the *Lambton* were nearing town, I drove out to meet them as they arrived, weary and bedraggled, after four days of frightful experience, in two horse-drawn bobsleds, and followed them to an hotel. Here they refused to talk; they wanted baths; they wanted food and rest. I had to wait until they had washed and eaten, but after supper I got their story. It was a strange one, the most remarkable of the series.

The *Lambton*, 253 feet long, with a crew of twenty men, was downbound, laden, on the last trip before navigation closed, when she was caught by the below-zero storm in the middle of Lake Superior. Coated with two feet of ice, she became a veritable berg and, depressed by the extra tonnage, began to wallow, nose down, propellor frequently clear of the water. The crew felt doom, they had almost given up hope when on the Thursday afternoon she struck on a shoal off Parisienne Reef some eight miles from the Ontario mainland.

At once calling all hands aft, the captain ordered them into rubber life-saving suits with which the ship had recently been issued.

These suits, black in colour, padded with kapok about the chest, covering every part of the body except the face and head, made them look like Michelin tire ads. In these grotesque overalls they lived three days—except three men who had none.

Shortly after the suits were donned, the captain ordered a boat launched, but the rope broke and it swept away in the early darkness. The remaining boat was prepared, but held, and the crew settled to wait for a lifting of the blizzard. The wireless out of commission, they started a bonfire on the steel top of the after-house, to signal, if possible, the faraway shore. In their rubber suits, they huddled in the saloon, black ghosts, all blown up. Two or three lanterns gave the only light. Against the walls the waves crashed, threatening to break in their shelter.

Friday dawned with the *Lambton* still clinging to the shoal. It was snowing, it was blowing, and the sea continued mountainous. They ate a meagre breakfast, standing.

That morning the weather cleared enough to give a glimpse of the mainland. The lure of it proved too strong for two of the crew. After lunch, trusting to the buoyancy of their rubber suits, they stepped into the water to float ashore.

So confident were they, though the other men tried to dissuade them, that they took off their work clothes and donned their shore-going best, even to collars and ties. The rubber suits had weighted feet and they expected to ride easily to land, for the wind was blowing and the sea running towards it. They hitched their waists together with a twelve-foot rope.

There was no emotion in their farewell.

“G’-bye, gang!” one of them called out as they stepped from the deck. At once

the sea caught them and swept them off, the upper part of their bodies clear of the water as if they were walking. Several times they waved before slipping out of sight. That was the last seen of them; no one heard of them again.

Those who remained passed another night in the saloon and next day, the sea moderating, the captain ordered the ship abandoned and eighteen men rowed ashore. It was almost dark when they landed, after three hours' pulling, on the shore ice. Still wearing their rubber suits, they began a trek along the coast, plunging through snow drifts, clambering over icy rocks.

The going was hard and the refugees soon began to straggle, but the captain urged them on. Some of them cut off the feet of their rubber suits to get rid of the weight. They kept going until 1.30 a.m. Sunday when they came on an empty shack in the darkness. Breaking in, they lighted a fire, threw themselves on the floor and slept in heaps like weary animals.

At daylight the captain flogged them to a fresh start. They set out, turned a bend—and came on an Indian village of the Goulais Bay Mission. Here they stayed and rested. On Sunday an Indian with horses managed to break trail for them to a farmhouse fifteen miles further on, where they stayed that night. On Monday they were driven into the Sault, and thus I came to meet them.

At nine o'clock Monday evening I headed for the telegraph office with their remarkable story. I had now been going forty hours but at the moment I scarcely thought of that, for the yarn had me fey, and I began to write without the slightest difficulty, my little Jeeves functioning without apparent weariness. Words, phrases, arrangement came without effort and a picture took shape of vivid, vigorous content. It went along thus until well after midnight, right through to one o'clock; then things began to miss and I found myself drawing to the end of my reserve. I had to keep straightening myself in the chair, not to keep from going asleep, for I did not feel sleepy, but to keep my body from falling down as if the spine were gone. My hands at the typewriter seemed to carry weights. My ears ceased to hear the staccato clicking of the nearby telegraph instruments. My eyes played tricks; once or twice, they seemed to turn completely around in their sockets, then right themselves.

Finishing the *Lambton* story, as smooth in effect I found afterwards as if I had been fresh, I filed it—then turned to resume and complete the narrative of the *Altadoc* where I had left off in the afternoon. For half an hour I struggled with it, fighting to continue, but I could not. My mind had reached its limit and positively would not function so that I could not recall a single fact, and notes read as if made by a stranger; they brought not the slightest response. I did manage to grind out a few paragraphs, then, suddenly, I knew that if I tried to work another minute



something—I did not know quite what—would snap. I threw up the sponge.

Writing “30” on the unfinished story, I let it go on the wire and walked along the deserted streets of Sault Ste. Marie to the hotel. At 2.30 that Tuesday morning I got into bed like an old tar who had just been through three successive shipwrecks.

To sum up the marathon into which I had been plunged without warning, I had been up forty-six hours, since arising at four-thirty Sunday morning on the train before reaching Sudbury. During that time I had covered three wrecks and written three major stories totalling nearly 12,000 words, twelve newspaper columns. From the time I had left the Sault train Sunday I had scarcely sat down except to a typewriter. I had not shaved, I had not washed, I had not removed my shoes, I had not changed my collar, or had it off, and I did not know what meals I had eaten.

Wearily I dropped into bed and tried to sleep, but sleep would not come. Shortly before noon next day, I got up, unrested, and that afternoon left for Toronto. Sleep came in the pullman but punctuated with nightmares. Next day, however, I was able to write an interview with the captain of the *Lambton* which had been worth holding out for a special story. In three or four days I was back to normal.

So much for a case history of a strenuous bit of journalism which everyone, except myself, has long since forgotten. That is newspaper work. To-day’s effort is gone by to-morrow’s sun.



## CEREMONY GONE WRONG

CANADA'S Diamond Jubilee of Confederation fell in 1927. The War had eclipsed the Jubilee year 1917 and people were not in the mood for celebrating a half-century of self-government. But the sun of unprecedented prosperity beamed on the sixtieth year out of a sky flawless with the seeming promise of endless happy years to come. To join in the Dominion's maturing sense of nationhood and lend a hand in the rejoicing came the Prince of Wales, now King Edward the Eighth, his youngest brother Prince George, now the Duke of Kent, Mr. Stanley Baldwin, Prime Minister of Great Britain, and Mrs. Baldwin. They landed at Quebec shortly before noon, July 30, from the liner *Empress of Australia*. It was the fourth visit of His Royal Highness in eight years and my fourth job of recording him.

A large crowd, largely French-Canadian, had gathered at the wharf to cheer the distinguished Britons but the person most excited was Police Chief Trudel of Quebec City. As the steamer drew slowly in, a tug scooting across the harbour belched smoke across its course. This smacked of *lèse-majesté* to the gallant, gorgeously uniformed Trudel who ran waving his arms as he shouted in French, "For God's sake, have it stopped!"

The Prince of Wales came down the gangway in the uniform of a colonel of the Seaforth Highlanders, wearing trews instead of kilt, and behind him, jolly as a character out of Dickens and carrying an umbrella though not a cloud was visible in the Canadian sky, came Mr. Baldwin. In naval uniform shyly followed Prince George; then with smiling aplomb the motherly and rather mid-Victorian figure of Mrs. Baldwin.

A contrast in pairs, royal and commoner, they were to afford an interesting study for the next couple of weeks, though my particular task was the Prince of Wales. Charles Vining of *The Star* was to concentrate on Mr. Baldwin and Helen McMillan on his wife. But we were all inclined to agree that Baldwin, middle-aged, unpretentious, grinning puckishly at the least excuse, stole the honours of the visit from the Prince of Wales. His Royal Highness played the part of a bored elder; the Prime Minister carried himself like a youngster having a jolly good time. On a very hot day in Montreal, during an address to the Canadian Club following luncheon, he cast dignity aside, whipped off his coat and in a light vest and striped shirt talked to the city's *élite*. He was never, of course, without his pipe.

On the other hand, His Royal Highness did not appear to make the slightest

attempt to charm the people as he had done in 1919; he seemed anxious most of the time to get away from them. This was illustrated almost with comedy within a few minutes of his stepping ashore at Quebec. The speeches of welcome in English and French were scarcely ended before he jumped into the open two-horse carriage provided for the drive of state from the ancient Lower Town up the hill to the Chateau Frontenac. Either he forgot that the National Anthem was due—or the band was slow.

He was already seated in the rear seat; Hon. Narcisse Perodeau, Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, was sitting beside him; Admiral Sir Lionel Halsey, royal chief-of-staff, in navel uniform, and Col. Papineau, the Governor's aide, in scarlet coat, were settling themselves on the seat opposite—when the dilatory band struck up *God Save the King*.

The Prince looked startled but the Quebec Governor, very precisely, got to his feet. So did Halsey and Perodeau. His face red, the Prince struggled to his. On the uncertain floor of the official barouche, in a space of not more than eight square feet, the four of them stood in an amusing huddle, obviously praying that the horses would not move, while the band ground out the belated anthem.

Fortunately the horses stood and the incident passed, but it illustrated the future Monarch's tendency to breakaways in those days and how close to comedy came some of the attempts of entertainment committees to be right up to royal form.

On that tour, even more decidedly than in 1919, I got an impression of flags without end, of ceremony without limit, of a succession of officials reeling off platitudes and redundant encomiums from typewritten addresses drearily long.

No wonder His Royal Highness looked bored. I got to wondering what he thought of the time-worn formulas with which he was received and the trite paragraphs with which he was flattered. I wondered what he thought, as he stood almost apathetically, of all those people who delivered themselves of reiterated loyalties, thanks, blessings and the rest. I tried to imagine how he would react if some premier or mayor made the mistake of welcoming him as a human being instead of a royal symbol, with a little wit, a dash of simple feeling or a pat on the back.

To all these dignitaries in their unaccustomed silk hats and morning coats or militia uniforms it was necessarily a crowded hour, a momentous occasion. To the Prince of Wales it was just another speech, another guard of honour, another ceremony, and they were just another minister, mayor or officer commanding. It was strange, though, that he made so little attempt on this trip to hide his *ennui*. In Montreal he changed an announced line of journey to a golf club and disappointed

thousands of people who had waited in the heat for hours. Not only did he change the route but he dismissed the official car and, with Prince George, took a taxi to escape recognition. Thus he insisted on his right to privacy in non-public moments.

Montreal staged its civic reception of Their Royal Highnesses and the Baldwins on a day of midsummer heat which made the City Hall chamber a furnace room into which poured financiers from St. James Street, monsignori in colourful soutanes, officials, military officers and other invited people in a mob which struggled and sweated, and shifted from one tired foot to another as it faced a red dais on which under a heavy red velvet canopy stood a pair of red chairs, the mere sight of which added to everyone's warmth.

A step below and in front of these throne-like chairs were a pair of lesser chairs. Were these for the Baldwins—yes? No!

When the arrival of Royalty was trumpeted outside, Mayor Médéric Martin, resplendent in purple velvet robe trimmed with Russian sable and wearing his gold chain of office, led in his consort, a small lady in black. Depositing Madame on one of the lesser chairs, which she occupied with composure, her arms crossed, His Worship hurried out to do the honours.

Shortly he returned with the Prince of Wales and made such a business of introducing his very good friend to his very good wife that he did not notice Prince George bashfully standing on the edge of the dais. It was the Prince of Wales who finally included his brother in the welcome by making him, as we say, acquainted with Madame.

Meanwhile the Prime Minister and Mrs. Baldwin had come along and stood in the aisle with an air of unconcern, wondering what was their rôle in this family party.

There were, remember, just four chairs. The Princes were ushered to the major pair with a flourish by Médéric. Madame Martin, in her black georgette, with sable scarf, was in one of the others. Remained the fourth. Ah! this was for the Mayor. With great dignity His Worship seated himself, adjusted his robes, adjusted his spectacles, received his speech from an attendant page—and caught sight of the Baldwins.

They were easily disposed of; he waved them to corners. With composure Mr. Baldwin took his stand behind the chair of Madame Martin and Mrs. Baldwin stood similarly behind the Mayor's. Mr. Baldwin, with an air of easy interest but no particular enthusiasm, leaned against the back of Madame's chair while her husband sonorously read his speech. When his turn came to speak, he murmured imperturbably to the Prince of Wales, "Have I your permission?" and stepped lightly in front of him, to address himself charmingly to the people. The honours were easily

his.

Following this ordeal, the Princes and the Baldwins were led into the mayoral sanctum where, in broiling heat, they endured the presentation of everyone who had been present in the *salle d'honneur*. The temperature hovered close to 100 degrees. The sweltering people oozed through the door like treacle through a spigot, pressing against one another's backs.

In order to record for posterity the crush at its worst, photographers let off several flares which filled the room with fumes. Tears joined perspiration to complete the ruin of many a fair complexion. When Médéric's court made its last bow, princes, priests, premiers and people were fit only for the showers. Small wonder that His Royal Highness took a taxi and changed his route after he had had his! He had had more than his share of Montreal mob scenes.

But I have not finished with the reception. Outside the City Hall, on a big concrete square to the rear, came the final act. Here the police staged another scene of excitement similar to those of the 1919 tour, as if to prove that they had a habit of losing their heads when Royalty arrived.

On the square four hundred Boy Scouts stood on parade. In solid mass about them tens of thousands of hot and tired people waited for a glimpse of the visitors. Orderly to a degree, they gave not the slightest hint of a desire to encroach on the bounds set. That, however, did not satisfy the gendarmes. Going into sudden action, motor-cycle constables charged with roaring exhausts against the front ranks, while mounted police spurred their horses.

Followed a spectacle of terror as frightened people, fighting to break back, were prevented by the ranks behind. Children screamed as they were crushed, women shrieked, men shouted. Scores might be seen dashing past the motor-cycles and streaking across the place to safety with tears running down their faces. Newspapermen looking on from a vantage point in the middle cursed impotently. "If that cop hurts that old woman," a reporter exclaimed, watching her scrambles to get out of the way, "I'll knock him off his bicycle, if I swing for it."

At several points victims, overcome by the heat and confusion or hurt, were laid on the ground. Stretchers came into action. Nurses, fortunately on the spot, gave first aid.

Just then the Prince of Wales arrived wilted from the indoor reception, stepped along the Boy Scouts' ranks, said, "Thanks very much, I am happy to have seen you," listened to three cheers and dashed away to change for his golf game. His visit did not exceed five minutes. Mr. Baldwin did not get out of his car. Such was the crowd's reward for the long wait and the police brutality. It had been all so ironic.

In contrast to Montreal's hot and bothered performance, the reception at Ottawa had its focal point in an artistic and moving spectacle. That was the dedication of the Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower of the new Parliament Buildings which had arisen to replace those destroyed by fire during the War, of which His Royal Highness had laid the corner-stone on his 1919 visit.

Newspapermen did not witness the actual ceremony, for the small room held only some three-score people, the Princes, the Baldwins, the Governor-General and Lady Willingdon, Mr. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, cabinet ministers, aides, generals and other selected notables, and they were crowded. There was not space for the smallest reporter.

As it turned out, the invisible dedication of that beautiful sanctuary with its altar on which rests the Book of Remembrance of 60,000 Canadian men who died in the Great War was superb in effect from outside. It seems a pity that this sublime memorial should be isolated in Ottawa where few Canadians have seen it or are aware of it. Everyone knows of the London Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier but here is a national shrine, fine in its way as the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, but hidden, largely unknown.

Here is imagination, and poetry, and peace; it is impossible to enter it without emotion. It should be openly accessible—though it is easy enough of entry once you get to Ottawa—as a majestic conception of mystic and lovely, yet almost pagan, implications, built, not to the glory of war, rather to its suffering and tragedy, with its vaulted ceiling of Gaillard stone and its marble panels on which are engraven the story of the effort and sacrifice of a young country's generation, its floor of stones from French and Flemish battlefields on which so many Canadian soldiers were slain, its frame of black marble, its massive stone altar and its moving inscriptions, of which one will suffice to give the loveliness of them all:

“All's well, for over there among his peers a happy warrior sleeps.”

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A rich and tender room in the heart of the capital of Canada in empty memory of so many dead, who were killed in platoons, battalions, brigades . . . .

The day of the dedication was flawless. Against an August sky of purest blue stood the splendid Parliament Buildings, with their inspiring Tower of Peace wherein, invisibly, this memorial of war was being royally blessed. In front stretched the sweep of beautiful lawn. On the east and west were the weathered blocks of older buildings which had matched the Houses of Parliament which had been destroyed. Down by the railings massed a reverent crowd. Over all lay a great hush.

From the tower clock boomed the hour of three. Inside the Prime Minister of

Canada had begun to speak. We watched, eyes upward in the sunshine, then . . . .

The flag on the pinnacle fluttered to half-mast, and a vast sigh came from the silent outside audience. The Prince had unveiled the Book of Remembrance! At that moment bugles from little embrasures, high aloft, blew *The Last Post* in crisp, silvery unison; the notes floated down elusively, ethereally. People strained to find the source and finally caught the sun's flashes on the instruments. Ah! They sighed again.

The Requiem died. Outside fell silence.

Inside the chamber, the Prince of Wales with clear distinction read aloud the words on the altar:

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“My marks and scars I carry with me to be a witness for me that I have fought his battles who will be my rewarder. So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.”

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Then came the golden notes of the Peace Tower carillon:

“Oh valiant hearts, who to your glory came  
Through dust of conflict and through battle flame;  
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,  
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved.”

And in the beautiful room Mr. Baldwin quoted the words of Socrates: “And so we go our ways, I to die and you to live and which is the better God alone knows.”

The bugles sounded *The Reveille* and that was the end of the ceremony.

The Prince of Wales emerged from the front door of the Parliament Buildings. An officer's voice roared out in hard military style, “Royal Salute!” Rifles rattled and the band crushed out the National Anthem. Gone was magic and we were back again in a common world.

From this function everyone walked to another ceremony which had its sublimities also but was rather spoiled by the zeal of patriots: the unveiling of the statue of Sir Wilfrid Laurier on a knoll of Connaught Place to the east of Parliament Hill. His Royal Highness was to pull the string, but when we came within sight of the rendezvous, we came on tragedy—or was it comedy?

The heroic figure stood nude. It was already unveiled!

At that moment workmen with ladders began to swarm over the bronze Sir Wilfrid, scurrying to replace the shroud, while officials blushed and blanched in the presence of such a catastrophe, and some of the crowd laughed. Nakedness at such



a moment on the part of the statue was indeed a *faux pas*. The Prince of Wales and Prince George, Viscount and Lady Willington, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Baldwin, Mr. Mackenzie King, an admiral, several generals, a whole cabinet of ministers, a papal delegate in black and purple robes, equerries, aides, secretaries, had to wait like people arriving for dinner before the hostess was dressed, while overalled workers strove frantically to cover Laurier with two Union Jacks.

Official Ottawa, loving formality, had a bad five minutes, but the Prince of Wales laughed openly, saying audibly to his brother, "Poor old fellow! Poor old fellow!"

Did the flags slip at this most awkward moment by accident or by design? It is impossible to say. The statue of Sir Wilfrid had been draped originally with a British flag in front and a French tricolour at the back, but an unnamed cabinet minister, so a story said, driving home late the preceding night, was horrified at this flaunting of the French flag at a ceremony which was to be so loftily British and at once gave orders to have the Quebec statesman covered both front and rear with Union Jacks. This was done before the ceremony, but at the worst possible minute they both fell down. Did someone, feeling that Laurier's race might have been symbolized, arrange that they should?

At last the statue was draped and the great and the near-great took their seats. Immediately came a move of Sunday school picnic implications; a Dominion police constable distributed to everyone on the platform, to the Princes, the Willingtons, the Baldwins, to everyone in uniform, to every silk-hatted dignitary and prelate in black robes, to every lady of the high world of Ottawa, a little Union Jack of the two-for-a-dime variety. Evidently someone was determined to make this dedication loyalist beyond the shadow of dispute, but the reception of the toy flags by the visitors was amusing. The Prince of Wales, possibly waving a Union Jack for the first time, laughed gleefully and Prince George made it a duet. Lady Willington smiled enigmatically. Lord Willington engaged himself busily in examining his. Mrs. Baldwin blushed as if she had been caught in a compromising position.

Mr. Baldwin, finding himself passed by in the distribution, made as much fuss as a boy at a tea-party until he got one. This mirth in high places spread to the populace which began to snicker, then to giggle, finally to guffaw. For Mr. Baldwin, unlike the others who fluttered theirs jokingly, stuck his in his buttonhole, tilted his topper and assumed a broad comedy air. Mrs. Baldwin had much ado to keep from following the example of the Prince of Wales and laughing out loud.

A dignified ceremony followed. Sir Robert Borden, former Prime Minister, paid tribute to Laurier. Mr. Mackenzie King, who had succeeded the latter as Liberal chief, spoke finely. Mr. Rodolphe Lemieux, Speaker of the House, once one of his

ministers, declaimed in French, his outbursts moving the crowd to cheers.

Still holding in one hand his flag, the Prince of Wales with the other pulled the draping off the statue. None seemed more glad than he when the event was over, even though it meant going, by way of variety, to a poultry show. Thus ran the gamut from the sublime to the ridiculous to the commonplace, all in a royal day.

In Toronto His Royal Highness golfed, danced, reviewed veterans, attended a huge open-air service in front of the Canadian National Exhibition grandstand and then drove to the dedication of the International Peace Bridge which had been built across the Niagara River between Fort Erie, Ontario, and Buffalo, New York. It was Sunday, another torrid day, and a crowd estimated at a quarter of a million gathered for the ceremony. This was large-scaled, since it included the Prince of Wales, Prince George, Vice-President Charles G. Dawes of the United States, Mr. Baldwin, Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg, Prime Minister Mackenzie King of Canada, Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York State, Premier G. Howard Ferguson of Ontario, Lieutenant-Governor W. D. Ross of Ontario, the British Ambassador to Washington, the Canadian Minister to Washington, the American Minister to Ottawa, a Roman Catholic bishop, a Protestant clergyman and a Jewish rabbi, plus attendants in great numbers.

Dedication took place at the United States approach to the bridge. It was at once formal and informal. At Niagara Falls, Ont., where he stopped for lunch, the Prince of Wales changed the lounge suit he wore on the long drive for a morning coat and silk hat. He made a concession to the heat by leaving off his vest, so that his shirt showed above the top of his trousers in North American fashion.

On arrival at the bridge he and Prince George, the Baldwins and others of the British-Canadian party advanced along the Canadian section of the bridge until they came to a white ribbon from which hung British and United States flags with a stuffed white dove carrying a green sprig in its mouth. No one seemed to know the correct move. The Prince walked uncertainly towards the ribbon beyond which stood the American notables. The Vice-President saved the situation by sticking his hand across into Canadian territory and saying, "How d'you do? I'm Dawes." That broke the ice. He presented the Secretary of State. "How are you, Mr. Kellogg?" said the Prince of Wales. "I am very happy to meet you."

General introductions followed, and a most friendly meeting developed, everyone chatting without constraint. Shortly, snipping jointly, with a pair of golden scissors, Mrs. Kellogg and Mrs. Ross cut the white ribbon. Special cars then carried the party in procession to the grandstand where prayer and speech took place. Al. Smith, then New York Governor, and Howard Ferguson, the Ontario Premier, later

Canadian High Commissioner in London, stole the applause, the former with his brief, twanging introduction, the latter with a selling talk on the beauties and glories of Ontario. Seizing the opportunity of a great American audience both present and listening over the radio, he won the Province a million dollars' worth of free publicity.

Of the other speeches, none was more to the point than that of Vice-President Dawes to the Prince of Wales, when he said, wiping the inside of his collar with a silk handkerchief, "It certainly is very hot." To which the Prince, mopping his face, replied to the Vice-President, "It is damnable."

That was the last time I "covered" His Royal Highness for *The Star* did not send me west with him; he had ceased to afford more than routine copy. He had long ceased to be the Sunshine Prince, the Smiling Prince, Prince Charming or any of the other creatures ballyhooed on the 1919 tour. Eight years of adulation had palled and he had an air of being tired. On the other hand, he had lost his previous look of not being sure of himself, of being the plaything of ceremonial fate. There was a crispness about him which he had previously lacked, as if he had emerged from his apprentice days and graduated as a full-fledged royal heir. Not that his appearance had changed much, for youth still lingered at thirty-three, but in bearing and spirit he had undoubtedly altered. Gravity rested on him as if he already felt the burden of the sceptre he was to assume within nine years.



WORLD BEAT<sup>[1]</sup>

MY most tangled experience began literally out of the blue on Saturday afternoon, April 14, 1928, when a wire flash electrified *The Star* Desk, and every news desk on the continent, with the word that the German aeroplane *Bremen* had landed on Greenley island, a pinch of rock off the coast of Labrador, after the first successful crossing of the Atlantic from east to west. At once began intensive scheming to corral the biggest air story since Lindbergh flew solo to Paris and one of the biggest air stories of all time. This resulted eventually not only in *The Star* printing an unparalleled spread of exclusive narrative from the airmen but in scooping the world with the first published photographs of men and machine at Greenley.

This world beat in pictures did not come by prayer or luck; it was a direct reward of the intelligence work done by a great news desk which did not miss a move in four hectic days of long range struggle. At the same time it hung in the balance until the last minute of the twelfth hour when it was snatched by a kind of blundering coup on the part of the near-crazed *Star* man on the spot.

When the first word came—after an ominous silence of more than twenty-four hours—that, though their gallant *Bremen* was damaged, the fliers, von Huenefeld, Koehl and Fitzmaurice, two Germans and an Irishman, were safe and had not suffered the fate of Nungesser and Coli, the French pair, and other airmen who had tried, failed and disappeared without trace, the immediate craving of every editor was the earliest possible contact.

Where was this unheard-of spot Greenley? How to communicate? How to get there? How to win their story?

A glance at the map showed it seven hundred miles beyond the last limit of railroads, automobiles and telegraphs. Inaccessible! Up there it was still winter and even a boat might not reach it for weeks. And any attempt to fly along the ice-bound, rock-girt, forested coast of the St. Lawrence Gulf and Labrador, was obviously a dangerous trip—even though Duke Schiller, Canadian wilderness pilot, started after the flash came and made it, and later, more leisurely, a big Ford trimotor transport, piloted by Bernt Balchen, Polar flier, also managed it. But Duke in those days was bold enough to try a flight to the moon if someone had staked him a machine.

Trains ran to Quebec City, then east to Murray Bay, a summer resort, now winter-gripped, which was the end of steel. That was the nearest point of civilization

to Greenley. All right, get there! Go to Murray Bay, quick!

At once reporters and photographers from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Montreal and Toronto, representing news associations, news-reel services and the bigger newspapers, began converging on Murray Bay and thence over a snow-covered road to Lake St. Agnes, a frozen lake fifteen miles away, from which Schiller had hopped off on his rescue flight and to which, it seemed, he was bound to come back, if he came back, with one or more of the transatlantic conquerors.

Lake St. Agnes, its nearby *habitant* village representing the last edge of civilization, became press headquarters. Eastward beyond it stretched the north shore wilderness of the St. Lawrence, grim, impenetrable. Between it and Greenley, on the threshold of Labrador, seven hundred miles distant, were just two isolated settlements: Seven Islands, two hundred and forty miles east, and Natashquan, another two hundred and thirty, the only stopping places along the route taken by Schiller. A telegraph wire ran to Seven Islands and ended there. No link existed with Natashquan or Greenley, except a small wireless set at the latter place from which came fragmentary messages.

Thus, between the airmen marooned at Greenley and the newspapermen marooned at Lake St. Agnes, lay a virtually impassable void. It became an affair, therefore, of waiting for Schiller's return. He was the key man. On him hinged the story. It was a matter of grabbing Duke when he came back.

That was the ambition of some thirty newspapermen.

It seemed, though, that he belonged exclusively to me. But did he? This was the situation. No newspaper desk man ever acted more quickly than David B. Rogers, now managing editor of *The St. John (N.B.) Telegraph-Journal*, at that time telegraph editor of *The Toronto Star*, when the flash came saying that the *Bremen* had landed on Greenley. Learning from Ottawa that Schiller was attempting immediately a relief flight on a plane of the Canadian Transcontinental Airways from Lake St. Agnes, he at once put in a call for the air station there and, in consequence, got in first with a proposal. Verbally, for a comparatively small sum compared to larger money which intruded later, he tied up the Airways for Schiller's own story and for the exclusive use of any photographs of the *Bremen* or its crew which he might bring out.

He made this arrangement on behalf of *The Toronto Star* and, subsequently, of the North American Newspaper Alliance, of which *The Star* was then a member. N.A.N.A. was delighted at the chance to come in, for von Huenefeld was under contract to write for the Hearst syndicate and Fitzmaurice was signed up by *The New York Times*. Schiller gave promise of being a big feature to offset the series

offered by rival services.

Incidentally, *The Star* bought both the Hearst and *Times* features; these with the exclusive Schiller narrative, not to mention the precious photographs which are the centrepiece of this tale, made a notable spread.

But the point which was of pressing concern was this: Of what value was the arrangement with Schiller, made over the telephone hurriedly before big money was interjected into the scene by New York interests? Dave Rogers did not know. As he bade me good-bye, he said, "You'll have to make it work!"

On the other hand, thirty competitors at Lake St. Agnes during three days of waiting for his return with Fitzmaurice, the only man he brought out, were equally determined that it should not work. They were not going to be left out in the cold without a story, if they could help it. They aimed to make Schiller's arrival a free-for-all.

I was at home that Saturday afternoon, looking forward to a quiet week-end, when Rogers telephoned me to take the night train to Quebec, with Tom Wilson, staff photographer. We reached Quebec late Sunday afternoon, to find that there was no train to Murray Bay until next day and that motoring was out of the question. Yet word had come that Schiller had reached Greenley and might be back in Lake St. Agnes early Monday. We could not afford to wait, but ordered a special train, Canadian agency of Fox News sharing the cost, and left that night at nine o'clock—not before a brawl at the station during which we had to eject two New York newspapermen and four photographers who climbed aboard. We reached Murray Bay Monday morning and drove by cutter over the fifteen miles of snow-covered, switchback road to Lake St. Agnes. The frozen lake nearby was the aerodrome on which all eyes were focused awaiting Schiller's return. A small hangar at the edge contained offices upstairs which had been commandeered as press headquarters.

Although in time, we were by way of being late, for Montreal men had got there Sunday and New Yorkers had come up by plane. It seemed as if we were already behind in the hunt. Shortly before our arrival a second machine of Canadian Transcontinental Airways, piloted by Romeo Vachon, had taken off for Greenley with two newspapermen and two photographers. Vachon, like Schiller, was an experienced winter flier. He might get through—and he did, eventually. One of the two reporters represented a chain of American newspapers. I shall call him Jones. He will figure presently.

Other aeroplanes, hired by newspapers or belonging to photographic agencies and news-reel companies, were present, but their American pilots, inexperienced under such conditions as the wilderness coast presented, dared not risk the long hop

and had to wait to provide quick transport out with photographs when the story broke in earnest.

Vachon's flight revealed the larger money values that were beginning to intrude. One movie man, eager to reach the *Bremen* and secure the first moving pictures, was said to have paid for his seat the sum of \$20,000. Later it was said that he had bought every gallon of gasoline at Seven Islands and Natashquan to stop competitors from following.

Gossip said that his company—let us call it the Superb—had tried to purchase Lake St. Agnes, make it a private aerodrome and thus bar rivals from going on the ice to make pictures of the rescued airmen.

On my arrival Airways officials acknowledged *The Star's* telephone-made agreement with Schiller. Fitzmaurice alone, they announced, was coming out with him. When they landed—so we arranged—there would be a reception, tea and maybe a little wine, at which the only persons present would be Miss Junkers and other officials of the German company which had built the *Bremen*, representatives of the Hamburg-American Steamship Line, *The New York Times* man who was to handle Fitzmaurice according to contract, and myself. Afterwards, *The Times* reporter was to take Fitzmaurice aside and I was to have Schiller alone.

As for news men not concerned in exclusive agreements, they were to stay strictly outside. Such was the plan agreed on which seemed to make it as easy for me as the gathering of low-hanging fruit.

Beneath the surface, however, the promise was not so roseate. Other newspapermen had learned of *The Star's* tie-up with Schiller and even though we kept close-mouthed about the possibility of his bringing out Greenley photographs, an inkling of it spread. American photo agencies, particularly Superb, were spending thousands of dollars in an effort to snatch the first pictures break, and were not going to see it plucked thus by a rustic Canadian, if they could help it. I sensed the hostility of news men and photographers. There were over thirty reporters, all but three of them from the United States, and some thirty photographers, movie and still, and photographic agents, directors and strategists, practically every one of them an alert New Yorker who would break rules, if necessary, to win.

None of them intended to take this exclusive arrangement lying down. They plotted, I knew, to cut me out when the time came. There was more than a hint that I might find myself, so far as Schiller was concerned, extinguished.

What a strain was the three days' wait in that isolated hangar in frontier Quebec! It was a bedlam as sixty men planned and plotted, strove and struggled to win the breaks. Out of nowhere it had suddenly become the news centre of the Continent,



nearest outpost to Greenley and the marooned airmen—and yet there was only a single telephone line to Murray Bay and the eager outside world. That line was choked with long distance calls. New York! Toronto! Boston! In one twenty-four hour period one hundred and twenty-five calls took place between the Lake St. Agnes-Murray Bay end and New York alone. Frantic men stood in line for a turn at the wire. Secrecy was impossible. The mob knew everything that was said. Everything was telephoned, even telegrams, for fifteen miles of switchback driving with horse and sleigh made the sending of telegrams to and from the Murray Bay terminal impossible except by telephone. In consequence everyone knew everyone else's hopes, plans and orders. Rivalry involved ruses.

So bitter was the strife that I had to arrange a password with David MacWilliams, manager of Canadian National Telegraphs sent specially to handle the Murray Bay glut. I had to give this before he would telephone a telegram to me at the airport or accept one from me for *The Star* in Toronto.

It was warfare. No one might be trusted. Men, scarcely resting or sleeping, grew hard, elemental, haggard as under fire. Superb, the big picture outfit, spent thousands of dollars to secure the first picture beat of Fitzmaurice, but a hit-and-run rival plucked it right from its hands—and made Superb's chief tactician a wreck fit only for a sanitarium as he saw his planning shattered.

You will recall that this company had sent a man on the second Greenley-bound plane with Vachon? Reaching Seven Islands, the first stop, it halted there to await Schiller and Fitzmaurice coming west. The plan was that the Superb's operator should make movies of Fitzmaurice there, hand the film over to Schiller to bring out to Lake St. Agnes—whence it would be at once flown to New York ahead of rivals who would take pictures of him after landing—and then continue on with Vachon to Greenley to make shots of the Germans still waiting to be rescued.

The scheme seemed fool-proof but on Tuesday afternoon, when Schiller and his passenger arrived at Seven Islands, Tom Hogan of Atlantic and Pacific Photos swooped down in another aeroplane at the psychological moment—from Lake St. Agnes!

Almost as if he had known the exact moment in advance, though it was sheer luck, he timed his landing, took both movies and stills of Fitzmaurice, then headed back for Murray Bay, Quebec and New York—while the Superb man, held powerless at Seven Islands by the fact that Vachon was under contract to continue to Greenley and that Schiller was not continuing his flight out until next day, foamed at the mouth. Of course, he, too, had taken pictures of Fitzmaurice on arrival, as planned, but they were now useless.

Hogan flew non-stop to Quebec City where he had to land for gasoline. Superb, having learned of his coup, made frantic appeals to the police to arrest him, to the customs officials to stop him, to impound his film—but Hogan, clearing all pitfalls, got to New York and scored a clean beat of twenty-four hours with the first photos of the Irish airman.

That Tuesday evening, when Schiller did not arrive at Lake St. Agnes, we drove in once more to Murray Bay and lay on stretchers in the crowded, tiny Hotel Savard, but not to sleep. Argument, carousal, poker games, constant long distance telephoning made the place a hades. On Wednesday morning long before dawn, unshaven, unslept, we drove back again to Lake St. Agnes for the coming hour of struggle.

At any moment now would come the test. Somewhere across those bleak dark hills, beyond those trees, were Schiller and Fitzmaurice. Suddenly out of those storm clouds would come winging the story. We waited as for an execution, every man an Ishmael, brooding, sullen, hard.

Out of the air would come the story—who would get it?—with all this tie-up talk and all the plotting? What would happen on that sheet of ice where a dozen aeroplanes stood ready to break away with photographs?

My own feelings were difficult to describe. Toronto and New York offices counted on me to succeed and saw no reason why I should not. I was only a cog in an involved arrangement on which they had been working for days for wide syndicate distribution of the expected prize. I was merely the outpost instrument for making contact with Schiller and obtaining any photos which he might bring out. By hook or by crook! But how? What had all these other fellows schemed? What fast play would they make at the moment of climax?

Suppose I failed.

The only person to whom I might turn was Frank Murtagh of Newspaper Enterprise Association, whose aeroplane was to carry to Montreal the pictures which Schiller might bring. We had tried to hire a machine but none was available; they had all been bought up. We had, therefore, brought in N.E.A. for transport purposes.

Murtagh, wise in the ways of photo fighting, sensed what was afoot. “Be careful,” he warned, “when you approach Schiller. Don’t let anyone see, or hear. Those other lads won’t let us get away with any Greenley film if they can prevent it.”

Four distinct tasks faced me, all centring on Duke Schiller, an unknown quantity, who might or might not have a clear idea of the arrangement made so hurriedly when he had hopped off on the rescue flight four days previously. First, I had to find out if

he had photos taken on Greenley. Second, I had to get them from him quietly to avoid trouble. Third, I had to hand them to the N.E.A. aeroplane, to be rushed towards Toronto and New York. Fourth, I had to obtain and write in the first person Duke's own story.

Schiller loomed as the key factor, not only for me, but for everyone. With Fitzmaurice tied to *The New York Times* by a binding contract, he was the man on whom outsiders must concentrate.

In advance, I made one move of potential value. Out of Murray Bay ran just three telegraph wires and in a short time thirty men would be fighting for the use of them. An old trick came to my mind in the final hours of waiting at Lake St. Agnes. I explained it to Tom Wilson, my photographer-colleague.

"The minute your job's done, and you get your Fitzmaurice plates away on the plane," I said, "hop in the first cutter you can find, hit for Murray Bay and open a wire to *The Star*."

"But you won't have any copy ready to file."

"No, but here, start them with this," and I pulled a weekly magazine, *The New Republic*, from my pocket. Wilson eyed it doubtfully.

"It's all I have, Tom; it will work."

It did work, but that comes later.

At 4 o'clock that afternoon, after an unexplained delay, Schiller and Fitzmaurice landed, and after them out of the machine stepped Jones, representative of an American newspaper who had started for Greenley on the Vachon plane. Why had he come back with them instead of going on? I had no time to speculate. Everyone milled around the airmen, with photographers having the first inning, shouting, jostling, cursing, fighting for close-ups, while they grinned, quipped, shook hands to satisfy the cameramen.

It was impossible to approach Schiller; every time I tried I was blocked; and Duke was like a will-o'-the-wisp, elusive, buoyant, boisterous. A fine chance here, I thought, for a confidential chat! But time was flying imperatively. I worked in close as Miss Junkers, the German girl, held him for a moment of talk. The instant she turned away, I caught his elbow and whispered, dramatically, no doubt, certainly intensely, "Duke—Griffin, *Toronto Star*. Did you bring out pictures from Greenley?"

"Lo, Griffin," he roared, catching my hand, "how's the boy?"

"Fine, Duke, but did you get *Bremen* pictures?"

"Pictures! Oh yeah, I remember, pictures—in the old bus. Had 'em developed last night at Seven Islands. Get 'em when this fuss ends."

"But listen, I've got an aeroplane wait——"

“Why, boy, oh boy! if it isn’t my old buddy!” And the turbulent fellow turned away to throw his arms around an American pilot. He was carried off. I was shouldered back. Next moment the crowd was sweeping him and Fitzmaurice towards the hangar. At that moment I felt the loneliest man in Canada.

“Did he have pictures?” The voice of Frank Murtagh broke in on my uncertainty.

“I—I think so,” I stammered, as I tried to figure out what he had meant by saying he had had the films developed at Seven Islands. “He said he had them on the ship.”

“Well, get them quick. All the other planes are gone or going, and I must get ours away. It will take some going to reach Quebec before dark.”

“Right, Frank, but give me five minutes.”

I was puzzled, more than a little scared, as I stood looking at Schiller’s machine out of which an attendant was taking baggage while three men of the Superb company checked everything and two or three movie rivals checked them. I felt not only alone but helpless. If they found film, what should I do? How should I know it was the film sought, Duke’s or mine? If these men took it, how should I get it from them?

Fortunately, the quandary solved itself. Though they felt all over the mail bags, the Superb men did not find a thing. That left me more than ever puzzled. Where, since they found nothing, was the film which Schiller had said was there?

I ran towards the hangar.

Schiller, Fitzmaurice and officials had vanished to the upper office. Newspapermen and photographers, excluded, grouped around the bottom of the outside stairs, their way barred by a Quebec Provincial policeman, sprung from nowhere. He held me as I made to go up.

“I’ve got to see Schiller,” I told him excitedly.

“I have the order,” he said. “No one must ascend.”

“But listen, I have an arrangement. You can’t——”

A voice from behind interrupted! “Don’t worry about Duke’s story, Griffin.” I wheeled. It was Jones. “He gave it to me for you. Here it is, all written out, ready to put on the wire,” and he handed me a sheaf of paper.

All written out! I glanced through it hurriedly. Why, this was not his story—his real story, to be dragged out of him—but short, amateur bulletins which he had already filed to *The Star* from the Greenley wireless station. I felt webbed in an intangible net. What did it mean? What was at the bottom of it?

I did not blame Duke, who knew little of news values and news rights. This good-natured pilot, I felt, was being fooled to deprive *The Star* of his exclusive

story and the pictures. Anger began to grip me, but I felt even more impotent than on the ice. Where to begin?

At that moment Murtagh spoke again: "I don't think there are any pictures. But pictures or not, I got to start that plane."

"Frank," I said, "for God's sake give me five more minutes. Go then, but wait, please——"

And, turning quickly, I dived hard at the Quebec guard. Before he could stop me, I was up the stairs, and into the upper hall, shouting, "Duke! *Duke!*"

A man came out of one of the rooms. "He's not here," he said, "he went down the other stairs. Where to? How the hell should I know!"

That was the end. I was licked, disgraced—a failure! No pictures. No story. No Duke. A complete defeat. Walking out to the balcony, I looked down. Frank Murtagh stood looking up. I was just about to signal him to let the plane go, in another minute it would have gone—when in the distance I caught sight of Schiller!

He was entering a *habitant* farmhouse up the road, with two men. Ten seconds more and he would have vanished across the threshold. This was Fate. I recognized his unmistakable swagger and I knew the other two as American reporters. So! Here was something tangible at last, something to fight. Suddenly I went mad.

"Hold it, Frank!" I yelled, and, sliding down the stairs, I started to run, and no doubt broke a record up that Quebec road. I burst into the farmhouse kitchen. The reporters were sitting. One had a bottle of whisky. Duke stood in the middle of the floor. Indecision now gone, I jumped and caught him by the shoulders. He was big, bluff, cocky, not inclined to stand rough handling, but, berserk, I shook him, shouting, "Duke, where are those pictures?"

"Easy, Griffin, easy. Now, wait a minute."

"Where are those pictures? You said they were in the plane; they're not in the plane. Those fellows are fooling you, Duke. Where are those pictures? Tell me, where—are—they?"

"Easy, easy, I'll tell you—I gave them to Jones."

"To Jones!"

"Sure, he said he'd give them to you."

"To me! He was fooling you, Duke—we got to get them back, quick. Come on."

I was already starting back, Schiller after me. Berserk before, I was crazy now, sobbing with fury as I raced towards the hangar—to see Murtagh coming to meet me.

"I'll—have—them in a minute," I panted as I passed him and shot up the outside

stairs. Inside now, the reporters stood grouped. Singling out Jones, I went right for him, murder in my heart; it must have shown in my face. In a moment, if he had not shown the pictures, I would have had him down. But as I closed, I shouted, "You have some photos belong——", and involuntarily his hand shot to the breast pocket of his coat. I caught it and yanked forth a brown envelope.

Backing slightly, I opened it—films! I held them up to the fading light.

The *Bremen* pictures! Snapshots of the transatlantic aeroplane on Greenley Island. A glance showed that.

"Frank," I yelled, all secrecy gone now, "start them away!"

He clutched them, "An escort," he said, "or we'll never make it."

"Take the cop!" I shouted, motioning to the Quebec policeman. "Here, you!"—for I was on top now—"go with him. See that film safe on board."

Without a word, he dog-trotted after Murtagh. I listened—came the roar of the take-off. Almost dark, but the pictures were on their way—we had won! My knees went limp. At that moment Jones came over. "A rotten trick," he said. That straightened me.

"Another word," I said, "and I'll——"

"I could easily have destroyed them," he went on.

"You damn fool! why didn't you?"—and I turned to Schiller. "Come on, Duke, let's get that story."

That was hard work, dragging it out, for he sought to start with his cradle days and pursue every bypath since, but I held to essentials by riding him hard. At last I arose with a fine yarn, describing his flight to Greenley, his meeting with the Germans and Fitzmaurice, what he had learned from them of their adventure and escape—to realize that I had the place to myself. Everyone was gone. The last newspaperman had long since vanished towards Murray Bay, fifteen miles away, to file his copy. I rushed downstairs and outside. Not a sleigh, not a cutter, in sight! It was pitch dark and raining.

"Duke," I cried, "your yarn's no good unless I get to a telegraph wire. I must have a cutter at once."

"Just a minute, I'll raise one," and the irrepressible fellow, without a hat, shirt open at the throat, went roaring down the road. In less than ten minutes he was back with a country sleigh. Jumping in—"Murray Bay," I told the driver, "and step on it!"

He whipped his horses and we drove, bumpety-bump, uphill and down, heaving, jerking, stumbling, splashing. The snow had turned to slush and the thaw had pitted the road. I was soon wet through, aching all over, holding on to the sides lest I be thrown out, worrying as to whether Wilson had held the wire. It was 9 o'clock when

I got to Murray Bay, rushed into the telegraph office—and found the wire open and waiting.

Tom had guarded it well. Arriving before any of the reporters, he had given the operator my *New Republic* to start filing to *The Star*. For more than two hours its chaste editorial utterances had gone loggily over the wire. Five thousand useless words had been sent when I turned up to start in with real copy.

During this time more than a score of men had been fighting for the remaining two wires, crowding the little office. Some of them, failing to edge in, had turned to the telephone. One man talked 2,800 words to New York at heavy cost. It was hard going for them, but I had no sympathy to waste.

My bad time was over, with a wire ready. Wilson brought in coffee; I had merely to sit down and write.

“Loop in,” I told the operator, pulling off my wet shoes and socks, “to N.A.N.A. in New York. Get them as well as *The Star*. The same story goes to both, the bold, brave narrative of the great Duke Schiller.”

In less than five minutes his story, ghost-written in the first person, had got under way to Toronto and New York to be relayed by syndicate to papers in Canada and the United States getting the services of *The Star* and N.A.N.A. Writing was easy, a mere affair of arrangement while giving a hint of his breezy character. In less than two hours I was finished. Hot on the close came back congratulations from New York: the yarn a knockout! They did not know down there how nearly true that was.

Relaxing somewhat, I turned now to write a general account of the arrival. That was not so easy. So concentrated had I been on the problem of the film that I had not witnessed the landing and had scarcely seen Fitzmaurice. I hardly knew what he looked like. Though he had given a general interview, in spite of *The Times* contract, I had not heard a word of it. No matter, I ground out a piece; then went off to get a dry pair of socks. That night I had my first real sleep in four days.

Thus ended my small, if key part in a well-planned, coördinated effort to get the precious film—so fatefully recovered at the last possible moment at Lake St. Agnes—through to New York and Toronto. *The Star* had laid its plans for days. If I had fallen down! For weeks the thought kept recurring to make me chill. Yet I had only avoided a complete miscarriage by a hair’s breadth. If I had not been able to persuade Murtagh to hold the plane! If I had not seen Duke Schiller about to disappear into the farmhouse! If I had not gone mad! If Jones had not gestured towards his pocket!

Everything hinged on Schiller bringing out pictures to Lake St. Agnes and my receiving them there

from him, but *The Star* had had reporters ready at Quebec, with a special train, to dash to Father Point or any other place at which he and Fitzmaurice might possibly be forced in the uncertain weather to land instead.



A photograph which was a world scoop:  
the *Bremen* on Greenley Island.  
*Toronto Star*

In the meantime photos made by Wilson of the arrival were flown to Montreal by a chartered plane which arrived there long after dark. A *Star* man, Roy Greenaway, met it at the airport and put them on the night train to Toronto.

But what of the Schiller films, eleven kodak scraps a mere 2½ by 4¼ inches, worth their weight in platinum, but which did not leave St. Agnes until it was almost night?

The machine carrying them, last away, had not the luck to win through to Montreal but was forced down at Quebec City, nearly two hundred miles short. How to get the film those two hundred miles that evening? Another plane was unprocurable. Motoring was impossible in time on account of the condition of the roads. A special train!—the only way.

It steamed out of Quebec with one *Toronto Star* reporter and one envelope of world-famous film. It high-balled through to Montreal, but arrived much too late; the last regular train, though held fifteen minutes, was gone. Arose the problem of the remaining three hundred and thirty-five miles to Toronto. It was now midnight.

The eleven films were rushed by taxi to a dark room all ready waiting in Montreal and printed, a set for Toronto, a set for New York; and seven prints proved first class. Roy Greenaway, having hired a heavy car, took *The Star's* set and started on the long night drive. It was bad going. For the first one hundred and fifty miles, frost-heaved roads, gravel and slush held the automobile from making speed. At dawn, he had only reached Morrisburg in Ontario but from that point the highway improved.

At 11.25 a.m., exactly 9 hours and 55 minutes from the time he left Montreal, he drew up in front of *The Star* office on King Street, Toronto.



Within five minutes, the prints, hurriedly retouched by waiting artists, went into the hands of the engravers to make big Page One cuts and an inside full page layout.

Shortly before noon an edition was on the streets, and it carried a world scoop in *Bremen* pictures.

The photographs were fine in detail and magnificent as a news spread. They showed the famous aeroplane on Greenley Island. They showed clearly how the propellor had been bent by the landing on soft ice. They showed von Huenefeld, Koehl and Fitzmaurice with some of the natives.



Tense moments following Duke Schiller's landing on Lake St. Agnes Quebec with Fitzmaurice, the Irish flier, as rival photographers search his plane for hidden pictures.

*Toronto Star*

“The most remarkable news-picture scoop in newspaper history.” That is how *The Star* captioned its display.

“So far as is known,” the lines read, “these are the only pictures in existence taken at the actual scene of the *Bremen's* forced descent. They will not appear anywhere else in the world to-day.”

They did not. It was, positively, a world beat, for a plane which started that morning from Montreal with the New York consignment of prints broke down and they only got there in time for the next morning's papers, *The World* and *The Herald Tribune*, which received them respectively through N.A.N.A. and N.E.A.

Truly, the stars in their courses had fought for us.

Some idea of the news value placed on the photographs may be gathered from the fact that a New York tabloid was said to have offered \$20,000 for the privilege of using a single print simultaneously with *The World* and *The Herald Tribune*.

Following the securing of them and the Schiller story, my work at Lake St. Agnes virtually ended. *The New York World*, great newspaper now dead, commissioned a Ford trimotor machine to fly to Greenley to rescue the Germans. It carried the famous pilots, Floyd Bennett and Bernt Balchen—but when it stopped en

route at Lake St. Agnes, Floyd Bennett stepped out from the controls to die, a few days later, of pneumonia. He should never have left New York.

This trip of the big transport was, through the membership of *The World*, a story for the North American Newspaper Alliance and, consequently, for my own paper. Roy Greenaway relieved me at Lake St. Agnes that I might go to New York to record the reception to be given there to the Germans and Fitzmaurice. I did not witness it. The delay was so long that the story died.

But in New York, directors of N.A.N.A. invited me to dinner at the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, to tell them how I had scooped the world. I did lyrically but truthfully, and these American editors were kind enough to cheer a Canadian reporter. Yet I knew mine had been the reward of sheer luck at the last possible moment and of positive despair. Instead of being lauded, I might, but for the mysterious ways of Providence, have been hunting a job.

N.A.N.A. voted bonuses to Dave Rogers and me. His was the quick newspaper mind that had in the beginning made the whole thing possible.

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[1] The material in this chapter appeared in somewhat different form in *Behind The Headlines* edited by Vernon McKenzie, Dean of the School of Journalism, University of Washington, and published in 1931 by Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, New York. It is included here as an integral part of the record.—*F. G.*



## OBSTACLE RACE

SHORTLY before noon, February 10, 1928, a local correspondent in Timmins, gold mining town of Northern Ontario, 485 miles from Toronto, sent *The Star* the following wire:

“Twenty-five men trapped Hollinger underground fire one body reported recovered how much? (signed) Murray Magee.”

Hollinger was the greatest gold mine in Canada. The number of men cut off by fire which broke out in rubbish in an abandoned stope on the 550-foot level turned out to be forty-nine of whom thirty-nine died. Threat of fire, explosion and carbon-monoxide gas which caused the miners’ deaths was considered virtually non-existent in a gold mine, which is very different from a coal mine where such danger has to be constantly guarded against.

Murray Magee’s wire gave *The Star* a complete beat of more than two hours on the biggest North Country story since the Haileybury district fire; and, inexperienced though he was, he held the fort with excellent despatches until staff men arrived.

Ten *Star* reporters and two photographers arrived by a relief train next morning to lay down a barrage of coverage. My assignment was not merely to write news and panoramic features interpreting the tragedy but to act as front-line editor in charge of the shock brigade. Officials had to be quizzed. Survivors had to be interviewed. The homes of victims had to be combed for pathos and pictures, and we did not miss a home. Undertakers’ establishments, the morgues, the hospitals had to be checked. (In one funeral place, in state, fifteen ash-blond Finns in black clothes lay in a row to which crowds swarmed, while dogs relieved themselves against the trestles of their biers.) Rescue work had to be watched. Rumours—and how rumour flew in that mining town!—new angles, fresh avenues of interest were constantly emerging to demand instant action.

Keeping the men engaged was a task in itself, but I had to treat it simply as an added chore. It had, at least, the advantage of giving complete knowledge of every phase of the story. Many of the reporters did not write, acting merely as leg-men, scurrying around to garner details or incidents which might be woven into the major tapestries. It was *The Star*’s platoon system at its best.

We cleaned up current news for the Saturday afternoon editions and had Sunday clear to make a Monday killing. We did. As usual, I had a fortunate break. About

one o'clock Saturday afternoon, coming out of the telegraph office after filing my first despatch, I saw an ambulance go past and followed it to the main shaft. Men were alive! A signal had just come up from the mine in which everyone still down there was long thought dead from the smoke, charged with carbon-monoxide fumes, which filled the levels and crosscuttings in the vicinity of the burning stope.

I arrived at the pit-head in time to see George Zolob brought forth. He was one of twelve trapped men who had maintained life by tapping an air line the power of which beat back the smoke and thinned the fumes. Squatting over the vent, they breathed in clean oxygen. It was dark, they had no lights and all around them death reeked in the atmosphere. But for twenty-eight, thirty, thirty-two hours, they had the patience and the grit to live on this tapped air. They were not sure of the nature of the catastrophe. Somewhere near the burning stope, they knew, dynamite was stored. There had been no sign of rescue. They did not know that, without gas masks, no one had been able to descend to search for them.

Then Zolob, middle-aged Jugo-Slav, broke through. Stumbling, falling, crawling in the darkness and the reek, he managed to make his way to the station on the 425-foot level and signal. The cage came down and he was brought up. Then a rescue gang, with masks arrived that day from Toronto, went down and carried several more men up—living men, when all had been thought dead. This work went on for nearly two hours before another newspaperman came along to this scene in a pit-mouth shack of corrugated iron with the half-frozen ground trampled to muck by many feet.

That evening every *Star* man was detailed for a clean-up. By Sunday afternoon, having acquired an exact knowledge of the topography of the great mine's miles of workings, the different levels, the crosscuttings, the fatal stope, the course of the tragedy that arose with such quick, sinister effect, the parts played by various individuals, the whole drama of smoke and choking, underground death, I was able to present a complete picture of the why and how of the disaster to the extent of eight columns. Roy Greenaway and Paul Reading sent special stories and other men contributed to the inflowing harvest of words.

On Monday the General Manager of Hollinger, A. F. Brigham, submitted to an examination by newspapermen. Noah Timmins, President, and other mine officials were present. The Press showed clearly in its guise of public servant in that examination of Brigham. At the same time he had our admiration. A man of imperious temper, he could not have been more severely grilled by prosecuting attorneys, yet he maintained his calm and met our questioning fairly.

When disaster happens, it is not unusual for corporations to shut down on

everything but the barest facts, even to close the mouths of employees, lest disclosures result which may reveal a negligent or damaging condition. This applies as much to government services as to private companies. Railroads and steamship companies are particularly touchy about wrecks which are not only regarded as a bad advertisement but which may eventuate in heavy claims, particularly if neglect or carelessness be shown. Most disaster stories, therefore, involve meeting a measure of official hostility.

Of course, neither railroad nor shipping companies can stop passengers from relating their experiences but they frequently try to prevent employees from talking.

The wisdom of this attitude is doubtful, although nothing will probably ever alter the protective impulse of a wounded corporation to cover its hurts from the public. They put needless difficulties in the way of reporters, they give the effect of seeking to hide, they antagonize—to little purpose, since I have rarely worked on a disaster in which the facts were not pretty clearly brought out by newspapermen.

In the Hollinger case, with courage, for he was greatly upset by the accident, Mr. Brigham met our gaze frankly. Far from resenting our pertinence, he sought, without fear of prejudice, even though a Provincial investigation loomed, to satisfy our curiosity.

In March, 1929, a bad wreck occurred on the Canadian National Railways at Drocourt, Ontario, 42 miles above the junction of Parry Sound, when two transcontinental trains, each pulled by a 6,000 engine, met on a curve and killed some eighteen people, mostly passengers in a colonist car which caught fire. With a show of coöperation, officials took news men on board a relief train leaving Toronto but, without warning, put us off at Parry Sound and said we could go no further.

That did not prevent the story being obtained. Keith Munro of *The Star* reached the wreck on a freight train and A. D. Kean flew up from Toronto, landed on a half-frozen lake and walked ten miles through bush to secure photographs. Railroad men in Parry Sound and injured people brought to the hospital gave me the material for an account sufficiently accurate to be used at the inquest by Crown Attorney W. L. Haight as the basis of his examination of the train men involved. Nothing was gained by official obduracy.

One night late in the Fall of 1932 I drove to Port Colborne on Lake Erie to cover the loss of a freighter from which all but two or three of the crew had been rescued. They were already in bed at an hotel, with the solicitor of the ship's owners on guard, and he refused to allow them to be seen. In the morning, however, he permitted an interview in his presence with the captain and two members of the crew and merely stopped answers to certain questions, which was fair enough, in view of

the fact that heavy insurance was involved.

The worst block I recall followed an explosion in a chemical plant at Nobel, north of Parry Sound, in which four men were killed. A number of us drove up to find a blanket of censorship in force. Approach to the scene was stopped. Men in the company village who had been close to the accident were sullenly mute. Officials were equally reticent. The manager would do little more than answer in monosyllables and, since I was ignorant of the layout and processes of the factory, it was difficult to achieve a rational article. Thus, censorship may be exercised by corporations as well as nations.

Another example of this occurred in connection with the Kingston Penitentiary riots which broke out twice within a week in October, 1932. Newspapermen hastened to the scene of the outbreaks, which were serious, including the setting ablaze of shops, the calling in of soldiers and rifle fire, only to find the facts locked within the high grey walls. It was impossible to penetrate, impossible to reach the prisoners, talk to them, find out their grievances and the cause of the trouble; almost equally impossible to reach officials. Barriers were placed across the highway to prevent approach to the prison. Guards had their mouths sealed. But leakage took place, of course—it always does—and my own knowledge of the place, gained on a previous visit, and the knowledge of police reporters who knew the interior intimately, made it possible to describe the riot accurately in regard to cause, course and effect. We cracked the incident wide open in spite of the official desire to quell the trouble and impose discipline without public knowledge.

A new Superintendent of Penitentiaries, Brigadier-General D. M. Ormond, had only recently been appointed from the Canadian permanent army ranks. He had remained a soldier since the War and had not become accustomed to being a civilian. His view of newspaper men was the same as Kitchener's in the early months of hostilities; they were nuisances to the military man; he referred them to the Minister of Justice at Ottawa for official statements. But so great was the public demand for truth about what was obviously a serious prison situation that, a day or two after the second outbreak, evidently acting on instructions from Ottawa, he sent word that he would admit us to the Penitentiary to view things for ourselves.

Entering in good faith, we found ourselves surrounded by soldiers and prison guards, lined up, examined, all but finger-printed; then Ormond made a brief speech in which he prohibited us from asking questions during the tour. That seemed reasonable enough since we imagined we were to be close to the prisoners. As it turned out, we did not even see one, since all were locked in the cell-blocks which we did not enter.

Then, accompanied by a heel-clicking army colonel in a trench coat and steel helmet as aide and a steel-helmeted soldier carrying a rifle with fixed bayonet, the new Superintendent led us through sections deserted as a graveyard.

We were prevented from addressing a question to him or speaking to one another, on pain of being instantly shot, bayoneted or fed to the inmates.

Thus we progressed through the empty yard and the uninhabited industrial shops which had been the scene of the first outbreak—in absolute silence broken only by the staccato remarks of the General when he chose to explain something.

Even when we were herded into his office at the conclusion of this Trappist pilgrimage, he refused to permit speech or questioning. He read us a statement along the lines of a war front *communiqué*; then curtly dismissed us as if we were, to say the least, outside his social knowledge; in fact, he let us know, in so many words, that the editor of *The Kingston Whig-Standard* was the only person among us to whom he had been introduced!

At least, he gave us an unusual Canadian sample of goose-stepping high and hybrid.

Not all public officials behaved thus. Some time previously, a building of the Ontario Hospital (asylum) at Penetanguishene had burned, causing the death of four elderly inmates. In this case, far from resenting our arrival, the Superintendent seemed to welcome it. He not only submitted to questioning but led us over the gutted two-storey building and explained the course of the tragedy. No difficulty was placed in the way of our examination of the night guards on duty when it broke out. We saw them alone at their homes and obtained their statements freely. The only persons we might not question were inmates. Since they were all mental cases we had little complaint. The result was an accurate, restrained account which, considering the implications of an asylum fire, might easily have been developed sensationally.

The value of a newspaper's intrusion in such matters was seen in February, 1929, when a posse of five Ontario Provincial Police shot and killed a man at night on a country road near the village of Bolsover. First reports said the dead man was Orval Shaw, a notorious if petty Robin Hood of the swamps whose offences were of the chicken-thief variety, plus hood-winking the police whom he had made to look foolish on a number of occasions. Describing how he and a companion had been cornered at 3 o'clock a.m. in a stolen automobile, these accounts represented him as having been shot when he attempted to pull from his pocket what seemed to be a revolver but turned out to be a billy. The word "battle" was used and a general implication of "fight" given, as if the affair had been a desperate one with the



constabulary as brave defendants.

Arriving at the scene, I learned, instead, that the police patrol who had been advised of Shaw's presence in the district, had been marching along the road when they met two vagrants—whom they did not recognize in the darkness and who might, for all they knew, have been innocent country lads—and had, when the wayfarers ran on being accosted, opened fire and shot one of them twice in the back fatally. No automobile had been involved and there had been no resistance.

When the police picked the fallen man up, they did not know who he was; not for thirty-six hours did they succeed in establishing his identity as Pete Brennan, a vagabond who had escaped from Chatham Jail where he was serving a three months' sentence for some minor crime and had become a companion of Orval Shaw, who had once more escaped.

I was able to relate how the police, without recognizing him, had drilled like a running deer this ne'er-do-well with a mere four cents in his pocket and not a scrap of paper to give his identity, this homeless fellow without an undershirt. He and his companion were on their way to thieve in the village in all probability—but did that warrant the police shooting an unknown in the dark?

Newspapers carried questioning editorials and the right of the police to shoot was discussed. An inquest was held and, as a sequel, two constables of the group were placed under arrest. They were tried on a charge of shooting with intent to maim and acquitted by County Judge W. D. Swayze of Lindsay who expressed the view that they had acted in the belief that they were warranted under the circumstances in doing what they did.

My point is that if the first account, giving merely an official version, had not been followed up by *The Star* sending a man to enquire on the spot, the death of the tramp Brennan would have been a regrettable casual event, quickly forgotten. But even vagabonds have the right to live, and in this case the man shot might not have been a vagabond. It would have been most difficult for the police to have explained if he had happened to have been some farmer lad on his way home, scared by their unexpected challenge and not recognizing them as such in the darkness in a district where they were rarely, if ever, seen.

The years 1928 and 1929 brought a variety of experiences. Within a month of the Hollinger tragedy, I was in Quebec City to witness a snow derby in which men raced teams of northern dogs drawing sleds for three days over a daily course of forty-one miles, a boy called St. Godard of The Pas, Northern Manitoba, winning by less than three minutes of elapsed time over Leonhardt Seppala of Nome, Alaska. In the following month came the incident of the *Bremen* transatlantic fliers.

June found me in Northern Ontario, on the Montreal River beyond Elk Lake, writing special articles about a great drive of 550,000 spruce logs, a flotilla of timber that stretched for fifteen miles, a hard, slow, majestic affair of moving a cut forest by water in traditional Canadian fashion.

This stay on the river taught me that the forest swarming of black flies and sand flies in the early summer might almost drive men mad. Their very buzzing was torture.

“Talking about flies,” said a forest ranger who had been out all day cutting telephone poles, “look at this!”

He rolled up his jeans, rolled down two pairs of heavy socks, rolled up his long underwear. Each leg below the knee, above the top of the sock line, was ringed with bites and blood. Hundreds of flies were dead! All day long they had crawled down inside his clothes to his knees where he had killed them ceaselessly.

In September came the grim tale of a small steamer, the *Manasoo*, which foundered in the Georgian Bay with a loss of four men and 112 head of cattle. During a heavy blow the ship listed, tilted, plunged and sank, to have become an unexplained mystery of the Great Lakes only that five men clung for sixty hours to a raft and were saved. At least, four of them survived; the fifth died, the others dividing his clothes between them. A grim tale, indeed, but easily drawn from the survivors in an Owen Sound hospital; just a more or less routine episode of our local seas.

It served, however, as curtain-raiser for the sinking of the *Vestris*, the most tragic episode of the sea, with the possible exception of the loss of the *Empress of Ireland* and not including submarine barbarities, since the *Titanic* had struck an iceberg on her maiden voyage. This was before the burning of the *Morro Castle*.

The liner *Vestris* sank on Monday afternoon, November 12, 1928, 250 miles off the Virginia Capes, less than forty-eight hours out of New York, en route to South America. Like her tiny counterpart, the humble *Manasoo*, she sank in an ocean of question marks. She had been carrying 328 persons: 129 passengers and 199 crew. Only 60 passengers were rescued, though 154 of the crew were saved. The dead totalled 114, 45 of the crew and 69 passengers, including 27 women and 13 children. It was said that not a child was saved: a drowning of the innocents. A tragedy like that of the *Manasoo*, of a ship that listed, canted and foundered. A tragedy of smashed and capsized lifeboats.

It happened that I reached New York with just enough time to drive from the train to the wharf to which a rescue vessel, the *American Shipper*, was bringing over a hundred survivors. There was no chance to visit the Customs Office at the Battery to secure a press card of admission to the pier; at any rate, at this morning hour, the office was not open.



Remarkable photograph, taken as the *Vestris* canted, shows sloping deck of doomed ship as lifeboats were loaded and launched.

Courtesy of "The News",  
New York's Picture Newspaper.  
Copyright by News Syndicate Co. Inc.

Presenting myself at the pier gates without one, I was refused admission by the guards, and they were adamant, for crowds of unauthorized persons sought entry.

I looked around desperately for the *Shipper* was due in ten minutes and if I failed to make immediate contact with the survivors, I felt I might as well have stayed in Toronto. But my luck held, as always. Shortly, I saw a news movie man, Whipple of Universal Service, who had worked in Canada on the 1919 trip of the Prince of Wales. "H'lo!" he called as he hurried towards the gate, with tripod, camera and film.

"I can't get in, and you need an assistant," I said. "May I?"

"Sure thing. Here, take this case. My pass will get us both in."

A moment later I was through, and in a few minutes survivors of the *Vestris* came down the gangway—to be shepherded off in taxicabs. No chance was given to talk to them but from a number of passengers I got their addresses, to look them up later, and learned that the crew were

being taken to the Seamen's Institute. Driving to the Institute, I quizzed several of them in quick order and flailed out a despatch. During the afternoon, pursuing the why, what and wherefore of the disaster, I interviewed passengers.

When I sat down to write that evening I had not only a narrative of intense pathos, pointed with many incidents, but I knew as much as it was humanly possible to know about the sinking of the *Vestris*, short of holding an investigation such as was subsequently held for days. The inquiry, except that it threw fuller light on certain facts officially, merely verified the viewpoint of my overnight despatch.

It was a difficult, a pitiful, story to write. The New York papers carried flaring headlines and bitter accounts which alleged bungling and cowardice. I was able to show that there had been, at the worst, misjudgment and to clear somewhat the mystery of the drowned women and children and of the seemingly disproportionate number of the crew saved.

That was the year of Canada's greatest wheat crop, when the Prairies produced more than 500,000,000 bushels. In the period between the *Manasoo* and *Vestris* tragedies I was despatched West to spend four weeks and obtain the material for a dozen special articles which were written after my return. Three were on the subject of the grain avalanche of that wonder year at the crest of the prosperity wave; one dealt with the misfit miner-harvesters, of whom the British Government had shipped out thousands as a pre-election move, to wander about the Prairies; and the remainder described foreign settlers and settlements.

At that time, before the depression closed the gates, immigrants were a live question in Canada, with political implications. Bishop Lloyd of Saskatchewan, an Anglican churchman, was the mouthpiece of those who wanted nothing but British settlers. There was much fulmination against the inroads of, especially, Central Europeans. Imperialists raised their voices against Hungarians, Czechoslovaks, Poles and Russians who had flowed unto the Prairies and to a lesser degree against Germans and Scandinavians.

But it was openly to be seen all over the West that foreign settlers were by way of being its backbone. Where many British immigrants of the miner type, without incentive to farm, failed even as seasonal labourers, they had fitted in and flourished. After visiting them, I examined the prejudice against them, showed that criticism was largely based on ignorance and gave example after example of their successful Canadian citizenship.

Shortly came the depression, immigration halted and people had other things to think about.

On February 2, 1929, *The Toronto Star* definitely marked the status it had achieved by moving into a new skyscraper building at 80 King Street West, from which it could look down on the rivals whom it had outdistanced. Incidentally, I became shortly afterwards News Editor but in three months I was permitted to go back to writing. Less than a month later, on a day's notice, I was off to Mexico, going by train to Brownsville, Texas, then by aeroplane along the Gulf of Tampico and across the mountains to the capital. This seemed better than being chained to a desk.

My assignment was to look into the case of a Major William Rupert Kingsford,

formerly of Toronto, who had been arrested, held without trial and released under threat of expulsion. At the same time the churches of Mexico were to be reopened after a three years' interdict during which services had been under ban and priests and prelates exiled or in hiding.

There was no time to secure introductions and I knew no one in Mexico City, but American correspondents there were very kind, particularly Arthur Constantine of *The New York World*, and they gave me the necessary leads.

After finishing the case of Kingsford and his native wife, I concentrated on the reopening of the churches, obtaining interviews with Archbishop Diaz, swarthy as an Indian, head of the Mexican church, Archbishop Ruiz y Flores, the Apostolic Delegate, a small, spare priest, and Archbishop Orosco y Jiminez of Guadalajara, a handsome, scholarly aristocrat of colonial Spanish descent, who had been for three years a fugitive in the mountains of Jalisco.

My great desire was to interview Calles, dictator behind the scenes, but, living constantly under guard, he was as impossible as Stalin of Russia and I failed to reach him. But I had an interview with Portes Gil, Provisional President, in his office at Chapultepec Castle.

These contacts were achieved in simple fashion, after a first roundabout attempt. On arrival in Mexico I went to the British Ministry where I had a chat with Sir Esmond Ovey, who afterwards went as ambassador to Moscow where I had the privilege of another talk with him three years later. I told one of the staff that I should like an interview with Portes Gil.

"That shall be arranged," said the Scots secretary. "I shall begin negotiations immediately."

Four or five days later I called to see how they were progressing.

"Oh, splendidly," he said, "splendidly. We have conducted the preliminary pourparlers. In a day or two I shall write a formal request."

"Oh! And then?"

"Ah, then you shall have an interview in possibly ten days."

"No sooner than that! Why, I'll be returning to Toronto before that!"

"Oh, I say, maybe we can hurry things a bit. Suppose we say a week."

In two days I got the interview, by hiring, on the advice of the American correspondents, a go-getting young Mexican to whom a few dollars acted as a powerful incentive. He found me Archbishop Orosco y Jiminez in seclusion and led me to him; he then brought me to Chapultepec Castle where, by guile, bluff and persistence, he got me past a chain of guards right into the presence of Portes Gil, then acted as interpreter. What powers he had I do not know, but he produced

results much faster than the British diplomat.

Remarkable ceremonies attended the reopening of the churches, particularly the first high Mass after three years in the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the national shrine situated just outside Mexico City, of which the celebrant was Archbishop Ruiz y Flores. An intimate view was made possible by the prelate telling Nicholls, *New York Times* correspondent, and myself that if we came early to the side door he would see that we got places. Driving to the cathedral shortly after dawn, along roads choked with people on their way to the service, I hoped he would remember his promise.

He did, though it must have been one of the most important days in his life. An attendant, waiting for us, led us along passages past priests' robing rooms to a pair of chairs ready waiting on the sanctuary dais to one side of the high altar. Otherwise, so great was the press within and without, we could not have got in.

From our point of vantage we could almost touch the richly vested Ruiz y Flores as he went through the ceremony of the Mass. We were indeed on holy ground for the altar held a picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe, an object of intense veneration. And ours were the only seats in the Basilica. The body of the church was a mass of dark forms, hooded in black shawls, hundreds bearing lighted tapers, thousands carrying flowers. They milled in waves against the sanctuary where guards held them back. Spontaneous song broke forth at intervals to reverberate from the dark walls and the high ceiling.

The Archbishop's quietude, his serene worship, was in contrast to this fanaticism. Acolytes and priests were obviously excited but the Apostolic Delegate, reopening the shrine to the multitude, was unmoved.

At last came the procession of the Eucharist, the old man bearing the Host beneath a canopy, down into the body of the jammed church. People fell on their knees before it, unheeding the candle grease which dripped on them. Cheers and *vivas* thundered while hundreds pelted it with flowers, and tears streamed down women's faces. Priests had to put out their hands to protect him from the zealots, but he moved placidly, his eyes closed, his lips moving in prayer.

As the procession turned into a side chapel, Nicholls and I started away, for we had stories to file. As we descended from the altar, a woman caught his arm and whispered fiercely. I wondered if she were annoyed at our heretical presence, but presently she let him go. Hurrying after him, I asked what worried her.

"She said," Nicholls replied, "'Watch your pockets well. Thieves swarm in the crowd.'"

My despatch written, I presented it at the cable office, only to be told that

ensorship had been suddenly imposed and that it could not be accepted without authorization. The resident correspondents, knowing the Mexican censor, made no attempt to file, but my impulse to send words winging to Toronto at the earliest possible moment was not to be denied. The cable manager said he would go with me and we went to offices in the National Palace to interview the censor. But we could not find that elusive gentleman as, waiting here and waiting there, we were sent from official to official.

After nearly two hours of this, we found at last a man who acknowledged a certain responsibility. He issued this dictum: "Make three copies in Spanish, bring the original and the three copies here and it shall be decided what you may send."

With some difficulty I found a translator to make copies and hurried back to the official, only to find that the office was closed and everyone gone, since it was Saturday, for the week-end!

That seemed to write *finis* on any chance of cabling the despatch, but the censorship was lifted that evening with as little explanation as when it was imposed, and I began to understand why the American newspapermen had refrained from action while it was in effect. By the way, typewriters in the cable office were chained to the desks on which they sat, and the desks were chained to the wall, which was apparently another quaint Mexican custom; in this case to prevent thieves from taking them off openly. Maybe the cable office itself was chained to the ground, but I did not notice.

One Sunday, to add to things seen, I witnessed an artistic, vivid but most unpleasant bull-fight at which I learned this: derelict horses suffer more than the fighting bulls. After teasing and torture, the latter are merely killed, but the poor horses, bags of bones fit only for the knacker's, are disembowelled. The bulls, young and gallant, are treated with respect; the horses, goaded to their ignominious rôle with the near eye blinkered, are simply used as goading bags, to weaken the bulls, bring their heads down by straining their neck muscles, so that the prancing matadors may the more easily give them the final thrust between the shoulders that brings them with a thud to the sand. A miserable, if brave, sport, sadistic torture posturing as art.

I went alone to the *Plaza de Torros* and had a choice seat in the shade, entirely surrounded by Mexicans. No one had warned me about the horses, but I had been advised not to leave until the fights were over as the crowd was liable to resent a foreigner's premature departure as an insult to its noble sport. There were no aisles and such a going would have meant having to climb through the close-packed fans. The goring of the first horse shocked me as much as if I had seen a man bayoneted, the ripping of the second sickened me; after that I sat with my head down through

the remaining five fights from the moment the horses entered until the yells died down after they had been dragged off, dead or dying. This may not have been a very courageous action on my part, but in this case discretion was the better part of valour and open disapproval would not have led to the sparing of a horse.

So much for Mexican cruelty. In September I had evidence of Canadian cruelty when, as a result of a short item carried on the wires and caught by the keen eye of the Managing Editor, I was sent 700 miles to Dolbeau on the north shore of Lake St. John, Province of Quebec—the country of *Maria Chapdelaine*—to secure a story of horror which the mind of Edgar Allen Poe dare scarcely have conceived, of which the brutal realism might have given Dostoievsky pause. The securing of it was not difficult, a mere affair of extraction from the principals by patient questioning, and I telegraphed two long instalments, of which the following is an outline:

David Cotnoir was Indian with a dash of French, not tall but built hugely, strong as three men. At a country fair four years previously he had carried around in a circle for six hours on his back a sack of sand weighing 300 pounds; and, during the last half hour, for good measure, a man weighing 163 pounds had ridden on the load. By way of test, he had once carried sacks of sand aggregating 1,000. A simple man of the woods, casual, a little terrible—trapper, hunter, *voyageur*.

A year previously, in August, Cotnoir and his two sons, René, nineteen, and Michel, only thirteen but big, strong like his father, had gone five hundred miles north of Civilization to trap. All went well until spring when plans to acquire fresh grub failed and they suffered weeks of semi-starvation. One dog died from lack of food; they had to kill and eat its emaciated fellow. On April 27, for a reason rather obscure from a white man's viewpoint, the father parted from his sons, leaving them at the trapping grounds, and started south with the avowed purpose of reaching Civilization and bringing back food. He would return, it was reckoned, by June 10.

He did not return—and René died on June 11.

More than two months later, on August 27, Michel, aged thirteen, was found beside René's body, his hair matted on his shoulders, his clothes in rags, pounding a fish bone to pulp, to swallow as food. Indians who came on him calculated that they had beaten death by four days.

No stranger tale was ever unfolded than that of these boys in the woods alone.

After the father had left them, they lived on the flesh of an occasional beaver, otter or muskrat which fell to their traps, and they caught fish. But their net rotted and they were reduced to spearing fish with a nail on the end of a pole, which was not very satisfactory. Periods of two or three days passed when they had no food. They worried, grew more and more lonesome, began to count the days until their



father returned. Their matches gave out, until only two were left; these they wrapped in a waterproof cloth for emergency, while they tried the expedient of keeping fire constantly alive in a pail. Their cartridges were exhausted and they could shoot no more. Gradually they grew so weak that they could no longer visit their trap lines to seek meat, however poor. Forced to stay close to the camp, they were reduced to eating roots and leaves.

To what extent René, the elder, denied himself available food for Michel I could not discover, but one night, in his sleep, he died.

It was June and already growing warm in the North. But for four days, without stirring, without eating, the strange boy Michel lay under the blankets beside the corpse of his brother.

Even when he arose at last and prevailed on himself to part from the body, he moved it merely a few feet, wrapping it in a tarpaulin and leaving it just outside the tent in which he lived. He had no thought of burying it. Maybe his mind was obsessed with the thought that his father would any day return.

The heat was increasing in the forest, the flies were thickening, but three or four times a day as he moved weakly around, he pressed back the folds of the canvas to look on the changing face of his brother that soon became a horror. He looked at it daily and he cried.

When he was brought home his first words to his mother were, "Mama, a man does not die from crying, for I have been crying every day as I looked at René."

How he had lived on by himself for two months no one could tell. Two weeks after the death of his brother, he had snared two muskrat. They were his only meat until he was rescued. The rest of the time he lived on leaves and roots.

The story of David Cotnoir, the father, was almost equally terrible. On his trip south, without food except such as he snared or shot, he weakened. Caught by the spring break-up, he halted, and devoted himself to netting and smoking fish. With these as a food supply, he travelled on, now by canoe. His legs began to swell. Still he continued. Then his body became swollen, big, he said, so big. On the portages flies swarmed around him and bit until the blood streamed down his face and dropped from his wrists. His body grew more bloated and water flowed beneath his skin. At times, when he climbed out of his canoe, he could not walk. He had to crawl on his hands and knees, dreadfully, painfully, advancing a foot or two at a time.

At last he managed to reach a fire ranger's camp.

He arrived home in July, 1929, having left in August, 1928, eleven months previously, and he had to go to hospital for two weeks. But he quickly recovered.

About that time Michel was found by a party of Indians.

A strange tale indeed. When I saw Cotnoir, he told it with unconcern in English broken with French and Indian. He was preparing to go back into the bush for another winter's trapping, as if nothing had happened. Michel, who stayed out of sight and could not be induced to speak, was not going; but maybe, said his father, he would be back the next Fall. I left with the feeling that I had been in contact, not with humans but with half-humans, trolls of the forest.

Later that same year I journeyed to The Pas in Northern Manitoba on the trail of an exploration group, the MacAlpine party, who had set out to make an aerial search for minerals from Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay across the Barren Lands towards Bathurst Inlet and Coronation Gulf beyond the Arctic Circle.

Missing for a considerable time, they turned up, at last, at Bathurst Inlet; word came by radio to the outside world. Expecting that they would emerge by Fort Churchill, I went by way-train to this new Far North port, a trip of three days from The Pas to the edge of the Barren Lands. It was already winter when I arrived there, had lunch, turned around and left on the returning once-a-week train, for news had arrived that the lost fliers were not coming out that way. At any rate, *The Star* was getting the full story from Richard Pearce, editor of *The Northern Miner*, one of the party.

I returned, therefore, by way of The Pas and Winnipeg, to Toronto, having completed the longest trip, nearly 4,000 miles there and back, I ever took for nothing.



## SOME PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE

LOOKING back, it would seem that the main theme of my newspaper writing has been, not politics or economics or social trends, though these have been touched on constantly, but people. The demand of *The Star* has been for a human interest approach, and undoubtedly there is human interest in stones—if men blast them to build a Welland Canal or hurl them in a street row.

A bewildering collection of people have been fed as grist to my typewriter mill. They have included princes, airmen, radio stars, movie stars, priests, Salvationists, criminals, faith healers, prize fighters, scientists, Harlem negroes, Shriners, politicians, champion bridge players, hoboes, cynics, simpletons, mystics, adherents of the Oxford Groups, Mexicans, millionaires, Communists, professional hockey players, farmers, trappers, explorers, police, zoo keepers, marathon swimmers and technocrats. Among them I had no favourites. All I sought of any of them was personality and performance; it did not matter whether he or she was a prime minister or an oddity, an evangelist or a monster. All were simply subjects to be interviewed or observed, like beetles by an entomologist. I may have had private opinions about them and reactions to their behaviour or beliefs, but my job was to interpret in terms of their common human interest.

To put it another way, what had to be sought everlastingly in people was that indefinable quality called colour.

I found it one day in the Fall of 1926 in Emma Goldman. The famous Anarchist—who had been jailed in the United States for her incendiary teachings; then thrown out; who had gone to Soviet Russia, then left it in disgust—was staying in Toronto, an exile from excitements. I found her in a bed-sitting-room on Spadina Avenue which was heated country fashion by a little stove in the middle of the floor. The only beauty, the only femininity, in it was a bowl of roses. “I’d much rather,” said Miss Goldman, gesturing towards them, “have roses on my table than diamonds on my neck.”

She was then a woman of fifty-six, middle-aged, dumpy, but quick and energetic, light on her feet as a girl, with a square, compelling, strangely spare face, a masculine rather than a feminine face, a pioneer face. I had gone seeking a brief interview but she was lonely and she unlocked her heart and, before I realized it, she was telling me, in a quick panorama, without a word of emotion or emphasis, the story of her fighting life.

When she had finished, I asked her, "Are your plans done?"

She answered, "I believe in living to the fullest extent. I let time take care of itself and never give a thought to the future." A pause, then, "Whatever will happen will happen. I hope to die on deck, true to my ideals, with my eyes towards the East, the rising star. Perhaps, if I had my life to live over again, I might avoid some of my mistakes, but in the fundamentals—in the light of the War and of Russia—I am more convinced than ever that nothing but liberty as the basis of society can solve the present problems of the world."

Thus spoke the lover of freedom, giving me unexpectedly not only a page feature but a thrill, and as I left I found it hard to keep from kissing her hand, in tribute to her unquenchable spirit. Peculiarly, six years later, on my way to Russia for *The Star*, I heard another exponent of liberty, Konrad Bercovici, one night on the *Olympic*, expound almost the same doctrine. The gipsy writer, so different in his approach to life from the eminent anarchist, denounced the Soviets for going forward to mechanization instead of back to nature and declared that he would never, never set foot in a land that reduced men to automatons.

Every person, I found, had a story, often of an unexpected turn; this hope made newspaper work a quest of which I never tired. It made a hangman a rare specimen. He was Arthur Ellis, at that time Canada's official executioner. I spent two hours with him in his hotel bedroom in Woodstock, Ontario, one May night in 1921, where he was waiting to hang a murderer named Garfield.

It was a thundery evening and our talk was punctuated with flashes of lightning which, always a romantic, I found a setting properly sinister. I was interested, not disgusted, when once, with a friendly gesture, he placed his hand around my shoulder. Yet I shuddered, for that hand had thus gone around the shoulders of two hundred men and women whom he said he had hanged. At dawn it would go around the shoulders of Garfield.

Whatever is the popular conception of a hangman, Ellis did not fit. Seen on the street, he was a small, meek-appearing, yet jaunty figure, for all the world like a deacon on his way to church, carrying a pair of neatly folded black kid gloves. Though inconspicuous and incognito, he gave no hint of furtiveness as a tradesman of death. Indeed, a Bible under his arm was all he needed to make him seem a figure of confident piety. Later, in his bedroom, seen close-up, this feeling of him as a religious person strengthened. He had the thin, nervous, tight-lipped face of a zealot. He spoke clearly, almost gently, with a Lancashire accent, and with a decided sense of drama, using his forefinger for emphasis. Weak eyes behind heavy glasses were his only, shall I say? ghoulish feature. They had an effect of death, as if they were not

eyes, but empty sockets—this again may have been merely my imagination.

In general, he had an air of not quite belonging to this generation, as if he had stepped out of the pages of *Barnaby Rudge*.

“I never take a liberty in a prison,” he said, “and I never allow one.”

He was vain, an exquisite, with two heavy rings on his left hand, a massive gold watch chain and a tiny black bow tie perched at the front of a high, stiff, double collar; yet he fascinated, and entertained. He could laugh at himself and his job as he told of seeing in an hotel a man pointed out as the hangman and shunned. “Poor fellow!” he said, “he had my sympathy.”

“In carrying out the extreme sentence of the law,” he declared oracularly, “I am the last wheel and the smallest wheel. The judge sanctions the execution; I merely perform it. I take it very religiously.”

“How do you mean, religiously?” I asked.

“I mean sacredly, rather,” he said, his eyes glowing like dark fires, so that for all his unction I shrank from him. “It is a solemn, a sacred duty. But no, I make no special preparations. On a day of execution, I may be a little more serious, concentrated, I think you’d call it—that is all.”

He liked books, he said, especially history, and his favourite author was Marie Corelli. He got off this aphorism: “There is not as much pain in being hanged as in having a tooth pulled.” Maybe he was right at that; there is no ache afterwards.

Years passed before I talked with a murderer. This was Harold Vermilyea, a man of forty-nine, graduate of the University of Toronto, who came from California to Belleville, Ontario, where on the night of October 4, 1934, he killed his mother, a woman of seventy-six, with a hatchet. By driving in taxis from Belleville to Hamilton, taking the next day’s train to Chicago and then flying by night to Los Angeles, he was back in his California home by the morning of October 6th, and might have created for himself a remarkable alibi if he had not left a clear trail across the continent by his behaviour, arguing with taxi drivers, acting oddly on the train and so on.

Following his arrest, Inspector Hamar Gardner of the Ontario Provincial Police and Detective Fred Izard of Belleville brought him back to Canada and I was despatched to attach myself at Chicago and accompany them to Toronto. I met them on the morning of October 20th, as they stepped off the Los Angeles train at the Dearborn station, with a choice of two routes, by Sarnia from another platform of the same station or by Detroit from another station. The latter was the one we had been advised they were going to take, but the former seemed the more logical.

The situation presented one of those momentary dilemmas which are the

reporter's bane, since a false move might leave him stranded and his quarry gone. It was complicated by the fact that I did not know either of the officers by sight and that they were liable, possibly expecting newspapermen at Chicago, to make an attempt to throw them off the scent.

However, as most situations do that seem difficult in advance, it solved itself easily. I hired a red-cap attendant, gave him my grip and typewriter, explained the necessities and told him to watch and follow me closely as I could not concern myself with him or my belongings. That left me free to pick out the three men, which was easily done, since Vermilyea was an unmistakable figure chained, however unobtrusively, to Izard. Instead of going to another station to take the Detroit train they walked around the end of the platform to the Sarnia train, went on board and entered a drawing-room. I took a berth in the same sleeping-car, to find that Percy Cole of *The Toronto Telegram* had done the same thing.

When Inspector Gardner emerged, he proved more than kind and chatted freely, if discreetly. He demurred at first about our talking with his prisoner but yielded finally to the feeling, I think, that we were Canadians on United States soil. He entered the drawing-room, spoke to Vermilyea, then came out and said he would see us. We went in and chatted with a most unusual man who might have been a Rotarian going to a convention instead of a captive being dragged back to answer for the repulsive killing of his mother.

He treated the two detectives as friends, calling them "the Chief" and "Fred," playing cards with them continuously and keeping meticulous tally of the score. He greeted us as welcome guests and chatted as if he had not a care in the world. My thought was to take him easily and I asked him about his children, of whom he had two in their 'teens, and the trip from California. He answered cheerily and volunteered this startling remark: "You know the story of the man who fell out of the twentieth storey window? As he went past the sixth floor, a fellow shouted, 'How are you, Mike?' and Mike called back, 'I'm all right so far.' Well, that's my situation exactly; I'm all right so far."

My friend Cole grew impatient when he refused to discuss his case and blurted, "You might as well know, Vermilyea, that the people of Belleville have you as good as hanged already." The murderer looked at him quietly and said, "Oh, that remains to be seen." This remark must have been a shock to him for the Canadian officers had kept back knowledge of the evidence he had left of his flight across the Continent. However, he maintained his control and I seized the opportunity to interject, "Whether you are innocent or guilty, I think you will admit that your mother met a terrible death." My hope was to draw from him some show of feeling but he

replied airily, "I'll say she did!"

During the afternoon we spent some time in the drawing-room, chatting. Vermilyea discussed any and every topic, from earthquakes to fruit growing in California. To draw him once more, we suggested a glass of whisky and he immediately countered with:

"You ought to know better than to offer a prisoner a drink—he's liable to kill someone."

This from a man who was found guilty of murder and was hanged in April, 1935. A majority of alienists gave evidence that they considered him sane and the jury accepted that view. Everything about him to my mind suggested the abnormal, a man of twisted ego and misdirected emotions. Throughout the trial and in the death cell he maintained his iron air of calm. He walked to the scaffold one night shortly after midnight without a tremor. He did not confess, he did not deny and he did not express regret.

One spring day in 1927 I had the luck in New York to bag a couple of ex-Presidents, as both were then, Alexander Kerensky of Russia and Eamon de Valera, who has since become head of the Irish Free State, interviewing the former in the morning at a select Park Avenue hotel, the latter in the afternoon at the old Waldorf-Astoria on Fifth Avenue.

They had this in common, that they were unsmiling, apparently humourless men, unpretentious and, in their hotel suites at least, singularly unimpressive.

I am not sure, though, that it was not with a desire to impress that Kerensky came bounding out of his bedroom, without dressing gown, in a suit of biliously purple pajamas of coarse cloth, which had not been slept in for they were not creased. In this he paced the sitting-room, talking in a hard, high, vibrant voice, at times gesturing with both hands as if I were an audience, at others histrionically thumping his chest.

Present was his secretary, a very tall, very grave young Russian in morning clothes who acted as interpreter and succeeded in making his master's utterances entirely innocuous in English. I would ask some such question as "Do you think the Soviet government will last?" and the purple-pajamaed near-Cromwell of 1917 would pause while this was translated. Then he would start orating for two, three or four minutes, his words snapping out, his eyes flashing, his hands waving; while his secretary gravely nodded his head.

Suddenly the ex-President would stop and stiffen to attention, while the interpreter would turn to me and say, "Mr. Kerensky says No!" There was little point in saying that Mr. Kerensky had just made a speech, for that gentleman,



listening, would back up the secretary with an energetic “Yes! Yes!”

He seemed a somewhat absurd world figure as he strode jerkily about and yet he had aspects of dignity. A grey, sallow man of stocky build, with baggy face, heavy soft nose, full lips, yellowish pouches below eyes of peculiar, impenetrable blue and head close-cropped as a convict's, he had an air of worrying subjects with talk as if he were a terrier.

Kerensky may have appeared to me in pajamas, but I had the privilege of a reception by President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States in bed. That was during his visit, not long after taking office, to the Island of Campobello, New Brunswick, just off the coast of Maine, where he has a summer home. It was there that he had been stricken years previously with infantile paralysis and this was his first visit since. He came gliding in at the end of a yachting holiday and the Canadian islanders gave him a joyous welcome.

Next morning about eleven o'clock I went to the house to glean what news I might and chatted with his son James. Before leaving I said something to the effect that I was departing for Toronto that after-noon without having spoken to the President.

“I think he'll be glad to see you,” said young Mr. Roosevelt, and he went inside. A moment later he came out. “Father's not up yet,” he said, “but he'll be delighted to have you come in, if you don't mind seeing him in bed.”

That was too novel a chance to miss, and I was led into a room on the ground floor. Here the President was enjoying the luxury of a late morning rest, a white pullover sweater over his pajamas, but he had evidently been awake for some time for he was shaven and a saucer full of butts on the counterpane spoke of many cigarettes. Hunched on a chair in the corner was his secretary and intimate, the late Col. Louis McHenry Howe.

Mr. Roosevelt, then at the height of his first vast popularity, smiled warmly, shook hands and said, “It's nice to see you,” as if he meant it. I made no attempt to interview him but chatted for a few minutes, remarking, “You must have got a big kick, Sir, out of your reception here yesterday?”

“It was wonderful,” he replied, “wonderful; so many of the old friends I have known since I was a boy. It was like coming home.”

The following winter, in Washington, where I spent nearly a month in the Press Gallery of the United States Senate during the debate on the question of ratification of the St. Lawrence Seaway Treaty with Canada, which was in the end rejected, I attended a number of the President's press conferences and had a chance to see him in an official setting. He was the same man behind his desk, genial, glowing, as he

chatted with a ring of correspondents in a manner unique for an executive of exalted office. At these meetings he outlined or explained policy, or indicated administrative action, with clarity and good humour, calling a number of newspapermen by their first names and turning questions aside on occasion with a laugh or a joke. It was not unusual to have him twit one of them thus: "Jim, you should know better than to ask a thing like that."

Even allowing for a measure of guile in his attitude to newspapermen, he showed genuine goodwill, having this rare gift of dignity that he could bandy words and risk repartee without losing face. Certainly he did not keep his personality wrapped in his cloak of office.

Another notable who received newspapermen in undress was General Italo Balbo, Fascist Air Minister who commanded the fleet of Italian flying boats which crossed the Atlantic in 1933 and flew to the Century of Progress Exhibition at Chicago. Covering his arrival in Montreal, I attended a mass interview in his hotel sitting-room.

The youthful leader, not yet forty, received us while submitting to the ministrations of a barber. Lacking tunic and shirt, he entertained in heavy woollen underwear and breeches, and swathed in a sheet. He had the soft face, soft beard, soft arms of a priest, but his air was dashing and he had the challenging eyes of a pirate.

While the barber shaved his pink cheeks, snipped and clipped at his wavy brown beard and brushed his soft brown hair, Balbo held court. He proved himself unorthodox, gay, as he lounged in a brocaded chair and chaffed us in French. With gallantry, he ordered in cocktails. Still in the barber's hands, he drank our health and we drank his.

An interesting interlude occurred when a long-distance telephone call came through from Italy and he talked in our presence with Mussolini, for he did not ask us to leave the room while he reported to Il Duce. His only admonition was to place a finger to his lips delicately as he stood holding the telephone, a little rotund, a little quaint in his winding sheet, his brown eyes glistening, his right hand to his forehead in a military salute, as he talked with rapid enthusiasm. His conversation finished, he went back to his barber's chair and resumed his jousting with us like a boy in high good humour.

So much for the human ease of some men of note. The late Major-General Sir Sam Hughes, Canada's militant Minister of National Defence during the Great War, went one better than any of them when once, at the King Edward Hotel, Toronto, he received a reporter of *The*



Mary Pickford, with her husband Douglas Fairbanks, on her first visit to her birthplace, Toronto, since she had become famous.

*Toronto Star*

*Star* and gave him a characteristic interview while taking a bath!

In contrast to such robust and sociable fellows was Mr. de Valera, tall, gaunt, loosely powerful, schoolmaster turned rebel, idealist turned politician, dreamer turned statesman, with his angular face of an eagle, not of an imperial eagle but of a lonely eagle in a zoo cage, whom I interviewed within a few hours of Kerensky.

Somewhat worried about my approach for he was notoriously timid with reporters and was likely to give me short audience, I did something I had never done previously and have never had occasion to try since: I typed in advance some twenty questions of a more or less philosophical nature which I fancied might hook him. They did. Ten minutes, at most, was to have been my lot, for he had other appointments; he let me keep him an hour and a

half, while visitors kicked their heels in his ante-room. My examination paper got under his guard and he kept on submitting to oral quizzing.

As illustrating the kind of question on my list, one was: "What might your life have been if you had been born in a country without revolt?"

"Teaching," he answered simply. "I was a professor of mathematics before, you know. That would have been my work."

Another question was: “Are you a republican by temperament?—that is, do you believe the king idea obsolete?—or simply because you are convinced that only as a republic can Ireland attain the fullest national freedom?”

He answered: “My temperament is conservative though I believe in republicanism as a system of government; I believe in authority coming from the people. The main thing is that the Irish people should be given the right of determining their own form of government, to develop as they never can in the present circumstances.”

Later, as he began to read a question I had framed around his “passion against England,” he interrupted emphatically: “I have no hatred of the British government or the British people. I insist only on the right to our own freedom.”

Thus he was drawn not only into most interesting self-revelation but into talk about Ireland. That was long before he arrived at power in the Free State but he urged his idea that it should be self-contained, making its own shoes, its own wool, its own houses; producing, maybe, its own steel. “If we were in power,” he said, “we would prevent English dumping and build up a home market.” He would abolish, he said, the oath of allegiance. Thus he prophesied, as later he was destined to fulfil.

There was no intention on my part of writing a news interview; the questions had been merely a subterfuge to win time to measure him. But as I moved to go he played me an unusual trick, saying, “While I receive some of my friends, will you go into the next room, please, and write out your interview, so that I may read it?”

Considerably nonplussed, since I was not at all sure that I had paid enough attention to his views to produce them verbatim; yet not daring to confess that I had kept him talking in an attempt to see his wheels go round, I complied, sat down at his secretary’s typewriter and whipped out a straight interview. I handed this to Mr. de Valera, and he went through it like a schoolmaster correcting an exercise, altering a little pedantically a word or phrase. He expressed himself satisfied and gave me to understand that he thought me, for a journalist, quite an intelligent fellow, and I cleared out, glad to be done with him. He had given me much more of his time than I had bargained for.



Visit to his summer home at Campobello, New Brunswick: President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the helm of his yacht.

*Wide World*

I am afraid, though, that I played my distinguished countryman a shabby trick, for I did not use the interview, but instead, in a single article, etched him and Kerensky under the title *Two Nice Gentle Rebels*. The fact that he had made me thus write the interview was revealing. No one else ever asked me to do that.

In contrast to this austerity was a jolly Sunday afternoon in March, 1924, spent with Mary Pickford and her then husband, Douglas Fairbanks, in Toronto. It was by way of being an historic occasion, for Miss Pickford, at the crest of her screen fame, was paying her first visit to her birthplace since she had left as the young, unknown Gladys Smith. Accompanied by her late mother, she and Fairbanks arrived unheralded and registered at the King Edward Hotel; slipped out and made a quiet pilgrimage to cemeteries and other places of early Smith memory. They even visited 211 University Avenue, the tiny house where the famous Mary was born, which for years American tourists regarded with the awe they might have given to a shrine of Washington.

Newspapermen learned of their visit some time after their arrival but did not catch up with them until after lunch, so that a considerable amount of history went unrecorded. In the afternoon a number of us accompanied them to Christie Street Military Hospital.

A sad place, Christie Street, filled with crippled ex-soldiers, many of whom had not moved from it for years. A trying place to visit. In those post-war days I tagged around behind a succession of distinguished visitors who found it a severe test. What was there to say to hopelessly broken and bed-ridden men? So frequently feeling could only express itself in platitudes. Less than six months previously I had seen Lloyd George voiceless, in tears, as he looked down at men lying paralysed by war. All he could murmur was "My poor fellows! My poor fellows!"

Afterwards he used this charged emotion to move a crowd as I have seldom seen a crowd moved as he spoke to thousands in front of the City Hall and thanked Canadians for what they had done and suffered in the Great War.

Yes, once previously I saw a crowd crying uncontrollably. That was in the Royal Alexandra Theatre when Sir Harry Lauder visited Toronto during the last year of the War. The Scots comedian had recently lost his only son in action, yet he came out on the platform to laugh, crack, sing and skip as usual in a performance of courage and pathos. Behind the laughing little man with his comic clothes and his songs of sentiment stood the shadow of his lost boy.

When he had finished his regular turns he stood to make a speech, not of humour but of evangelism, to help sell Victory Bonds, and the emotions of the time, and the thought in everyone's mind of his bereavement, gave it a terrific impact.

He spoke of Scotland, its men gone, its glens denuded. Then he told, with seeming lightness, of having not long previously visited the Front where he had had the privilege, he said, of singing to the troops. As he related how he had met the men of a Scottish division just emerged from battle, he built up a moving, magnificent picture in his half-humorous, homely phrasing, smiling as he crucified his wartime audience.

He had stood, he said, in the heart of a natural amphitheatre, the soldiers massed around him, and had addressed them. At the close he had called, “What’ll I sing ye, lads?”

“Harry,” a big, braw Hielander in the front row—to use Lauder’s own words—had shouted, “gie us ‘The wee hoose ’mang the heather’.”

And forthwith, without accompaniment, to the Toronto audience as to the Highlanders at the front, Lauder sang the haunting song. It dripped with sentiment—but he sang it without a quaver, smiling, his voice clear and strong. It was brave playing, and there was not a dry eye in the house. It was not merely that people wiped away surreptitious tears; they sobbed.

Speaking of Christie Street and the other soldier hospitals which the great and the near-great visited as a duty in the years before the War and its victims began to take on a measure of oblivion, I recall an unrehearsed incident at Davisville Military Hospital, Toronto, which occurred as I tagged around in the wake of the Duke of Devonshire, then Governor-General of Canada. His Excellency made his inspection with his air of a fatigued walrus, accompanied by aides, officials, the Commanding Officer, the Adjutant, doctors, nurses, *et al.*; he never gave much hope of human interest copy. He came to the kitchen where half a dozen cooks in white hats and uniforms were drawn up in line. He gave this culinary guard of honour a dreamy stare, peered into the saucepans on the stove and turned to go—only to have the Adjutant, in khaki uniform with high boots glistening, jump efficiently out of his way, step on some grease on the floor and fall flat on his back!

His Excellency’s expression did not change by the slightest flicker, but the onlookers tried to choke back guffaws, and the cooks’ faces were a study. They were scared, horrified, and they wanted to laugh, but they remembered that they were, above all, soldiers, and they did not. They stood rigidly while the Adjutant scrambled to his feet.

When the Duke passed out of earshot, the latter came back into the kitchen and swore dreadfully—and we all wondered if that grease had got on the floor by accident!

But the movie stars, Mary and Doug, carried Christie Street in unaffected

fashion. "I want to thank you personally for what you did for me in the War," said Miss Pickford to more than one bed-ridden man. It may read banal, possibly a little impudent; it did not sound so, as she said it in gracious, cheerful tone. The grinning Fairbanks, radiating physical and nervous energy, was very different from the average visitor of lugubrious mien. He bounded up the stairs and into the wards, chinning himself up to an awning and balancing himself at right angles on an upright. Not many august visitors did that!

In one ward Mary Pickford made, under the circumstances, a most effective speech. "I am sorry," she said, with a hint of wistfulness, "that I could not bring happiness to you so that I might give each of you a package. Words are so inadequate when I see you like this, b-but you make me proud to be a Canadian."

The patients, poor fellows, had seen many visitors without feeling any particular impulse to cheer. But when these bright people from Hollywood left, they crowded to the windows and cheered like schoolboys.

Few of those one met during the years impinged with such qualities of personality. Another was Charles Lindbergh, hero of the solo flight to Paris in 1927. I saw him shortly after his return to New York when he appeared a tall, rather gawky youth with careless clothes and unruly hair. But from him came an effect of force. Guest in a fashionable Park Avenue apartment, he seemed rural, out of place in this suave setting, but, even allowing for the glamour of his feat, he dominated. A circle of New York newspapermen, who would not ordinarily be awed by the Angel Gabriel, surrounded him and he held them absolutely at bay, not by glibness or adroitness but by some aura of honesty and positiveness that they could not penetrate.

When he landed a few years later at Ottawa, with Anne Morrow, his wife, on their flight north towards Japan I was present at another interview. That was before the tragic episode of his kidnapped son and the Hauptmann aftermath. He was much more easy in his manner, amiable, smiling, diplomatic, but still dominant. Lindbergh was no eagle of lucky flight but of inborn, fundamental qualities. Chance and the hour gave him the fame to which he soared but in some path of life, in some community, in however humble a part, he would have been a personality.

Strange how some people stayed in the memory, vividly etched and felt, while others faded! Looking through clippings, I find that I once interviewed the late Lord Northcliffe, the English publisher, but I cannot recall ever having seen him. I have almost equally forgotten the late Arthur James Balfour, the British statesman and philosopher who became Lord Balfour. He was in Washington in 1916 on a war mission and came to Canada on a brief visit. Of it only a couple of incidents remain.

One was seeing him asleep on a train couch, his lean length curled up. The other occurred just after he crossed the Niagara Falls bridge from New York State to Ontario.

At that time the hydro-electric power plants above the Falls on the Canadian side were heavily guarded against possible enemy sabotage, the area surrounded by barbed wire. But officials of the Ontario Hydro-Electric Power Commission had provided a special trolley car to carry him and other distinguished guests through on a tour of inspection. They climbed into the car; a reporter and a photographer from *The Toronto Telegram* slipped on after them. We went to follow, just as the car was moving, and our rivals tried to bar the way and leave us stranded. Those were the days when *The Telegram* and *The Star* fought war on all fronts. However, we managed to scramble on, then almost came to blows with our enemy under the noses of Mr. Balfour and the other notables. The row was just at the punching stage when someone in authority threatened to throw us all off, asking pointedly, who invited us on board anyway? Whereupon we subsided.

It was no doubt an execrable incident, but we were youthful and keen, which must be our excuse, if one is needed. It is doubtful if the aristocratic Balfour even noticed our presence.

Agnes Macphail, Canada's only woman Member of Parliament, at her farm home in Grey County, Ontario; Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, in the solitude of his country place, Kingsmere, in the Gatineau Valley some miles out from the cares of Ottawa; Billy Sunday, the acrobatic evangelist, stopping an address in Buffalo to say to a mother with a crying child, "Take that brat out!"; Hickson, the Anglican faith healer, in St. James' Cathedral, Toronto, with the maimed, the halt and the blind flocking in pitiable hope to have his hands laid on; a girl bandit in police court facing a charge of armed robbery; Hotrum and McFadden being sentenced for the murder of a druggist; a well-known doctor going to jail for performing an abortion; Brother André, quaint, elderly mystic of the Order of St. Joseph, around whose miracles a great shrine has been built on Montreal Mountain; Dr. Mahlon Locke, country doctor of Williamsburg, Ontario, sitting in a circle of pilgrims whose toes he pulls to cure their ills and aches; a Polish countess who had been prisoner of Hindenburg during the War; the Dionne quintuplets seen through a window when they were two weeks old and looked like rabbits lacking skins; Litvinov, the Soviet Foreign Commissar in Washington; the late Earl Beatty, the admiral, as an orator; exiled Russian aristocrats trying to make a living as store clerks and waitresses; Six Nations Indians dancing at a White Dog feast in a pagan long-house; striking relief camp workers interned at Regina; Rudy Vallee, Floyd Gibbons, Jessica Dragonette



and other radio stars during two weeks spent around a big broadcasting network; escaped members of the French Foreign Legion; Raymond Moley, Roosevelt brain truster; Frances Perkins, woman Secretary of Labour; General Hugh Johnson, big stick of the Blue Bird; Milo Reno, radical farmer leader; the Keys quadruplets of Texas; Joe Louis and Schmeling, pugilists—such flash out from the parade of mixed humans from whom I sought to catch human interest and colour.

Out of it springs a patch of drama in two acts which I feel impelled to outline. It was so perfect that it might have been staged by a master craftsman instead of being merely a chance slice of life. It occurred in November, 1931, and I happened to witness it through being sent to a City Hall court to describe the sentencing of eight Communist leaders found guilty of belonging to a pernicious organization. Arriving early, I found, peculiarly, as a preliminary in the same court, that eight ex-Councillors and others of York Township, a Toronto suburb, found guilty of a conspiracy to defraud, were to be sentenced first.

Their judgment took two hours. That, at least, was the time consumed in a final struggle to win them the lightest possible sentences. Few judges have had to face such a barrage of sentiment as the mild, white-haired Mr. Justice Kelly underwent that day. Eight defence lawyers piled heart throb on heart throb. An array of clergymen testified to this man's church attendance, that man's nobility, a third man's philanthropy. Other citizens followed them in a portrayal of holiness. The group were pictured not only as good burghers, good churchmen, good public men, but as good grocers, good druggists, good contractors.

One guilty man told quaveringly of having spent the best years of his life in the service of York Township. In a few years, he intimated, he would be facing the Hereafter. Another spoke of a child's long illness and of the medical expenses incurred as excuse for taking a bond, which was the crux of the charge against him as against the others. Two doctors testified that a third man was suffering from grave stomach trouble.

For two hours the court was turned into a clinic of souls and sobs. At the end, quietly, the judge sentenced the eight men to reformatory terms of two years or less each.

They walked out, and the eight convicted Communist leaders filed in to take their place, most ordinary fellows, not councillors but a polyglot group of working men; Tim Buck, a small Englishman with a pale, taut, eager face, who seemed as colourless as his clothes; Malcolm Bruce, a grey, grim Canadian wearing a grey work shirt; Tom Ewan, a small, serious Scot; a Serb, a Russian, a Ukrainian, a Jew.

Commonplace men indeed, found guilty of what the judge, the late Mr. Justice

Wright, a stern pontifical man, called “a species of treason, one of our most detestable offences.” They were rebels against the existing order.

They sat in the row of seats vacated by the eight gentlemen from York Township, until the judge, sharply, told them to stand up. They stood in line, without plea or fear, without mockery and without rebellion. Certainly in this drama of Canadian justice these Communists did not, by word or deed, detract from its dignity.

Thus, standing, they met their punishment.

For them there was no procession of clergymen, no neighbours, no comrades, no score or more of character witnesses to say that they were good citizens, churchgoers, kind fathers, philanthropists, honest men who had never taken an unearned nickel, honourable men who had never broken their word. Their character was not in question, merely their ideas and ideals. For them their single lawyer spoke but briefly. A few words, and he was done.

The judge invited them to speak. The small Tim Buck alone responded. He did not beg; he did not plead; he took a pace forward like a soldier and, looking front, said, “I accept the sentence of the court. I only hope that those who trusted me will find that I proved worthy.”

Then he stepped back.

The court was silent. This insignificant man had suddenly shot the drab scene through with shots of colour, of quality and courage.

The court was silent when Mr. Justice Wright pronounced sentence that sent these men to Kingston Penitentiary for terms up to five years. A full-voiced man, he spoke quietly, as if he felt that the occasion was historic, the outlawing of Communism as a philosophy and force in Canada. He spoke as if he felt he were sentencing not a group of men but a set of ideas. It was a very great, a very simple scene. It took just fifteen minutes.

The condemned men stepped out smartly as a file of soldiers. Only a wave of Buck’s hand, a short smile of farewell to a friend, showed that they were really men and not ideas who were going to jail.



## WITH AND WITHOUT RED TAPE

AFTER the highlights of the twenties, the thirties threatened to become prosaic, if not actually humdrum. It was almost as if excitement had died with the Rainbow Decade. There were no more disasters, it seemed, few of the other colourful episodes which had come with a kind of regularity. It was as if the Slump had discouraged human effort of the more spectacular kind, including tragedy, and had put an end to most news except economic, social and political discussion. And yet there were events of note to cover, such as the evangelical enthusiasm with which the United States adopted the Blue Eagle as a bird of salvation in the summer of 1933 and began organizing under N.R.A. codes as if these were of divine origin—and the quick and sober transition of New York from the speak-easy to open drinking when the dry era ended with the downthrow of the 18th Amendment. Both of these I covered, in Washington and New York, but they were simply affairs of observation, inquiry and interpretation.

In February, 1930, I went to find out how “broke” was Chicago and, incidentally, since it was always good copy in Canada, to get an article on crime there. On later visits I investigated the situation of the payless school teachers and delved into the alarming growth of kidnapping or the snatch industry as it was called and labour rackets with their terrorist bombings. Peculiarly, while there on this last story, I was violently awakened one night by a bomb which exploded just around the corner from the hotel room in which I slept. That night four bombs went off in various parts of the city, which showed, at least, that I was not pursuing a myth.

In this connection I might mention the courtesy of Americans, highly placed and otherwise, to a Canadian newspaperman. A *Toronto Star* man could mean little to officials in Chicago or any other large United States city, yet one could, without introduction, walk in on Hon. Silas K. Strawn, former head of the American Bar Association, chairman of the Chicago Citizens Committee, or George Fairweather, chairman of the Joint Commission on Real Estate Values, two of the most important men trying to solve the city’s financial mess; and find them not only willing, but apparently delighted, to explain the situation. Mr. Fairweather took time to give me an outline in primer terms that left no room for misunderstanding. Similarly, I found myself without difficulty, being given an hour’s interview with ranking American police officials whereas, in Canada, the more important police chiefs are sometimes as difficult of access as European princelings.

Any American assignment is easier than a similar assignment in Canada. I have got into the New York County Jail and been given a free hand to talk as long as I liked to inmates whose ex-wives had sent them there for non-payment of alimony; interviewed men held for deportation in the Erie County Jail, Buffalo; visited Sing Sing Prison to watch a football game; entered a compound of milk-striking farmers under military arrest at LeMars, Iowa; and sat in on a radio broadcast by inmates from the great Michigan State Prison and afterwards had supper there, with far less trouble than I would have getting into the Don Jail, Toronto, in which, as it happens, I have never been.

I have run into more red tape on the part of local police at a parade of Shriners, a marathon swim at the Canadian National Exhibition or a Lloyd George visit to Toronto than in scores of visits to all sorts of events in the United States. Lower Florida, following the hurricane of 1926, was under military control but a pass, acquired on the spot after showing my credentials, gave full authority to go where I wished. Under similar circumstances in Canada I would have needed a letter from the King.

Other Canadian newspapermen have reported similar American experiences. Kenneth MacTaggart of *The Mail and Empire* drove over to Detroit to the speed boat races between Kaye Don and Gar Wood. A race over, he wanted to get to a telegraph office in the city and made his way out to the highway, only to find it blocked with cars. It did not look as if he might be able to move for hours. In his dilemma, since time pressed, he showed his credentials to a Michigan State Trooper on a motor-cycle and asked if there was a way out.

“Follow me,” said the traffic officer, and mounting his cycle, he led the way for MacTaggart in his car, in and out of traffic, over ditches and around obstructions for two or three miles.

“Now, you’ll be all right,” he said. “That’s okay, Mister. Glad to have been of help.”

A negro evangelist of dude type, murdered in Philadelphia, was brought to Harlem, New York’s darktown, for burial, and I attended the funeral service since it promised queerness. Arriving at the church on Seventh Avenue more than an hour early, it was to find the closed doors besieged by a negro crowd which stretched for blocks and hope of entry when they opened negligible. Explaining that I was a Canadian newspaperman anxious to witness the doings inside, I asked a white constable’s advice.

“Seems to me,” he said, “that the house next door is connected with the church.  
If you could work your way inside the crowd



Col. Charles Lindbergh and his wife, Anne Lindbergh, on their flight via Canada to the Orient.

*Wide World*

to that house, maybe you could get into the church.”

I thanked him, accepted his suggestion, wormed my way to the house and presented myself to a number of negroes there. They led me at once to the cellar, through a passage and into the basement of the church. That, it seemed, was as far as I could go. A negro official—whether he suspected me of being a gangster, since the evangelist’s death was blamed on gangsters, I do not know—refused to let me up. “Wait you there,” he said and, unknown to me, sent for a policeman.

Who should presently enter but the constable to whom I had spoken outside. He glanced at me. “He’s all right,” he said, “he has business here. Let him into the church.”

Presently I found myself in a front seat within a dozen feet of the murdered clergyman lying in state amidst a profusion of flowers, from which I had a fine view of the carnival of music, oratory, wailing and hysteria lasting two hours in which the negroes took leave of their “martyred brother”.

Such instances I do not attempt to explain, except to say that the Press has greater

influence in the United States, newspapermen have built up a greater authority and officials, from the President to the poundkeeper, have a greater respect for publicity and recognition of the intrusive rights of the reporter, besides being, essentially, more politically minded since most offices are elective. Neither do I argue that it is always in the best interests of either the general public or individuals involved, the Press or the reporter, that such pervasive respect should exist since it has a tendency to weaken the newspaperman’s initiative and critical approach, lead to a system of too easy hand-outs already in vogue and give newspapers an attitude of expecting favours. At least, it is pertinent to record that one finds a democracy in one’s press contacts in the United States, whether high or low, that is, to a degree, lacking in Canada where there is a tendency to ape the aristocratic stance and where

frequently officials, impregnably appointed, become more difficult of access than a royal duke.

In the summer of 1930 I was sent to Lakehurst, N.J., United States naval air station, to witness an arrival of the *Graf Zeppelin*, German dirigible. Presentation of my card was sufficient to win from a press liaison officer of the United States Navy a red tag which gave full run of the place and even won salutes from marine sentries. A few rules for behaviour were laid down for newspapermen; otherwise no restrictions were placed on seeing the U.S. airship *Los Angeles* take-off at night and the *Graf Zeppelin* arrive at dawn.

When the veteran commander, Dr. Hugo Eckener, descended from his ship, he was led without ceremony to the press room and delivered to our tender mercies. It was our business to determine how the interview should be staged and his to say when it should end.

This was in contrast to the way in which newspapermen were handled by Canadian officials when the British dirigible *R 100* paid its much heralded visit, its first and its last, to the mooring mast specially erected at St. Hubert Airport, Montreal, to inaugurate an Empire airship service which the subsequent crash of the *R 101* in France a few months later doomed. This visit was essentially a publicity stunt, calling for ballyhoo and goodwill. But newspapermen found themselves restricted by enough red tape to have stretched from Montreal to Ottawa. Officials who did not know the most elementary principles of newspaper work issued fresh sets of instructions at almost hourly intervals and lectured us on just how the interview with the officers and petty officers of the British ship should be conducted. Only a single representative from each service or newspaper was permitted to attend the quizzing.



Jim Fahey, reputable citizen of Jasper, Alberta, alias Frank Grigware, escaped lifer from Leavenworth Penitentiary, and his wife, as he appeared following release by the Canadian authorities.

*Toronto Star*

*The Star* had a commission from an English news agency to cover the arrival and cable fast copy. An hour's heated argument was necessary before officials yielded to the necessity of a second staff man being present for the sole purpose of this service.

When the *R 100* hove in sight Canadian and American newspapermen were herded, led in a body and kept some distance from the mast by a dozen constables of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with revolvers, as if they, the correspondents, were convicts—while hundreds of citizens streamed across the airport to the very foot of the mast. This, too, in spite of the fact that anchorage took place to a trick swivel a couple of hundred feet up, where approach by the most snooping of news men was impossible.

The airship was scheduled to make a flight from Montreal across Southern Ontario and back, with a view to stirring interest in dirigible travel in this slice of the Empire, and *The Star* sought to have me go as passenger on this trip in which tens of thousands of earthbound people had interest. Every approach for permission was tried, only to meet with refusal. A dozen newspapermen from Ontario and Quebec papers might have been carried, to contribute narratives of value to two or three million readers. Instead, only a single reporter, a representative of the Canadian Press Association, was taken—but a dozen minor Ottawa officials had a joy ride!

Later, on the return flight across the Atlantic, *The Star* was offered a berth—in fact, my name as its representative was published in the list of passengers—but such a trip, interest over with the airship's departure, had no news value, unless disaster happened, which, fortunately, did not. The paper, therefore, did not let me go.

Lest it be thought that I am critical of Canadian officials while glorifying Americans, let me record an incident which I do not think could have happened in Canada. This was in February, 1935. I was in Cincinnati, Ohio, getting material for a special article on that city's Reform government when one evening I received a wire from Toronto to the effect that a man called "Piccolo Pete" Murray had been arrested in Covington, Kentucky, and was being held on a charge of being implicated in the kidnaping of John Labatt, and instructing me to interview him.

The kidnaping of Labatt, a wealthy brewer of London, Ontario, and the holding of him for ransom in a backwoods cottage for two or three days was a Canadian sensation of 1934. It was the first instance, at least openly, in Canada of the crime which was sweeping the United States, although there had been two or three reported instances of Canadians having been previously snatched, held and released quietly. For this crime a former Canadian, David Meisner, who had a Covington connection, was at the moment in London awaiting trial; he was afterwards



convicted and sentenced to fifteen years in Kingston Penitentiary; he was a year later retried and acquitted as I shall presently explain.

Covington is just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati. For *The Star* it was pure luck that I should have been in Cincinnati when Murray was arrested. For myself it was just one of a thousand breaks on the credit side in newspaper work. I drove across to Covington and went to Police Headquarters. There a lieutenant on night duty told me that Murray, held on \$50,000 bail, was in the jail across the way and that no one could see him. He was, it appeared, a prisoner not of the local police but of the United States Department of Justice, of the incorruptible, unapproachable G men of the Division of Investigation, who had become famous in their war on gun-men, gangsters, kidnapers and killers.

Well, I thought, if he is held incommunicado by the Federal agents there is not much chance of seeing him.

I went, however, to their office in Cincinnati. "Yes," said the Night Chief, "we picked up Murray on instructions from Detroit for the Canadian authorities. Sorry, you cannot see him."

My quest should have ended there, but it was only beginning; it was yet to be proven that someone in the Kentucky city of Covington would not let me in to Murray. I went back there to Police Headquarters. A stout, amiable Chief had come on duty. We became friends quickly, but he was powerless to help. "Now if he were our prisoner," he said, "it would be easy. But those Federal men, you can't fool them."

"But, Chief," I said, "this Murray is a most important prisoner to Canada. I've got to see him. Isn't there any way?"

The good-natured Kentuckian shook his head. "I tell you," he said, "you come back here about 9 o'clock in the morning and we'll see what we can do."

Thanking him, I walked across the street to the jail. The night turnkey came to the door. Speaking briskly, I said, "I'm a Canadian newspaperman. I want to see your prisoner Murray."

It did not work. "Sorry, son," he said, "ordinarily I'd be glad to oblige. But this Murray, he's held by the Federal men, bail's set at \$50,000 and orders is, no one can see him."

Returning to Cincinnati, I slept on it and next morning, after breakfast, drove again to Covington and entered Police Headquarters. My friend the Chief was not in; he was, I was told, in police court in the jail across the way. I found him there and reminded him of the hope he had held out that he might get me in to see Murray.

"Can't do much about it," he said, "those Federal men——"

I looked at him more in sorrow than in anger. That seemed to touch him. “But say,” he said, “there’s his wife and his lawyer.”

“Whose wife and whose lawyer?” I asked.

“Murray’s,” he said.

“Thanks, Chief,” and in quick fashion I quizzed them, at least. But I was no nearer to seeing Murray than I had been the night before, and Murray was my objective. He seemed impossible. I was debating in my mind whether I should not return to Cincinnati and once more try, without much hope of success, the Department of Justice agents when I had a sudden thought.

“Do you see the turnkey around?” I asked a policeman.

He pointed to a man in his shirt-sleeves. Just as I thought, he was a different turnkey from the one I had tried the night before. This was the day keeper. Walking up boldly, I said, “I’m a Canadian newspaperman, from *The Toronto Star*. I want to have a talk with Murray, held for the Canadian authorities.”

Only for a moment did he hesitate. Then—“Just a minute,” he said, “till I get my keys.” He walked towards an inner room, while I held myself tense, hoping nothing would interrupt or make him change his mind. He came out in leisurely fashion with a bunch of great keys. “Guess we’ll have to walk up to the third floor,” he said.

“Fine,” I said, “that won’t be hard.”

I followed him up a spiral staircase. Arriving at a grilled door on the top floor, he banged with his keys. “Hey, you there, Murray, are y’ in there?”

“Yes,” came back the answer.

“All right, then,” as he inserted the key, turned the lock and opened the door, “come on out. There’s a guy here wants to see you.”

Murray, \$50,000 prisoner of the Federal authorities, stepped out on the landing, to all seeming a free man if he wanted to make a run for it, for the turnkey had no weapon. A sallow, youngish fellow in a pullover sweater who did not look a valuable criminal, he was mine to talk to as long as I liked. We chatted for some time. He denied all knowledge of the kidnapping, denied knowing Meisner or Labatt, maintained that he had never been in Canada in his life and claimed the police had arrested the wrong man.<sup>[2]</sup>

The interview over, the easy-going Kentucky turnkey opened the door, said “All right, young fellow, in you go,” and locked it after him. We made our way downstairs.

Curious about his complaisance in view of the fact that Murray was held so strictly by the United States Department of Justice, I said, “It was good of you to let me see him.”

He spat. "I'll tell you," he said, "I've had guys like you come along and want to see a prisoner before, and I've refused them. And then maybe in half an hour half a dozen guys come along and want to see him, and I let them, and then the first guy gets sore. I'm getting sick of it."

"But," I said, "I was given to understand Murray was a Federal prisoner and that there were strict orders no one should see him."

"Maybe there was," he said, and he spat again, "maybe the night man had orders, but nobody told me nothing about it. That's all right, young man, might' glad to have been of service."

Local jailers in Canada have on occasion allowed newspapermen in to see a prisoner—Roy Greenaway of *The Star* once secured a striking interview with a bandit-killer, subsequently hanged, shortly after he was arrested—but if orders parallel to those issued in the Murray case were given, no local jailer would dare let a reporter enter, let alone lead a prisoner forth as my Covington friend did.

At the same time, though I have been critical of police and official red tape in the handling of events and occasions in so far as they have needlessly put difficulties in the way of a working journalist, I must fairly balance this by saying that, as a rule, in their sphere of criminal action, Canadian police are extremely coöperative with newspapermen and do them many favours. I have related the courtesy of Inspector Hamar Gardner of the Ontario Provincial Police in permitting an interview on the Chicago train with Vermilyea, the hatchet murderer of his mother. Superintendent W. F. W. Hancock of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was equally kind to me on Easter Sunday, 1934, in Edmonton, Alberta, in the matter of Frank Grigware alias James Fahey, held on a charge of being an escaped "lifer" from Leavenworth Penitentiary.

This was one of those unusual stories which only come once to a newspaperman. Fahey, twenty-four years free, had, as Grigware, a youth of twenty, been arrested in Omaha, Nebraska, charged with train robbery; he had been tried, found guilty with three other men and sentenced to life in Leavenworth. He had shortly escaped. As James Fahey he had slipped into Canada, worked honestly, married, bred three children and been successful until the advent of the depression.

During that time he had earned respect and goodwill by his behaviour and industry. He had been a pioneer in the Peace River country and had become mayor of the little town of Spirit River. Moving to Jasper, Alberta, pretty resort in the Rocky Mountains, he had set up as carpenter and contractor and had helped to erect a number of buildings. He became a member of the Jasper School Board and president of the Curling Club. No one there suspected him of being other than the

quiet, sober citizen he appeared.

Thus things might have gone on until the end of the chapter if Fahey, feeling the pinch of bad times, had not gone poaching in Jasper National Park, a Dominion game sanctuary, seeking fur. He was arrested, fined and, as a matter of routine, finger-printed. It was his finger-prints which, sent to Edmonton, then to the United States, and checked, led to his identification as the long wanted Grigware. Webbed toes settled the matter beyond doubt.

Fahey, a month after he had been fined for poaching, was arrested in Jasper on Wednesday, March 28, by Mounted Police. He was brought next day to Edmonton, arraigned and held for action by the United States Department of Justice. His unusual story was carried in brief outline across the continent. *The Star* seized on it. I was ordered to take the train that night to Edmonton, 2,000 miles west, and interview him. "The chances are no one will see him until you get there," said the Managing Editor. "We will take all you can send."

Reaching Edmonton on Easter Sunday morning, I learned from the local papers that, though he had appeared in court, his story had not yet been told. After breakfast I drove to Divisional Headquarters of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It was closed; the only person in authority was a corporal. He reluctantly admitted that Fahey was in the cells. And he added this further discouraging statement: "To-morrow's Easter Monday. That's a holiday, and there won't be any of the officers here. Better come back Tuesday."

I had to settle the question of seeing Fahey long before that and got from the corporal the name and address of Superintendent Hancock. I drove to his home, to find that he was not yet up. I left my name with a maid, saying I would be back later; then drove on to the home of Fahey's lawyer, whose name I had learned, was A. Fraser Duncan. He should prove an ally, I thought, in the matter of airing Fahey's story, if the man has had the fine record in Canada with which he is credited since his escape.

The unexpected is always happening in newspaper work and my visit to Mr. Duncan proved it. A maid opened the door and I gave her my name. Two minutes later an irate man with face half-shaven appeared and asked, "Well, what do you want?"

"To see your client, Fahey. I've come from Toronto in the hope of interviewing him."

"You have a hell of a nerve. Do you know what morning this is?"

"Easter Sunday, and I'm more than sorry to disturb you at your home, but I've got to see Fahey."

“See Fahey! If you want to see me, you come to my office Tuesday morning.”

His unexpected attitude floored me but I sought to conciliate this belligerent counsel. “Listen, man,” I said, “you’re Fahey’s lawyer?”

“What of it? Is that any reason why you should come disturbing me in my home?”

“Yes. You’re interested in saving Fahey from going back to Leavenworth, aren’t you? The only thing that will do it is publicity. I want to see him and to interview him. It’s in his interests that I should.”

“That’s all I want to hear from you. If you want to talk about Fahey, see me in my office Tuesday.”

“You are a fool,” I said, losing patience, “and you can go to hell so far as I am concerned.”

That, you will agree, was a poor start but, driving away, I could not see that I was to blame. At the same time it was in no buoyant mood that I drove back to call on Superintendent Hancock. At the best I had only a forlorn hope that he would let me see Fahey.

Again the unexpected happened. The Superintendent of the Mounted proved charming. “What can I do for you?” he said, after inviting me inside.

“I have come from Toronto,” I replied, “in the hope that you will be good enough to let me see your prisoner Fahey.”

“We can’t do that,” he said, “it isn’t done, you know. No newspaperman has seen him.”

“I know, Superintendent, and ordinarily one should not ask to see a prisoner. But this man is different, if all accounts be true. He is said to have lived decently in Canada for nearly twenty-five years and to have redeemed himself.”

“But that is no reason for permitting you to see him.”

“Perhaps not, but the Mounted Police have nothing against this man. It’s not as if he were some desperate scoundrel you had captured.”

Thus the argument went on for several minutes, the Superintendent good-humouredly listening to my plea. He gave no hint of his feelings, though there was hope in the fact that he was so willing to let me present my case. At last, unexpectedly, he said, “Just a minute and I’ll call up another officer.”

He went into the next room and spoke over the telephone. I did not hear what was said but presently he spoke in a louder voice as he called up R.C.M.P. Headquarters. “Corporal,” he said, “there’s a Mr. Griffin going there presently. When he reports to you, bring out the prisoner Fahey and let him talk to him in your presence.”

That made my pulse jump. "Superintendent Hancock," I said as he came back into the room, "this is indeed good of you."

"That is arranged," he said. "I don't see that any great harm will be done through your seeing Fahey, and you may do him some good."

Reporting to the Mounted cells, I signed a book and Fahey was led into the guard-room by the corporal. I explained who I was and the desire of *The Toronto Star* to place its columns at his disposal to tell his story. A lean, quiet, mild-mannered man of forty-five, he looked me over slowly, then he said, "I've no objection to telling my story, but I won't talk to you or to anyone else without my lawyer's permission."

Whack! I had been afraid of something like that. "Very well," I said, "I'll get your lawyer's permission. Then I'll be back." But I went out in uncertainty. I had got past the only barrier I had really dreaded, the police; I had seen Fahey; I had his promise to talk; I had the story almost in my hand—but I had been kicked off his verandah by his lawyer!

The next move called for finesse, since the latter might refuse Fahey permission to talk. In my dilemma I called on a local newspaperman who was *The Star's* correspondent. From him I learned that Duncan had a partner, W. R. Howson, who was leader of what passed for the Liberal Party in the Alberta Legislature.

A call to his home brought word that he had gone to his office in the Legislative Buildings. Driving there, I found them closed, but the watchman let me in through the basement and directed me to his office in the deserted buildings. I knocked and went in. Mr. Howson proved most agreeable, gave me an outline of the case and in less than ten minutes handed me his card inscribed to Fahey and advising him to speak freely.

Back at the guard-room of the Mounted Police, this unlocked, if it did not unloose, the prisoner's tongue. A taciturn man, reluctant to talk of his long buried past, it took nearly two hours of persistent questioning to bring out his story in detail. It proved worth the journey and the effort involved in procuring it. He claimed innocence of the Omaha train robbery for which he was arrested, tried and given a life sentence. He told in slow, defensive sentences how he had become enmeshed in the affair. He explained how he had escaped from Leavenworth. Then he related his interesting record of freedom as he began a new life in Alberta under an assumed name which was to last for twenty-four years.

I wired five columns of an article which gave a picture of redemption, if the man were guilty of the hold-up—which he said he was not—and implied, if he were innocent, that a tragic injustice would be enacted if he were dragged from his family,

his home and his Canadian citizenship and sent back to the American penitentiary. *The Star* had sent me to obtain an unusual story of human fate and had given me no instructions to hold a brief for the man; nevertheless, as the article wrote itself, it became, in effect, a plea for him. The quality of the man made it that.

That evening I learned from Mr. Howson that arrangements were being completed to put up \$10,000 bail for Fahey and that he might be freed shortly. I went to his office and there ran into his partner, Mr. Duncan, who had treated me so cavalierly in the morning. We quickly buried the past and no one could have been more coöperative than he from that time on. A couple of days later he secured me an interview with Mrs. Fahey, which had great value, and then took me to lunch. His Sunday morning attitude is as great a mystery as ever, since I did not question him on the subject; I can only ascribe it to a Calvinist ancestry, which is as good an explanation as any.

On Easter Monday I went to the mountain town of Jasper, chatted with Fahey's three nice children, interviewed leading citizens and described the remarkable evidence of shock over his arrest and of faith in his character and innocence.

In the meantime, back in Toronto, *The Star* had thrown itself into the task of doing its utmost to prevent what it felt was the injustice of sending him back to an American penitentiary. Besides the material it was receiving from Edmonton and Jasper, it was combing the country for every possible lead which might help his case. In editorials it argued that, even if he were guilty as a boy, he had, by an honest and industrious life since, given indubitable evidence of reformation.

It was in line with *The Star's* interest that I should receive a wire instructing me to proceed to Omaha, Nebraska, scene of the armed robbery of a crack Union Pacific train a quarter of a century earlier; analyse the evidence against Fahey and cross-examine witnesses who still lived. Arriving there, with the aid of Tom Porter, a veteran Omaha newspaperman who had covered the robbery and the trial, I was able to find several members of the train crew and of the mail-car squad who had been held up. It was not difficult to make a number of them seem weak so far as their identification of any of the robbers that night was concerned, especially Fahey. I went to Lincoln, capital of Nebraska, and found the States' Attorney who had prosecuted him and the other accused. He was Hon. Charles A. Goss, now Chief Justice of Nebraska. He was good enough to say that the evidence against Fahey had been largely circumstantial and to muse that there had been no direct testimony against him.

Back in Omaha, I found Hon. Frank S. Howell, who had succeeded Mr. Goss as States' Attorney nearly twenty-five years ago and had argued the States' case

against the convicted men in the appeal which they had carried to a superior court. Mr. Howell went even further than Mr. Goss and said that he always had held doubt about Fahey's guilt. He was convicted, he said, largely because he had been connected with bad companions; otherwise there had been little against him.

A reading of the evidence showed that Fahey had not been convicted on the very doubtful identification by some of the train crew and mail clerks but rather because of his proven association with four men whom to-day we should dub gangsters, who were found guilty, too. Perhaps the single factor that told most against him was the finding of a torn envelope addressed to him, under his then name of Grigware (mutilated), at a place near the cut where the robbery was staged.

However, everything ended happily for James Fahey of Jasper who had once been Frank Grigware. *The Star* fought the case through, sending bound volumes of the clippings to Washington to be presented to President Roosevelt and Attorney-General Homer Cummings. I do not pretend that *The Star* alone won, for the Alberta Legislature and other bodies of Canadian opinion moved to win liberty for Fahey, but its persistent airing of the case and its carefully directed follow-through undoubtedly helped to swing Canadian sentiment and possibly to tip the scales of justice in Washington. For, early in May, 1934, the United States dropped its case for extradition and Fahey went back to Jasper a free man, the shadow which had haunted him for twenty-four years, the fear that some day his past would arise against him, completely gone. That was something achieved.

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[2] Murray's protestations of innocence to me were corroborated in time. He was held some weeks in Covington without bail, extradited and brought to London, Ontario, for trial. Here he was kept seven months in confinement facing arraignment. Then, unexpectedly, a man named Michael McCardell was arrested in Indiana and brought to London. He confessed to the kidnapping of John Labatt. Murray, he said, had had nothing to do with it. Neither, he swore, had David Meisner who was serving fifteen years for the crime. Murray was at once taken to the Border by Ontario Provincial Police and set free. McCardell was tried, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to twelve years in Kingston Penitentiary. In the meantime Meisner was still held behind bars. Later in 1935 two other men, Jack Bannon and Russell Knowles, were arrested for



complicity in the kidnapping. At their subsequent trials both were found guilty and sentenced to fifteen years each. Knowles, like McCardell, absolved Meisner. At last, when he had served a year in the penitentiary, Meisner was granted a new trial. At this, his second trial for the kidnapping of Labatt, he was acquitted on March 20, 1936, and discharged a free man. The case was remarkable for the proof it gave of the weakness on occasion of alleged identification, the chance of error in circumstantial evidence and the fallibility of police methods. While the Canadian authorities delayed not unreasonably before deciding to give Meisner a new trial, it must be set down to their credit that they made no attempt to keep him indefinitely languishing in jail to hide a miscarriage of prosecution and judgment. Meisner became, therefore, neither a Dreyfus nor a Mooney.—*F.G.*



## RUSSIAN DETOUR

REMAINING episodes of the thirties that linger in the mind were an unusual funeral in Canada and a trip to Soviet Russia. They bring this news pilgrimage to the end of the first twenty years.

In March, 1930, I was sent to Winnipeg to delve into the condition of the Canadian Wheat Pool, selling agency of 140,000 Prairie farmers, a giant coöperative organization which had sprung up during the Rainbow Decade to handle more than 55 per cent. of Canada's crop but which had now been forced to accept government backing as a guarantee of its margin with the banks. During the twenties this grain colossus had grown, snowballing, until it seemed all-conquering. Then came the squeeze by British millers and European governments, followed by the world slump—and this great organization wilted.

Following the annual convention of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine in Toronto a month or two later, gaily mature gentlemen in red fezes, velvet jackets and baggy pants making pseudo-Oriental whoopee, which one had to view close-up for four days, happened the funeral in Hamilton, Ontario, of Bessie Starkman, common-law wife of Rocco Perri, a notorious Italian who, in an interview secured some time previously by David B. Rogers of *The Star*, had admitted himself king of bootleggers. She was a Jewess, a dynamic woman credited by the police with great organizing ability, who had been killed by a mysterious shot as she had stepped from an automobile at the rear of her home and Perri's on a substantial Hamilton street.

Athol Gow, chief police reporter of *The Star*, who had done smart work in connection with this crime which has never been solved, introduced me into this house by the rear way on the Sunday afternoon of the funeral, for thousands of morbid people blocked the street in front, to the front room where the murdered woman lay in state in a massive bronze and steel coffin allegedly worth \$3,000. Around her orchids abounded in more than a hundred magnificent wreaths. The room seemed filled with flowers, their scent heavy as fog; only a narrow passage led to the bier.

It was an event without precedent in Canada. More than 10,000 people, it was calculated, had entered to regard Perri's consort. At the moment the house was crowded to suffocation, principally with Italian mourners. The verandah outside, like the lawn and street, was jammed. People sought to climb in through the window in a last-minute frenzy of curiosity; they thrust hands in and raised the blinds, to see in,

and almost broke the front door down, to enter. Plainclothes police circulated, hinting at the possibility of vendetta. A massed uproar arose, scuffling, shoving, shouting. Beside me, a slight girl in heavy mourning, Mrs. Starkman's Jewish daughter, pitched to the floor in a faint. Men carried her out. The heat was almost intolerable, the odour of flowers abominable. Rocco Perri entered in his guise of principal mourner and stood over the murdered woman, his shoulders shaking. Thuds came from the door, cries from the hall, shouts from outside. "Order! Stop pushing! For Christ's sake, order!" A rabbi began to read prayers. The Italians made the sign of the Cross. Came the sound of a police dog baying in the kitchen. A grotesque medley!

The service over, men began to carry out the wreaths. Twelve large automobiles had been ordered to transport them, but only five had come through the crowd. People swarmed over them to see better; lawns, verandahs, the roofs of verandahs, trees, held spectators; only the hearse was free, but they milled around it. Police fought to make a lane for the procession of flowers. The crowd struggled as they were piled high in the available cars. Petals strewed the street as orchids, roses, lilies, suffered.

The casket, fit for a queen, was pushed into the hearse. Police managed to hustle Perri and his common-law wife's two Jewish daughters, who were not his daughters, into a car. But women mourners were cut off by the mob and cried helplessly. The few constables present were inadequate to handle the situation and it took half an hour to get the procession under way.

On the mountain road the hearse broke down and had to be towed the last mile to the cemetery. The rope constantly slipped or snapped and had to be fixed, making progress a nerve-wracking crawl as hundreds wove around the cars to peer in at the notorious Perri and the other mourners.

At last the Jewish burial ground was reached, a small enclosure inside a picket fence, the sparse grass parched brown. Within the gates stood the Holy House where washing, the act of sanctification of the dead, takes place. It was a shack, bare of furnishings except a rusty stove, a primitive catafalque and a wooden lectern in the corner on which a Hebrew book rested and above which four candles burned.

The rude house was crowded and the tiny cemetery swarmed as the casket was borne in with difficulty and the lid opened. As the face of the Starkman woman showed, argument arose in Yiddish and Italian. The rabbi began to pronounce the Hebrew ritual, but the Italians made the sign of the Cross, at which Jewish women spoke heatedly. The Italians shouted back and for a few moments a fight seemed imminent. Then the lid was slammed amid shouts of "Get it out of here! Get it out!"

and the casket was hurried into the open, bearers fighting their way through.

The mob clamoured about, trampling on graves. It climbed on tombstones, climbed on the rickety fence, climbed up trees, climbed on the roof of the Holy House.

The chief mourners were cut off. The avid crowd would not give way for Rocco Perri and the Starkman daughters. Argument and shouting arose and a fight, literally, broke out at the graveside.

No police were present and the place, a horror of heat, noise and confusion, developed into a bedlam, with men yelling angrily, cemetery workers seeking to clear a space, women spectators crying as they were crushed, women mourners wailing in lament.

Never had I seen anything so pitiful and terrible, human beings lusting like ghouls beneath a torrid sun in this patch of graveyard. Canada prides itself on its freedom from crowd violence, but there was little to distinguish this herd mood from that of a lynching. I felt sorry for the Italians, and for the Jews whose sacred place was so defiled. They were helpless before this mob mania.

Perri and his friends struggled to the grave as the casket sank. There Perri pitched and almost fell, his face working as in a convulsion. At the very edge of the pit his friends, their fists flying, battered the crowd back to gain him air. They ripped off his collar, pulled open his shirt and then, in a flying wedge, carried him to his car where he lay exhausted, unable to move while Mrs. Starkman was buried.

At the same time both Starkman daughters, wailing, fainted and fell. Two other Jewish women fainted. A little Englishman, going slightly mad, flailed with his fists to cut a semi-circle of space around them. Recovering, they were carried away shrieking.

With difficulty maintaining a stand on the earth piled by the grave, the rabbi read the words of committal, and earth was hurriedly shovelled on the coffin.

Thus a strange woman, strangely killed, was strangely buried. Driving away, I noticed that several patches of dry grass along the roadside were ablaze, threatening the cemetery fence. Men fought to stop the fire from spreading. It was the last weird flash of this grotesque funeral.

One December night of that same year a police constable named McQuillin, seeking to question two youths in a car, was shot dead by one of them, John Brokenshire, on the west outskirts of Toronto. Shortly an intense man hunt took place when scores of police turned loose to chase the killer and Clarkson, his companion. The latter was caught shortly, hiding in a cemetery, but Brokenshire was not taken until the following afternoon when he was run to earth some twenty miles

west of Toronto, having been hit twice by police bullets. One lodged in his chest; the other tore through his intestines to his hip.

Sent out as the hunt was closing in, I was almost present at the capture of this human quarry who had given the police a run of sixteen hours, missing it by a mere five minutes; but I was able to telephone a beat on the story and then follow the car taking him to St. Joseph's Hospital.

Ensued there another queer chapter in my experience of death when it comes violently, for Brokenshire, wounded dreadfully, was not expected to live. Along the hospital corridors stood police officers, hushed by the quiet surroundings, muddy, tired from the long chase, but satisfied that they had won McQuillin a fast vengeance. They did not want their captive to die, but to live—that he might be hanged, as he was, subsequently. One of them gave him a blood transfusion.

Doctors and nurses fought for Brokenshire's life. After two and a half hours in the operating room, they won the first round; in the weeks following they brought him back to health. My interest was confined to his capture. I saw him wheeled, unconscious, a policeman at his side, to the operating room. I did not go to see him tried, or hanged.

That leaves only the trip to Russia, which is easily treated since my newspaper articles have already appeared in book form. It was an assignment which came as unexpectedly as a sudden excursion to cover a railroad wreck or a mine disaster. That was in April, 1932.

Canadians generally had been slow in discovering the fact of the U.S.S.R., although *The Star* had sent its then London correspondent, Henry Somerville, there some years previously. It was only as the depression deepened and reports increased of the meaning of the first Five-Year Plan that interest in the Soviet Union quickened and flared and the Communist state loomed in many Canadian minds as a monstrous threat, not only in social terms but as an economic enemy in terms of wheat, lumber, pulp, fish and minerals. In 1932 this interest reached fever heat and possibly no country viewed Red Russia with greater alarm and even hatred. In many newspapers of Canada its name could not be mentioned except with fear and derision. It was pilloried as a godless land of slave labour.

*The Star*, on the contrary, had an open-minded news interest in it and carried every possible view and narrative that would throw light on events and practices there. In *The Star Weekly* Maurice Hindus' book *Humanity Uprooted* had been run as a serial. That led indirectly to my being sent there, although I had no idea then my luck was linked with it.

It happened that I was sent to New York to interview Hindus in advance of a

visit he was making to Toronto to deliver a lecture. He gave me a fine outline of the Soviet's achievements. Shortly afterwards a Canadian engineer, John Calder, who had carried out a number of big construction jobs in the U.S.S.R. under the Five-Year Plan, visited Toronto. Hearing of him by chance, I called on him and extracted a dramatic story. The Managing Editor read it. He was seized with the fact that Calder was a Canadian. "Find out," he ordered, "if you can enter Russia with him."



Lenin's Tomb in the Red Square is grandstand for viewing Moscow's big parades. Stalin looks down from extreme right.

*Wide World*

That called for hustling, for Calder was leaving in four days on the *Olympic*—but when he sailed from New York, I sailed with him. True, I had not a visa and was taking a chance on not getting one, since the Soviet authorities had been refusing Canadian journalists visas for some time, but the Managing Editor agreed to that chance. And as it happened, through the good offices of Hindus and Calder, my visa awaited me in London.

Thus I came to enter Russia as I had entered strange Canadian and American cities, to observe, question, soak in material and write. The canvas was bigger, I was farther away from the corner of King and Yonge Streets than usual, otherwise the technique of covering the story was little different from that employed on a visit to Florida during the boom, a tour of the Canadian West or a disaster, except that the panorama was wider, longer and deeper and that it called for a marathon wordage

since I wrote articles in a daily stream on the spot.

Actually, except for the strain of the unceasing interest that never lifted for a moment in this revolutionary country re-creating its customs, its practices, its economy and its humanity in new terms, and the fatigue of endless travel, observation and questioning, it was one of the easiest of jobs, for the very streets, the stores, the hotels, the trains, held unusual colour under my nose. I could not enter a school, a factory or a club without finding things worth translating into a record for Canadian readers.

There was one thing, though, that made this assignment different from others, even including a journey to Mexico, and that was ignorance of the Russian language and the constant need of an interpreter. Passing through Berlin I had been advised by American correspondents there who had been in Russia to secure an interpreter who was either a Communist or a member of the O.G.P.U. or secret police, or preferably a man who was both. Their reasoning was that such a man, feeling himself a person of integrity in terms of Soviet citizenship, would not only be more useful but would also lack the inhibitions of a less certain citizen in having on his hands a journalist who might write adversely of what he saw, found and felt.



Dr. Locke of Williamsburg, Ontario,  
at one of his first clinics.

*Toronto Star*



I got a fine interpreter from Intourist, the state travel agency. If he were a member of the O.G.P.U. he never let me know, but certainly he had assurance; in fact, he had the nerve of a New York tabloid reporter and frequently astonished me with his aplomb in this land where a man allegedly hardly dare breathe except according to the Soviet Hoyle. Once, for example, in Moscow, coming from the race-track, I expressed a desire to view a flying-field we were passing. The interpreter looked doubtful but ordered the chauffeur to swing in. As we drove near I realized it was a military, not a civil, aerodrome we were entering and checked the car. "Just a minute," I said, "the Red Army won't want a foreign journalist snooping around."

"That's all right," replied my interpreter airily, "I'll say you're from the British Embassy."

"Oh no, you don't," I said. "I've no desire to be found out and shot as a spy as a result of misrepresentation."

We did not enter the military field, even though my interpreter, who may have had authority of which I knew nothing, insisted I would be welcome. Several times afterwards I had a suspicion that I was exalted to near-ambassadorial rank or raised to the peerage when my friend was introducing me in Russian to factory chiefs, farm managers or other Soviet officials.

Although his wife was a member, he was not a member of the Communist Party of Russia. He had, however, belonged to the Communist Party in the United States and had evidently while there had some reputation as a Red. At least he told me he had been arrested some years previously and brought up from Panama charged with complicity in some way with the famous Wall Street explosion of September 16, 1920, when a horse and cart, laden with combustibles, blew up. Released, he took action for wrongful arrest and won, so he said, \$2,500. With this he returned to his native land and threw in his lot with the Soviets.

He was Jewish, a native of Odessa, but had travelled all over the world as a sailor, spoke fine English, was clever and capable, and was, as might be expected, a Soviet enthusiast. For my purpose he proved a splendid interpreter, even though a lack of knowledge of the language had its handicaps. But we could go into a people's court or marriage and divorce bureau, for example, and he could give me a verbatim translation of the proceedings that left little to be desired. He had almost a newspaper sense of the interesting, and frequently drew my attention to fragments of human interest which, with my locked ears, I might have missed. He was most satisfactory in translating an interview whether with some casual worker, waif or sailor or with an official, when I was dealing with straight questions of fact. Only

when questions grew a little oblique or involved did he fail somewhat, not because he sought to mislead but because he failed to get my meaning.

I had an arrangement whereby I had not merely the use of a car but the services of my interpreter at any hour of the night or day. In Moscow, of course, he went home at nights and frequently in the evenings or for hours during the day when I was writing instead of gathering article material. But on a trip of more than a month down the Volga, through the Northern Caucasus into Trans-Caucasia, along the Black Sea to the Crimea and up into the Ukraine, and later on a visit to the Donbas coal and steel region, he was with me night and day as guide, philosopher, friend, valet and baggage smasher. Frequently we occupied the same hotel room, sometimes the same bed. On this swing he was efficiency itself, looking after all accommodations, making all arrangements. Russia was thronged with thieves. One dared not open one's hotel window at night, if it was on a low floor; or the window of a railroad car. Waiting on a station platform, he or I never left our baggage for an instant; indeed, usually, when standing, I kept my most important typewriter between my feet, lest it be snatched.

My interpreter was constantly warning against the danger of theft. Such money as I had on my person I carried in a money-belt under my clothes but when I went into a crowd, he invariably walked right behind guarding me against pickpockets. "Watch your pockets!" was his constant advice. Imagine, then, his consternation when he, not I, was robbed, and robbed of all our Russian money.

We had just gone aboard a Black Sea ship at Batum, put our grips in the cabin and emerged on the crowded deck, and he had once again begged me to watch my pockets, when he put his hand in his own. His face turned green as he gave a shriek, "O-i-oi, I have been robbed!" Gone was his huge roll of roubles with which he paid our way—while I settled with Intourist in American dollars—and his dismay almost made me laugh, even though I knew his plight might prove serious. However, he wasted no time, but darted away and I lost track of him for nearly half an hour. When he returned, it was to say that "they" had caught the thief and that he had his money back.

Not to this day have I the slightest idea what machinery of the Soviets he set in motion but the efficiency of the method that so quickly combed the robber out of the people who swarmed on board was self-evident.

During the greater part of my stay I wore dark shirts and old clothes like a proletarian, whereas my well-dressed companion looked prosperously bourgeois. Clothing was difficult to procure then and of poor quality but he had an American hat and an American suit which he preserved with meticulous care. By what manner of

thrift or magic he could keep them looking so fresh and wearing so well, I could not imagine; I could only admire his spirit in maintaining appearances which seemed in no way to conflict with his Soviet enthusiasms.

His attitude and behaviour held interesting contradictions and showed interesting conflicts. In all our arguments, and there were many, he was irreproachably Communist and yet he was a go-getter and, with his American experience, frequently impatient over the slowgoing and involved methods of his countrymen. His hustling manner threatened a number of times to invite trouble; his scorn with dilatory hotel workers during our stay in Tiflis drew a threat from the Georgians that they would charge him with “bureaucracy”, a most serious offence in this most bureaucratic land. Whatever his authority was, at least he showed little concern over it and I got the idea that if they started trouble, he would end it.

He paid me the compliment of saying that I had a *tempo* worthy of the Five-Year Plan gospel and I frequently heard him refer to me as *udarnik* (shock-brigade worker) in commending me to officials, the highest form of Soviet flattery. He was fair and honest throughout, serving me with a strict responsibility in spite of my bourgeois antecedents, while he never wavered by a syllable in his allegiance to Communist principles. He failed me only in one particular, that he could do nothing towards procuring me an interview with Stalin. But then Stalin is inaccessible to all interviewers, unless they are a Ludwig, a Wells or a Howard. Only twice has he submitted to the interrogation of working journalists, to Eugene Lyons of the United Press, to prove that rumours of his death were greatly exaggerated, and to Walter Duranty of *The New York Times*, dean of Moscow correspondents.

However, at a big parade in the Red Square, I had the good fortune to find myself for more than three hours within fifty feet of him as he stood on the balcony of Lenin’s Tomb in the company of Voroshilov, the late Maxim Gorky, Molotov and other notables. It gave a chance to observe his appearance and manner, but speech with him was as impossible as with a King or a Kaiser, comrade though he be in this Russia of the New Comradeship.

So much for an unexpected foray into a land whose Communist philosophy is largely a mass philosophy. A million people may die—what does that matter if a plan or a programme succeeds? A generation suffers; that is too bad, but on their sacrifices a Socialist state is being built for their children’s children. Individual lives, hopes, dreams mean nothing; only society and the race count. It is largely as impersonal as an ant-hill.

It happened that to-day, as I was finishing this chapter, I was sent to a small home in a Toronto suburb, where three hours previously five children, trapped in

their sleep, had suffocated or burned to death.

The charred shell of a frame house was all that remained to indicate, mutely as always, the tragedy. Standing on the lawn, gazing at it blindly, was a smoke-grimed man in a borrowed coat, borrowed pants, borrowed shoes—the father!

We are startled by upheaval, shocked by revolution, horrified when flood, famine, earthquake or war devastates a country and its people. We pity classes or groups, the dispossessed Russian aristocrats, the German radicals and Jews tortured by the Nazis, the Vienna Socialists machine-gunned in their apartment houses, the Chinese butchered at Shanghai and Jehol, the Ethiopians bombed by Fascist planes—but here was an individual to whom Fate could not have seemed more harsh if it had come in mass terms wearing a social, political or military mask.

Five children dead in a twinkling from unexplained fire! It would have made little difference if they had been killed by a shell or a dose of poison gas. Yet, there would have been this difference, that their deaths might have been accounted for; there would have been something definite to blame. He, his wife and one child had escaped; five children were gone, and he could not account for it.

He stood there and looked, saying nothing, weeping not. He had not a shirt to his back; he had not a cent to his name. He was not thinking of mass movements, of War or Peace, of Society or the State; he was thinking only of his five children and trying to reason about Death.



## FLOODS AND A TORNADO

THIS book covering twenty years of "Variety Show" was meant to end with the last chapter but I cannot refrain from adding a kind of stop-press chapter or two to give it a newspaper effect of catching the reader with the latest to hand. Actually, I wish to show that my second twenty years have begun much more excitingly than the first twenty, yet with a similarity almost fatalistic on an assignment, rather a series of assignments, involving death—plus, in this case, wholesale destruction and suffering.

On March 17/18, 1936, before the first month of my second twenty was over, happened the Western Pennsylvania floods which swamped industrial and business districts and low-lying residential areas of the cities of Johnstown and Pittsburgh to a depth in places of eighteen feet. These were part of a vast spring overflowing of rivers, following one of the most severe winters on record, all over the north-eastern United States.

On Wednesday afternoon, March 18, despatches began to indicate the full severity of the Pennsylvania floods. Johnstown was isolated, but an amateur short-wave broadcaster, allegedly watching the water beat against it, spread a thrilling, if incorrect, report that the great impregnable Quemahoning Dam in the Allegheny Mountains beyond the city was likely to break at any instant and repeat the famous tragedy of 1889 in which over 2,000 people drowned.

With instructions to reach the scene, I caught an early evening train out of Toronto. No trains were getting through, but from Buffalo a night train ran as far as Youngstown, Pa., landing me there at 5 a.m. This was still over sixty miles from Pittsburgh and, since all communication was cut, including the telephone, I found myself, like Tantalus, almost, but not quite, within reach.

Inquiry at the Youngstown station discovered that at 9 o'clock a special train from Cleveland carrying a relief commando of United States Coast Guards with boats would pass through en route to Aquibilla, twenty-odd miles from Pittsburgh. Yes, I might board it; that would appreciably cut down the distance from the flood zone.

Meanwhile I fared into the city to see if I could hire an automobile or aeroplane to take me through direct.

Neither was available. Winter's heaviest snowfall had just ended. It was raining. Reports said that roads nearby were blocked and were under water closer to Pittsburgh and that a number of bridges were out. Money failed to induce taxi

drivers to make the trip. Seeking a plane instead, I found a pilot owning an open-seater light machine. Sure he'd take me—if he could get off the ground. Inspection of the airport showed that a take-off in the heavy snow with wheels was impossible.

This was at once a disappointment and a relief for, eager as I was to do or die in reaching my objective fast, it was “ceiling zero” and I had little stomach for searching in the murk among the hills for flooded Pittsburgh. That was not my idea of a joyous morning.

I took the special train to Aquibilla and, arriving there, managed to thumb a ride on an official automobile taking the Coast Guard officers into Pittsburgh by a roundabout way ahead of their men and boats which were to follow by truck. It was as simple as that, as everything in newspaper work is simple when the break is with you. Shortly after lunch I was in the Golden Triangle, downtown business section sandwiched between the junction of the Allegheny and Monagahela Rivers to form the Ohio, on the edge of the retreating water and in the heart of this powerful industrial city so severely crippled.

The panorama of disaster was big and diffuse; officials, driven from their haunts, were scattered and relief headquarters of the American Red Cross was chaotic, but immediate copy was easy to obtain. That evening I was able to wire 2,000 words to Toronto outlining the plight of Pittsburgh. Since there was no power it seemed a miracle that I should get through such a considerable despatch but the credit belonged to Western Union Telegraph officials who had succeeded in setting up an imported gasoline power plant in the heart of a powerless zone of sufficient strength to send impulses over the wires to the outside world.

The water slowly receding from the low business streets left behind uncountable tons of deep, oozy, running, pervasive, diabolical mud. Clean-up was already under way and recovery begun as thousands of workers invaded the desolated area but Pittsburgh lay with its tendons cut. It was a city, in the central district completely, along its drowned riverside industrial sections and almost altogether throughout its metropolitan region, without electrical power, or light, without street cars, without elevators, without a department store or an office building open, without a theatre, without movies or radio, without for a time telephone or telegraph, without train service, without schools, without water, without hygiene and without liquor much more decidedly than in 18th Amendment days, for its sale was rigidly prohibited. With power off, pumping stations dead, pressure in the mains negative, there was a serious threat of fire—with a myriad unfamiliar candles in use.

At night the city was like a tomb, dank, silent except for the sound of pumps, without lights except in two or three downtown buildings fortunate enough to have

had auxiliary plants. Hundreds of Pennsylvania National Guardsmen (state militia) not merely formed a cordon cutting off everyone from the rich district of unoccupied banks, office buildings, warehouses, shops and hotels but patrolled the unflooded streets of the Triangle and challenged at every corner. A walk of two blocks from hotel to telegraph office to file copy, with a flashlight to keep from tripping over obstructions, splashing knee-deep in water being pumped from basements or falling into a manhole, was a succession of stoppages by police and soldiers. I had not discovered in the chaos where to obtain a pass but my Toronto police card was honoured, though sometimes only after argument.

Three large downtown hotels were out of business but during the first afternoon I obtained a room on the 11th bedroom floor of the William Penn which had stood, fortunately, just outside the flood zone. It had, however, no light, no power, no elevators, no water, no heat, though it managed to maintain by some wizardry a fairly good dining-room service. To reach my room, fourteen flights from ground level, I had in common with scores of guests of both sexes and all ages to walk up stairs faintly illuminated by candles. In this room there was no ready flashing on of electricity when darkness came; I had to type by the light of candles stuck in their own grease on the desk. In the bathroom a trickle still came from the ice-water tap but a notice tacked on the door warned against drinking it. In this I washed and by the aid of a flashlight shaved. A bath was impossible and the chill room made a body sponging a spartan undertaking I did not dare. The toilet bowl did not flush and since the room's previous occupant had used it before leaving, it stank. So much for the facts of life in a flooded city.

It was Saturday before cold water was restored to the rooms though the warning still held against drinking it. I had by this time, for on Friday drinking water had been unprocurable, acquired from a department store reopened in part a half-gallon bottle of Poland water. I had also secured a stable lantern and, after visiting five service stations, a filling of kerosene.

It was Sunday before a single elevator began running and a skeleton series of electric lights came on in the corridors from power looped in from an auxiliary plant in an adjacent building. It was Monday evening, six days after the flood, before heat came on in the hotel and hot water for bathing was available in the rooms. On Tuesday night when I left Pittsburgh, while street lights were on and street cars were once more running, the damaged downtown area was still more than 90 per cent. dead.

The real drama of this story was not the death and havoc caused by flood, tragic as these were, but the paralysis of a big city. Here was revealed how much of



modern civilization depends on electricity. With its power gone Pittsburgh was helpless, life was reduced to a primitive condition and instant threat arose of food shortage, disease and fire.

As an assignment it was a simple affair of legging and questing through ravaged districts. A dozen men could not have amassed the thousands of individual experiences. All I could hope to do was go where copy promised most copiously and send descriptions and explanation, loaded with refugees' tales, which would give readers in Canada an idea of the magnitude, effects and suffering of the disaster.

On the Friday I drove seventy-odd miles to Johnstown and spent the day in this low, gorge city so brutally raped by the sudden rise of its two mountain rivers. Wearing heavy overshoes I tramped through the sickening mud, noted the destruction, talked to citizens and visited relief dépôts swarming with refugees. Only a tittle of the story was obtainable but it was enough to furnish a savour of a fierce catastrophe which had caused curiously few deaths, not more than twenty in Johnstown. That evening I drove back to Pittsburgh, since filing at Johnstown was out of the question, and put the tale on the wires.

The following days I drove to and trudged through the industrial North Side of Pittsburgh and through outlying riverside communities which had been swamped. Everywhere the same pitiable accounts—the gathering of them surfeited as I listened to the heartbreak experiences of poor workers creeping back through the mud to salvage what they might from their soaked homes.

I had seen disaster in several forms but I was not sure that this horror of flood and mud was not the worst of all. Within two weeks I was to see worse yet: the effect of a tornado, a strange, horrible, dancing wind which in less than three minutes on the morning of Monday, April 7, ripped through Gainesville, a small, pleasant city of Georgia, utterly destroying its business section and over one-third of its homes, and killing nearly 200 people and injuring over 1,000.

The effect of this local twister which on a 300-yard front cut thus through a Georgia community shortly after breakfast time and in a twinkling turned it into a hell of wreckage, injury and death was much more dreadful than anything I had witnessed following the Florida hurricane of 1926, though the latter was vastly more damaging in its aggregate result on a wide deep front.

My covering of the Gainesville tornado came by one of those breaks which have occurred constantly through the years and show in my second twenty happy signs of continuing. Side-tracked on my return from Pittsburgh on a Northern Ontario murder which promised interest but proved a dud, I missed going to the long delayed execution at Trenton, New Jersey, of Bruno Richard Hauptman, kidnapper

of the Lindbergh baby, for which I had been slated. Gregory Clark, colleague and friend of many years, drew the assignment instead and excelled with his despatches interpreting the weird course of this bizarre event which was at the last minute delayed three more nights, from Tuesday to Friday, to give the last touch of the macabre to an episode of punishment unique in criminal history.

At last, however, the notorious Hauptman was dead and that seemed the end. But no—word came Saturday, incorrect as it happened, that mob scenes were likely to attend his burial eclipsing those which the funeral of Rudolph Valentino, screen lover, had evoked years earlier, and I was ordered to New York in case of morbid bedlam.

On Sunday evening Gregory Clark, glad to be done with Hauptman, living or dead, returned to Toronto while I stayed on to write his finality which, instead of a hullabaloo, was to be a quiet cremation at Fresh Pond, Middle Village, in Queen's Borough on Long Island, attended only by his widow and two German pastors.

On Monday morning, by subway and elevated, I made my way there. Hauptman's last act was announced for 1 o'clock but I arrived early, like other newspapermen, since it might take place sooner. A cordon of New York City police guarded the high iron railings of the crematory and little copy promised except the arrival of Mrs. Hauptman and the smoke which might or might not issue to announce that Hauptman was at last, once and for all, ended. It was raining and we lounged dismally in automobiles, wishing the affair done.

The time reached 11.20; I was chatting in a car with a couple of New York men when to my astonishment I heard a call: "Griffin of the *Toronto Star*! Griffin of *The Star*!" It was a policeman in a slicker. "Anybody here seen a guy named Griffin?"

Tumbling out, I ran over. "Here," he said, handing me a slip with advice pencilled on it to call Toronto long-distance telephone operator 414, "they're trying to get you up in Canada. Maybe somebody dead or something!" How or where he had received the message I did not ask, but went to a nearby florist's shop and called the Toronto operator. Afterwards I learned that the Managing Editor of *The Star* had simply rung the Fresh Pond Crematory—rather the telephone company had done it for him—and asked to have word relayed out, if I were there as I must be, telling me to call.

Within two minutes I was talking to him. "Word," he said, "has just come of a bad disaster in Georgia at a place called Gainesville. Tornado! First reports claim a thousand dead. Drop Hauptman—we'll take the press services on him—get to Gainesville fast as you can."

"Right!" I said, and that was all that was said by either of us. Immediately I

started back to Manhattan but it was 12.30 p.m. before I reached the St. Regis Hotel, corner of Fifth Avenue and 55th Street, where I was staying. A map produced by the head porter showed that Gainesville was not more than sixty or seventy miles from Atlanta.

“When,” I asked, “does the next plane leave for there?”

A call brought the information: “An Eastern air liner is scheduled to leave Newark, N.J. (across the Hudson River) at 2.10; arriving in Atlanta at 7.15 p.m. but whether it will fly to-day is doubtful. Weather reports are bad—storms—especially towards the South. It will be half an hour before it is decided.”

I asked for a seat if the plane were going, for the earliest train would not reach Atlanta until morning, and wired the Managing Editor for money. Asking for the earliest possible report, I went to my room, packed and ordered lunch. It was 1.10 and an agreeable lunch had that moment been trundled in when the telephone rang and the head porter said: “That plane’s going. You have just twenty minutes to catch the Newark Airport bus at the Pennsylvania Hotel.”

Lunch was left. It meant hustling to get to the corner of Seventh Avenue and 33rd Street in time. The taxi was caught in traffic jams and was nearly five minutes late arriving. The bus waited, however, and I boarded the twin-motored Douglas air liner for Georgia. There were six other passengers, all male, two of them Brooklyn men who were rushing down to find sons, alive or dead, who were attending a military school near Gainesville. They had heard reports of the disaster over the radio in their cars, had driven to the airport and were flying South without even a toothbrush. Ours was a cargo in a hurry.

The flight was a trying one for this reporter who prefers terra firma to heaven even on the loveliest of days. This day was dirty. Flying through rain, heavy clouds and storm we were unable to make the regular Washington landing en route but went on to Richmond, Virginia. Taking off again, we passed quickly into dense layers of cloud and the earth was completely shut off from view. Sailing through the opaque blanket was steady, however, and knowing the night ahead would be wakeful, I seized the opportunity to store up a little sleep. I was aroused sharply by the plane bumping and pitching heavily and discovered with a stab of uneasiness that we were travelling in pitch blackness. The riding lights were on. The big machine swung and rolled, the wings seesawing jerkily in what was evidently a bad storm. I looked at my watch; over an hour yet before we reached Atlanta, and it should still be daylight; and settled myself anxiously to endure what might be a trying experience, blind flying in a black gale.

In the distance out of the darkness showed a flash of lightning. Even on the

ground I have never liked lightning. And I don't like flying. Flying through lightning seemed a malevolent combination.

The co-pilot emerged from the forward compartment and with artistic unconcern passed down the aisle, exchanging a word of calm with each passenger. "Oh yes," he said, "it's a bit unsettled, but everything's okay. Only this wind's holding us back—may be a few minutes late reaching Atlanta."

Then the storm broke in earnest and for the next hour we plunged, bucked and swerved through a torrential downpour which raked the plane with water. Above the sound of the motors came the crashing of thunder as if it were hammering at us to drive us down. Flash after flash of lightning zigzagged around us until I began to think we were playing tag with devils in a dark immeasurable hell. We seemed caught in a void, an infinity of blackness. I was as badly scared as I have ever been in a life not unfamiliar with fear.

Not only did I expect at any moment a blinding hit, then oblivion—and another "unsolved mystery" crash!—but there was the thought that we might be driven off our course, forced down and have to land blindly. (Next day, in similar weather, another air liner seeking Pittsburgh, and mistaking the route, piled on a mountain and only three on board escaped, which was more than good, since in such air accidents few survive to say what happened.)

My wind was up. To send it still higher, looking through the window, I unexpectedly saw behind the cowling of the starboard engine a glow of red, a flicker of white, then red again. Fire! I held my seat, trying to persuade myself that nothing could burn on this all-metal plane. Maybe not fire, I thought, but in a moment that engine will seize and we'll be forced in this flaming storm to seek an impossible landing.

Shaking, I got up, went to the other side and looked at the port engine. No red or white flicker there. Back in my seat, I fought down terror. Lightning!—now this! Should I not do something? But what? I must not be a fool. I must not start a panic on the plane. Turning with forced casualness to the man behind me, I asked as easily as I could, "Know anything about flying? What's that red under the engine hood?"

He looked, jerked and exclaimed, "My God! What is it?"

"Don't know," I said, holding my voice even, "maybe nothing—I just wondered."

"We'll find out quick," he said, which is just what I wished him to say, coward that I was, and he pushed the bell button above him. Back came the co-pilot. "Is that all right?" asked the man behind me, pointing. "What's that red in the engine?"

"Nothing," said the co-pilot, leaning over and looking, "nothing—just the exhaust

a bit heated. Don't you worry about it.”

“The other one's not like that?” I said, wanting to make sure nothing would be missed.

“That's all right,” he answered. “Sometimes the exhaust heats up like that. It doesn't mean a thing.”

He left us, and evidently he was right, for nothing happened as we drove through the storm.

This began to slacken, the lightning flashes grew fewer, but my watch indicated that we should be over Atlanta shortly. I wondered anxiously if we could land. Then, suddenly, we were out of the blackness into clear night and there below us, veritable jewels, stretched the city's lights. They were a joyous sight. Within ten minutes we were safely aground and I was making a vow never to go aloft again.

I longed to take a sleeping draught and call it a day. But somewhere, sixty-odd miles away in the rain, lay a shattered city named Gainesville. I had to go there that night and secure a story. That was why I had come; the Valkyrie sky ride just ended was merely an incident of travel.

Driving into the city, I checked into an hotel, visited the telegraph office to collect my wired money, went to an automobile station, hired a car and driver and started for Gainesville. Remembering I had had no lunch yet not wishing to lose time sitting down to dinner, I bought sandwiches and ate them riding.



Johnstown flood, first visitation, 1889:  
a tree trunk scores a hit.

*International News*

The drive to Gainesville was through a heavy Southern storm. Thunder and lightning continued unabated. Rain beat down so heavily that in places the road was flooded and at times the chauffeur had to slow to a crawl lest we end in a ditch. Heavy traffic with strong headlights was flowing into Atlanta from the stricken city, trucks, ambulances, rescue cars, and we had to progress with the greatest care. Half a dozen times, tired and dispirited, dreading the task of tackling what I knew lay ahead,

I had to fight against turning back. I did not turn back and at 10.30 p.m. I reached the ruins of the place through which that morning the tornado had ripped.

They made a dark, lurid nightmare of wreckage, the heavy rain adding the last dismal note of desolation to the bewildering destruction. Getting out of the car, I began to wander with a flashlight through what were once the streets of this unknown city, so fearfully strewn, as if air squadrons had plastered it with bombs. Sullen glowings showed where fires still burned despite the downpour and I made my way towards them as beacons indicating life. Here, too, in the public square were bonfires made by Georgia National Guardsmen bivouacked around them. No other lights showed in this broken town.

It was a case of groping blindly until I could find a lead which might result in information—accosting guardsmen, police, firemen. None of them had authentic knowledge or the will to bother about an intrusive Canadian at this time of such a night. Finally I found relief headquarters—the inevitable bedlam, of course, which follows the first effort to cope with a catastrophe—in a partly wrecked church; and there, questioning whom I could, I happened on a Gainesville doctor, a tired man whose name I forget, who was more than kind. He not only gave me a rational outline of the disaster but, with his son driving his car, took me on a tour of the wind-ripped area. It was a queer pilgrimage, cruising slowly in the rain through empty streets strewn with débris from the shattered buildings, with fallen trees and poles, and tangled with wires, turning our flashlights hither and yon as he explained with sadness the devastation.

It was long past midnight when I left to drive back to Atlanta to write and file my story. The storm had died, traffic had decreased but it was after 2 a.m. when I reached the telegraph office and sat down to grind out a tale of wind madness. An age seemed to have passed since I had sat waiting so complacently outside the crematory in Queen's for Hauptman's corpse to become dust. That was New York fifteen hours ago and this was Georgia now. Death there of a notorious criminal, death here of unknown innocents—hell, what was the good of trying to understand anything? All I knew was that I was very tired—that I had a tragic piece to write about a place called Gainesville of which I had not heard yesterday.

It was after 4 a.m. when I crawled into bed. It had been, I felt, a full day, but tomorrow lay ahead—there was not too long to sleep. On the morrow I drove again to Gainesville, saw its fearful, almost incredible, chaos by daylight, talked with whites and with blacks, and gathered once more a harvest of fact and human interest to prove how strange, how terrible, how odd, yet how similar is disaster always whether it comes through the mistake or carelessness of man or through a whim or

chance of Nature. Death was unavoidable in Gainesville as men poked in the smoking ruins of a pants factory where more than fifty girls caught under the wind-crushed walls had burnt. It came forth in grotesque embers that were hard to identify as once breathing, moving, living humans. Here was a mass cremation, brutal, unexplainable.



Moment of Dr. D. E. Robertson's emergence from  
Moose River Mine after imprisonment of 242 hours. Second figure  
from left, he electrified onlookers by walking out smiling.

*Toronto Star*

That evening back in Atlanta I once more filed a story. The day following, seeing the processions of the dead enter the cemeteries of red Georgia clay, watching the rescue gangs mop up and the inhabitants already beginning to rebuild, I got another story. Then I left for home, sick of disaster, sated with tragedy.

The series was not complete, and I left it intuitively, for always in my experience types of newspaper story have run in such cycles. Within a week the third was to begin, though I was not to get action on it for another week yet. But within a period of five weeks, in the first two months of my second twenty years of making copy out of events, I was to find myself flung into the throes of the third major disaster though fortunately this did not turn out so much a tragedy, with but one most regrettable death, as a glorious yarn of stamina, courage and rescue and of the splendour inherent in common man.

This grew out of the entombment of three Toronto men in an old Nova Scotia gold mine for ten days, ten nights and part of the eleventh—and the bringing forth of all three, only that one was dead. It deserves a separate last chapter.





## MOOSE RIVER SAGA

A MORE isolated spot cannot be imagined in which to stage one of the biggest Canadian news stories of two decades than the Nova Scotia hamlet of Moose River. It is situated in a forest region, eighteen miles from a railroad, over seventy miles from Halifax. Its only connection with the world is a back-country road and a party-line telephone on which neighbours may listen in. It is a Birdseye Centre consisting of a Wayside Inn to which in the summer an occasional tourist comes for the trout fishing, the general store of Matt Higgins, a small church, a little school, some twenty scattered houses—and an old gold mine.

It was this old gold mine which focused on Moose River, Halifax County, for there are three Moose Rivers in Nova Scotia, a beam of popular emotion which outclassed any mass sentiment the Canadian people had known since the War.

It was this old gold mine which became the scene of one of the most dramatic rescues in the history of mining, a gambling, gallant race against Death which won the plaudits of the King, the Governor-General, the Prime Minister of Canada; caused a wave of national recognition to break over the heads of the Nova Scotia miners who had effected it by digging a human gopher hole down through an old shaft and a crush of caved-in rock; and resulted in the public subscription of more than \$70,000 to reward their courage.

It was this old gold mine which caused *The Toronto Star* to stage one of its finest efforts to bring home the news—and the pictures; especially the pictures—from this isolated spot more than 900 miles away as the aeroplane flies.

Down this old gold mine about 9 o'clock Easter Sunday evening, April 12, 1936, went three men on a tour of inspection. All three were from Toronto. They were Dr. D. E. Robertson, Chief Surgeon of the Hospital for Sick Children, Herman R. Magill, a young lawyer and broker, and Alfred Scadding, employed by them as timekeeper at the mine, for the first two were its owners. Maybe three ordinary men would not have drawn so much attention to their plight but Dr. Robertson not only had high rank as an orthopaedic specialist but was held in general affection for his work with crippled children. There is no doubt that the thought of such a man entombed and suffering accentuated the acuteness of suspense with which the world longed for the rescue of himself and his comrades.

Surely no drama of life and death was ever played out to such an audience. For the last three days and nights, while a most dangerous rescue was being attempted,

millions of people in a state of unparalleled emotion, not only in Canada but in the United States, never left their radios as they listened to broadcasting at brief intervals from the mine by a Canadian Radio Commission announcer on a wide network and by Toronto newspapers.

In Toronto, particularly, the interest reached a kind of agony. At nights, it was said, lights gleamed until dawn in two out of every three homes. Business was at a standstill, stores were almost deserted, as women refused to leave their radios to shop, and theatres might as well have closed for all the custom they drew. On the streets men and women snatched at every edition of the newspapers with almost a sobbing passion. When the rescue was achieved church bells rang and sirens blew as if an Armistice had been declared.

All because on Easter Night three Toronto men found themselves suddenly trapped by a cave-in in an old gold mine at the 141-foot level and on the eleventh night two of them issued alive—and because a band of Nova Scotia draegermen, name given to coal mine rescue crews because of their Draeger oxygen equipment used in entering gas-filled drifts and not used at Moose River, proved themselves paladins in overalls who dared the hourly risk of a sudden, crushing, suffocating death to save strangers.

This narrative does not concern the men's experience but rather the effect above ground of their entombment. It is sufficient to know that they had water to drink, too much water, though they were never in any danger of drowning, and had for a time lights to give them their bearings.

For a day or two they were able to maintain a small fire the smoke of which percolated to the surface and advised workers there that one or more of them possibly lived.

Thus quietly was staged the prologue of a Nova Scotia saga of which the epilogue was to be enacted eleven nights later with the whole continent, the world indeed, distantly watching and listening as two of the three men, Robertson and Scadding, Magill having died of pneumonia at the end of the first week, emerged alive and comparatively well.

Private word of the accident reached Toronto in time to have Mrs. Robertson and Mrs. Magill, accompanied by Mrs. Gallie, wife of Dr. W. E. Gallie, Chief Surgeon of the Toronto General Hospital, catch the next morning's train for Halifax but the morning papers did not have the news. It won afternoon display but, beyond arranging for coverage by local Nova Scotia correspondents, *The Star* took no action for, as the despatches read, it looked as if the men were dead.

On Tuesday, however, things began to move. Word came that smoke had been

seen curling from the cave-in and public interest and anxiety began to quicken, particularly over the fate of Dr. Robertson as realization of his personality and record deepened. Looking back, it is hard to explain why this affair which became subsequently of such vivid interest was so slow in taking hold but the fact is, it took a day or two to gain momentum. It was like many a play or book which fails at first to impress the critics but which gradually, quickly, becomes a runaway success or a best seller.

On Tuesday afternoon *The Star* decided to send a man East. I could not be found and Gregory Clark got the call. He reached Halifax by rail Thursday night, drove by automobile to Moose River over roads boggy from the thaw and the spring rains and ripped badly in places by a steam shovel driven out laboriously, and arrived early Friday morning.

By this time the first rather spasmodic efforts at release had become an intense drive. Not only was Nova Scotia concerned but the imprisoned men's home province of Ontario. Offers and suggestions poured East. J. P. Bickell, President of McIntyre Porcupine Gold Mine, spectacularly rushed four skilled rescue men from Northern Ontario by aeroplane and train. This was before it was realized that the task was primarily one for coal miners familiar with soft rock work rather than for gold miners accustomed to hard rock.

Hon. Mitchell Hepburn, Premier of Ontario, ordered a Government seaplane from its base at Sault Ste. Marie, with one of the finest pilots in the service, George Phillips, to stand by at Toronto ready to fly supplies and equipment.

At the mine an attempt was made to cut down through by way of an abandoned shaft, but a shift of surface earth endangering the lives of several men caused officials to forbid such burrowing as too dangerous in the broken ground.

Draegermen who had come as volunteers, soft coal miners skilled in eating their way through loose and shifty rock, were thereafter forced to stand back while two safer methods were tried. The first was the slow, orthodox sinking of a vertical shaft through solid rock at the edge of the crushed area calculated to reach the 141-foot level. It was somewhat pessimistically believed that up this "death" shaft, so called, would come not living but dead men.

The second was the boring by a diamond drill of a hole, about 1½ inches in diameter, through which it was hoped to establish communication and pass food.

This drilling, aimed at an angle towards the place below ground where they were presumed imprisoned, was a triumph of precise guessing for plans of the workings were not available and the Nova Scotia driller, Billy Bell, had to bore by a kind of instinct.

The drill broke through into the main slope just below the 141-foot level on Saturday afternoon, nearly six days after the cave-in, and immediately those on the surface tried signalling the men below, if they were alive. They dropped a flare down the tube. There was no response. They shouted, mouths to the hole. No response. They sent compressed air down. No response. They blew through with a steam siren. No response.

Belief grew that the drill had missed or the men were dead.

Unexpectedly, shortly after midnight, when hope had ebbed, came a supreme moment. A blast from the siren, a waiting silence for reply, a deepening sense of defeat—then, incredibly, an answering series of knocks on the tube from below!

The hearts of men on the surface leaped. Billy Bell dropped to the hole and yelled. And a faint shout came back. All three were alive!

Such was the word which Gregory Clark, sensitively registering every line of this matchless drama of the sixth night, flashed to Toronto and *The Star's* desk jumped to meet what now promised to be a great story. There was no sleep at Moose River and there was little sleep for some of us in Toronto that Saturday night. An aeroplane was chartered and Fred R. Davis, staff photographer, Victor Child, staff artist, and myself were ordered to start at daylight for Moose River. Planning at once began to link this isolated and distant spot with Halifax and Toronto, taking in Boston and New York as wire-photo aids, in a network that would guarantee fast service with news and pictures when the rescue break came.

Davis, Child and I, due to last minute tuning of the machine, did not get away at dawn, but at 6.50 a.m., with a smart pilot, Frank Fisher, at the controls of a land plane, we hopped off for Halifax. Eight hours later, after stops at Montreal and St. John, N.B., having barged through broken weather over Eastern Canada, Southern Quebec, Northern Maine, New Brunswick, the Bay of Fundy and Nova Scotia, we got there. It was a sparkling flight which made me forget my recent oath never to go aloft again.

From Halifax two seaplanes of the Royal Canadian Air Force from the nearby Dartmouth base, as the result of coöperation which *The Star* had asked from headquarters at Ottawa, flew us the last leg over ocean inlets and forest lakes to a landing at Long Lake adjacent to Moose River hamlet. We arrived as darkness fell, in time for the full torment of the next three nights and days.

Gregory Clark, without sleep since his arrival Friday, introduced us to the weird night scene to which we picked our way by flashlight along the mud trail through bush. The spot was marked by the gleam of a few naked lights; engines supplying power and compressed air broke the forest silence. In one place miners drilled at the

“death” shaft and dumped buckets of rubble. A few steps away others lay on their stomachs, ears to the drilled hole which communicated with the prisoners below. Through this had been passed a rubber hose by which they were being sent coffee and soup.

The scene had a dark, infernal aspect, but optimism prevailed. It was only a question of time, everyone felt, until release was accomplished, though no one seemed quite clear how it was going to be achieved except through the slowly sinking “death” shaft. At midnight another “feeding” was given through the hose and the word was that all three were well.

Newspapermen were so sure that the immediate future held only routine that, almost without exception, we took the chance of snatching a badly needed rest. Within three hours we were awakened with a jolt when news spread that Magill was dead and that Robertson and Scadding might not last more than a few hours.

It was then that the draegermen of Stellarton and the other miners, thwarted by the official interdict on such an attempt as suicidal, decided to go ahead with the desperate resort of cutting a hole through an abandoned shaft and burrowing into the crush of rock to reach them.

“It’s the men down there who are in danger,” cried these soft coal miners, accustomed to the trick of gouging through such rock falls. “We’re going to get them out.”

Immediately, in a quick frenzy, they began the hazardous, marathon task which ended three days later of nibbling down the old choked Reynolds shaft, across through ancient workings and into the blocked main slope, by way of a twisting, switchback, rat-hole passage which they did not take time to support properly with timbers, which was at no point high enough for a man to stand erect and where at any moment a sudden fall might come which would squeeze or cut off ten, twenty or thirty men. Crouching, on their knees, on their bellies, they pried out and passed back stone and never cried a halt, relieving each others in shifts.

It should be remembered that gold miners of Nova Scotia and a trio from Ontario, hard rock men not familiar with such work, toiled in this glory hole alongside and behind the soft coal miners.

As if it were not enough for stout-hearted Nova Scotia colliers to hurl themselves at the task of digging out these Toronto strangers, the undertaking was further dramatized when Hon. Michael Dwyer, middle-aged Minister of Mines for the Province, dressed in rubber, entered the shaft and played a worker’s part from Monday afternoon until Wednesday midnight.

When rescue was pending a second Cabinet member, Hon. Dr. F. R. Davis,

Minister of Health, went down in his rôle of physician and was one of the first to reach the entombed men.

The Premier, Hon. Angus L. Macdonald, not only viewed this magnificent effort and assured himself that everything possible was being done, but when he returned to Halifax was kept advised continuously.

Small wonder that Nova Scotia awakened the world's esteem!

As human interest, the affair was a natural, with every conceivable ingredient to whet the public appetite for emotion, including the poignant figures of wives waiting, one for a dead husband, the other two in the hope of a glad reunion. To cap it came the fluctuations of suspense which marked the course of the three days during which the miners slowly, desperately, dug towards the two yet living men, one of whom was a noted surgeon esteemed for his work with crippled children.

The miners began their digging around 2 a.m. Monday. All that day they worked like men possessed. In the afternoon word came from official sources that they were nearly through and that rescue was imminent. Stretchers were brought to the pit mouth. Darkness came, and no rescue; time dragged. About 8.30 p.m. the mine manager, Henderson, announced that the miners had just cut their way into the main slope and were now ferreting down through the rock fall imprisoning the men below. There were about forty feet of this to work through, the going seemed good but it might take a little time yet.

A little disappointing this delay, everyone thought, but it's just a matter of a few hours—dawn, perhaps? How little even officials seemed to realize the grim two days that lay ahead!

Tuesday morning came, and no rescue. Tuesday passed gloomily, a chill, damp day, which turned to rain in the afternoon. A dreadful night followed of downpour, mud, fatigue and pessimism. Hopes sank that release would be consummated. The miners were flagging. A cry went out for relief workers and fresh relays come to the mine. A telephone line with a tiny microphone by which the prisoners might speak to the surface had been let down the drill hole and up it their voices came anxiously demanding when they might expect rescue.

Wednesday dawned clear and cold, and with it a revival of hope, though out of the rescue shaft came whispers of difficulties and to a degree, of conflict. Progress was fearfully slow and everyone knew that every moment the danger of a rock slip threatened. But the work went on. The hours crawled.

Then shortly after noon the word spread quietly: "They're through!"

Stretchers were once more carried to the pit mouth. Hon. Dr. Davis went below to give first aid. Under direction of the Mounted Police miners formed guard lines

along the pathway to the ambulance. A government doctor broadcast on the radio that contact had been made. A relative of one of the entombed men sent a message to Toronto saying that they were now being taken out. An engineer up from below drew a plan to show how the draegermen were cutting into a face of jammed timbers and twisted rails, which was the last barricade of all holding the crush of rock anchored in the slope.

We newspapermen filed stories that the rescuers had won and that it was a mere matter of time until Robertson and Scadding were brought to the surface—and we were justified in doing so. Officials said they were through. Miners thought they were through.

But they were not through. Only gradually did we discover that as darkness came on and there was no emergence. What was happening? We could not find out. What was wrong? No one seemed to know. Yet we dared not wire that rescue was postponed. Pessimism returned. Would they never get through? Were the two prisoners below really doomed? How tragic, if they were! Surely this tension could not survive another night of dark, burrowing, bitter agony?—another day? That did not seem possible. Everyone would go mad. . . .

The explanation was simple enough, in retrospect. The rescuers had indeed come shortly after noon to what they thought was the last barrier. Their lights flashing in revealed clearness. But, when they cut through, there was, a few feet along, another block of rock. Wearied to the breaking point, disheartened by this unexpected obstacle, they had to force themselves to one last despairing effort before they won out of the cave-in a few feet above the 141-foot level.

That was around midnight Wednesday, when Dr. Robertson and Alfred Scadding emerged in fairly good shape. Gregory Clark and I wrote throughout the rest of the night, to long after dawn, while the photographs taken by Fred Davis were motored out to Halifax to be flown at daylight to Boston, New York and Toronto in a three-way division by which *The Star* planned to score a beat, which it did, printing pictures of the rescue, flown to Boston, wire-photoed to Buffalo and flown from Buffalo to Toronto, in that day's main edition.

To complete the record of this unusual story: from the moment on Sunday night that Magill's death became known until Thursday afternoon, the day after the rescue, no newspaperman at Moose River—and few working on the story in Toronto, on the desk or on the street—went to bed.

Except at irregular intervals to rustle a meal, we did not leave the mine. We did not shave; we did not wash or clean our teeth. It was not that we neglected ablution purposely; we forgot; there was neither opportunity nor energy for it. To leave

unnecessarily the place where at any moment a startling break might come was impossible. Day and night, through rain and bitter cold, wallowing in unaccustomed rubber boots through mud, unkempt and raw-eyed, we kept devitalizing vigil. We could not count ourselves heroes like the officials, the miners, the R.C.M.P. constables, the R.C.A.F. pilots, the long-suffering villagers; we were just unnecessary fellows prying, questioning, hanging around, frequently yelling long-distance to Halifax and Toronto, and flogging ourselves before each successive dawn into sitting down by lamplight in a village bedroom and typing despatches which we hoped to Heaven would get through this cursed bush and reach a telegraph line.

We slept, of course; I do not wish to pretend we all went altogether without sleep, though some of the younger men did until they cracked. We slept at odd moments and for odd half-hours, nodding in the lee of a rock or in a corner of the crowded boiler house, the mine's only shelter. Occasionally, after pounding out a despatch, one of us would damn everything and throw himself for an hour or two on a couch.

The story itself was simple, the course of it right under our eyes, its drama under our very feet. Its difficulty lay in the isolation of Moose River, the problem of communication and the distance from Toronto. So far as we were concerned some of the burden was lifted by the coöperation of the Royal Canadian Air Force officers and sergeant-pilots. Not only did they transport Davis, Child and myself into Moose River but their machines stood by until release was achieved, ready to carry out copy and photographs to Halifax.

By the time the rescue break came, *The Star* had perfected an arrangement of men, aeroplanes and wire-photo service to make sure that our copy and photographs would quickly traverse the thousand miles that separated them from the first possible edition.

The R.C.A.F. seaplanes not only ran what amounted to an aerial taxi service between Moose River and Halifax but the Officer Commanding the Dartmouth station, Squadron Leader H. Edwards, placed to our use a field wireless unit for the sending of messages from the mine. This helped to supplement the single telephone line from Moose River, clogged with calls, and the despatch of heavier copy by plane. We were able to send a number of flashes thus by wireless, to be picked up by the R.C.A.F. operator at Dartmouth and telephoned to Halifax to be put on the telegraph wires to Toronto.

Besides this R.C.A.F. coöperation, headquarters staff of *The Star* lined up five or six other planes—we lost count of them at times—to rush photographs to Boston, New York and Toronto. Two of these, including Frank Fisher's which had stood by



at Halifax since landing us there Sunday, were chartered. The others were placed at our disposal through goodwill. One of these was the Ontario Government seaplane, piloted by George Phillips, which Premier Mitchell Hepburn had despatched with supplies and which he directed, following its delivery of these, to help in getting the news out. Phillips, a tried bush flier, hopped as we wished. Another was a big machine, flown by Lee Murray, President of the DeHaviland Company, which had carried radium experts to the mine from the Toronto General Hospital in the hope that they might be of assistance in locating exactly the imprisoned men. Starting back to Toronto at dawn after the rescue, Murray carried a packet of photographs.

Two more *Star* men arrived in our wake to assist in carrying out the plan, Claude Pascoe and Jim Kingsbury. Pascoe flew to Moose River with Phillips and was invaluable there. When the break came he drove out with the pictures for a daylight take-off. Jim Kingsbury did a great job as contact man in Halifax. He cleared all messages and handled his aeroplanes like a wing commander.

The gods were with us, the weather played fair and there was neither miscarriage nor mishap, for which we should all have sung the *Te Deum*.

On Thursday, the day following the rescue, Scadding was flown from Moose River to hospital in Halifax and on Friday Dr. Robertson was similarly transported. On Saturday it was announced that the latter's personal story of his experience underground, eagerly sought, had been given to the Canadian Red Cross for sale to the highest bidder, a generous and astute move. It was bought by *The Star*, which in addition acted as broker for the Red Cross in syndicating it.

That, it would seem, should complete this record of a tense news week. It does not. I must include a flash of one of the grandest, maddest coups I have ever known a newspaperman make. It was made by Fred R. Davis, a staff photographer of *The Toronto Star*.

I had worked with him for years and knew him as the keenest and fastest of news photographers, full of resource and guile, joking, devil-may-care, without a peer at the wheel of an automobile, a joyous comrade-in-arms when the going was hard. No man, especially one liable to fits of depression, could wish a finer partner than this flashing, laughing Davis who had become seriously famous as photographer of the Dionne quintuplets, of whom since their birth he, and he alone, had taken thousands of pictures which had been displayed in newspapers all over the world.

I thought I knew Fred's capacity for action but on Thursday evening, the day following the rescue, he wrote a special footnote to all the chapters that had gone before.

By this time the hamlet, hive for days of such intensive activity, had sunk back

into its ancient quietude. Only Dr. Robertson lying in a room of the mine office, his wife, Dr. W. E. Gallie of Toronto, and a nurse, and a few very tired newspapermen remained. During the late afternoon, in an attempt to forget newspapers and mine disasters, Gregory Clark, Fred Davis, Joe Cornwall, our driver, and I had gone through the motions of fishing for trout in the Moose River, without getting a bite. Shortly after nightfall we went for supper to the Wayside Inn. It was shepherd's pie. Gregory and I, none too lively, nibbled sparingly and spoke little. Fred was in a fey mood, his eyes dancing. Soon it became evident he was up to something. He left the table two or three times; he flashed around, whispering to this man, whispering to that, natives. It was all very mysterious.

Finally it came out. It was all arranged. He was going down the rescue shaft! He was going down to secure photographs of the hole which the miners had cut and of the place where the three men had been held prisoner by the cave-in. He had sought permission to enter while the work was going on and had been refused. He was going down now without permission.

We did not try to argue with him. This was his show and his alone. He knew the risk—but it would be a great beat. We silently envied him his nerve.

But the mouth of the hole had been boarded up to keep people out and a watchman was guarding the mine.

“Never mind that,” said Fred, “I’m going down, and let anyone stop me.” He was determined, keyed, exalted. We could only watch him with a kind of awe. He was magnificent but mad, in such a mood as men have stormed redoubts.

It was decided that I should go with him to the mine, to stay while he was down, to raise the alarm if alarm became necessary, to write about his feat as I am writing now.

It was nearly nine o'clock and a cool, clear night, with stars and a curl of new moon. We drove along the quiet village. Calling at a house, Fred picked up George Purdy, a middle-aged miner who had agreed, though he had not been down before, to enter the shaft with him.

Fred went into the general store, bought fresh batteries for their flashlights and five cigars. One of the cigars he puffed defiantly. There was no chance to secure overalls; he wore his soft hat, a sweater, trousers, ordinary shoes. He had his camera with its flashlight attachment and reflector. In a haversack he carried loaded plate holders and flashlight bulbs.

He was much too tense to talk and I said nothing as these preparations were quickly made; I knew that I could not think of attempting what he was about to do: go down that rat hole alone, except for a miner, at night. While the rescuers had

been nibbling their way along it had been strung at intervals with electric lights. Now it was Stygian dark. The idea of night in the deserted danger shaft made me cringe.

“Listen,” he said, “if anything happens, if something slips and I’m cut off down there—the ‘death’ shaft hasn’t far to go and that larger hole they were drilling is nearly through. Get them to rush it, shoot me down some food and I’ll just sit easy till I’m rescued.”

That was not melodrama. That is what he meant.

“Sure,” I said, “I’ll do that.”

“Come on, George,” he cried, “let’s get it done.”

We left the car at the end of the muddy lane leading through a patch of bush to the mine and, for we dared not use flashlights, walked warily, lest we fall into one of the many holes, to the mouth of the shaft through which the miners had clawed their way and through which twenty hours ago the rescued men had come. There was no sign of a watchman. Search for a lever, a quick ripping, and three boards were pried off the boxed mouth of the pit. There were no final words. Davis and the miner, their flashlights showing for a brief moment, simply disappeared below. Another moment, and sound of them ceased. It was chill, almost freezing, and deathly quiet except for the chirruping of frogs and in the distance the murmur of the Moose River. What a contrast to the night before, and the nights before that! Joe Cornwall, the driver, had come along to keep me company. We squatted in the shelter of a bush. I was all nerves, waiting, thinking of Davis worming his way down that nightmare hole. “The crazy coot,” I thought, “going down. A fine stew we’ll all be in if anything happens.” My ears strained for earth movement but there was no sound. I tried to read my watch. The light of the stars was not good enough. Joe made out his. “They’re down just ten minutes,” he said. “I wish they were up,” I said.

Ten minutes more passed—we had figured the trip and the shooting of pictures below would take about half an hour. Another two minutes—and then they were up, in twenty-two minutes. It did not seem possible. A sudden, welcome glimmer of light showed at the mouth of the shaft—a moment later Davis staggered forth and threw himself on the ground. He was plastered with mud, wet with sweat, exhausted, trembling. He fought for breath.

“I would not,” he gasped, “go down that dammed hole again for a million dollars.”

“It was bad?”

“It was terrible. If I had known, I would not have gone.”

“Did you get right down?”

“Right down!”

“Did you get pictures?”

“Five down where the men were and two of the shaft coming up.”

“Great work! Come on, let’s get back so you can change.”

“First,” said Fred, “put those planks back.”

We restored them, got in the car and drove to the house where we had rooms. If Fred had got pictures—there was the danger that under the circumstances that the plates might be blank or fogged—they were unique; no one could duplicate them, no one would ever again penetrate that hole. Neither of us knew then that in speaking of it that day in Halifax Hon. Michael Dwyer had said, “I am absolutely satisfied that to-day we could not have gotten into it as the narrow opening of the tomb of the two men sagged six inches after they were taken out. By the end of the week the whole structure of the mine will be completely crushed in.”

Such was the place down which Davis had gone to win pictures that would live a day on a newspaper page, risking his life. It was an exploit of cool, tempered daring, conceived and executed of his own will, which deserves to rank among news men as a classic. Whether he should have done it is not the question. He did it, and won.

Back in our room in the village, Fred told of his descent into Avernus. Scrambling down, he had had little time to think. Landing at the 141-foot level, he was just getting ready to flash his first picture in the dark cavern, when suddenly came a terrifying roar. Tons of rock had shifted somewhere above. Stones dropped in a nearby hole.

“Boy, oh boy, I was scared,” he said, “and I don’t mean maybe. Right there and then I nearly made a dive for the exit. But old George here said, ‘Steady now! Just take your time and get your pictures.’ That stiffened me a bit, but I didn’t linger. I didn’t see much and I wasn’t poking around. I just stood where I was and shot in different directions. Altogether I spoiled only two plates. And that wasn’t bad, if you’re asking me.”

Nowhere in the shaft, he said, was there a place where a man might stretch. In one place the hole was so small for a distance of possibly ten feet that he had had to take the flashlight reflector off the camera to get it through and had had to crawl on his belly. Thus had the passage squeezed in since the night before.

It was over and we were all exuberant. “Why,” I demanded sarcastically, “did you take only five shots of the prison drift and two of the tunnel? Run out of plates?”

“Boy!” Fred shouted, “I wasn’t waiting to take any more, and you can print that in capitals.”

Just then Purdy, the miner, took occasion to interject, apropos of nothing: “Daytime’s the best time to go down a mine.”

“Why?”

“Because,” he answered solemnly, “it’s at night things happen in a mine.”

Fred made a sound as if he were strangling. When speech returned he said, “Why in hell didn’t you tell me that before we went down?”

“There was no good scaring you, I thought,” said George. “And sometimes at night nothing much happens.”

That was the note on which we called it a day and wrote a slightly rakish “30” to the whole Moose River story. It was well ended.

When the hardly-won photographs reached Toronto the plates were most carefully developed, with the Managing Editor himself supervising. Only two were duds. Four of the prison level and one of the shaft gave fine detail.

They were published without explanation as to how they had been obtained. Interest in the whole affair remained tense. It was felt that to play up Davis’ post-rescue foray would draw a torrent of impassioned criticism from people, not yet recovered from the flood of emotion evoked by the affair, who would see red at the thought that he might have been trapped—to start the agony all over again!

Some of us felt it was rather a pity he had not been, safely; to have witnessed the effort *The Star* would have organized to get him out! That would have been a story.



## ERRATA

The following corrections have been made to this edition's text to correct printing errors.

FROM	TO	PAGE
and a veritable memagerie =>	and a veritable menagerie	<a href="#">20</a>
government under Demoracy =>	government under Democracy	<a href="#">33</a>
not to quizz =>	not to quiz	<a href="#">63</a>
said "Good Morning" =>	said, "Good Morning"	<a href="#">63</a>
he quickly said =>	he quickly said,	<a href="#">63</a>
the trailing newsmen =>	the trailing news men	<a href="#">64</a>
'I bet you its good.' =>	'I bet you it's good.'	<a href="#">80</a>
One fears dilillusionment =>	One fears disillusionment	<a href="#">93</a>
on forest waters and skies =>	on forest waters and skis	<a href="#">104</a>
gossamer cotillions =>	gossamer cotillions	<a href="#">107</a>
but wait soberly, meagrely =>	but wait soberly, meagerly	<a href="#">113</a>
story about the wilds in =>	story about the wilds is	<a href="#">158</a>
snapped up man-made island =>	snapped up man-made islands	<a href="#">171</a>
total of \$33,0734,350 =>	total of \$33,000,000+	<a href="#">171</a>
Tens of thousands men =>	Tens of thousands of men	<a href="#">176</a>
in navel uniform =>	in naval uniform	<a href="#">204</a>
Gravity rested on him is if =>	Gravity rested on him as if	<a href="#">216</a>
news reel services =>	news-reel services	<a href="#">218</a>
"and I'll—— =>	"and I'll——"	<a href="#">232</a>
Undertaker's establishments =>	Undertakers' establishments	<a href="#">240</a>
Mr. Brigham met our gage =>	Mr. Brigham met our gaze	<a href="#">243</a>
three or four times a clay =>	three or four times a day	<a href="#">261</a>
filled with crippled =>	filled with crippled	<a href="#">277</a>
doctors, nurses, <i>et al</i> =>	doctors, nurses, <i>et al.</i>	<a href="#">279</a>
it was anounced =>	it was announced	<a href="#">333</a>
In the afternoon work came =>	In the afternoon word came	<a href="#">347</a>
impassioned criticisim =>	impassioned criticism	<a href="#">359</a>

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected and an Errata sheet is provided to account for each correction.

Inconsistencies in punctuation have been maintained.

Illustrations have been moved to facilitate page layout.

A cover was created for this Ebook.

[The end of *Variety Show* by Frederick Griffin]