

A SENSE  
OF  
URGENCY

BURTON

*W. Burton*

*Clarke  
Burton*

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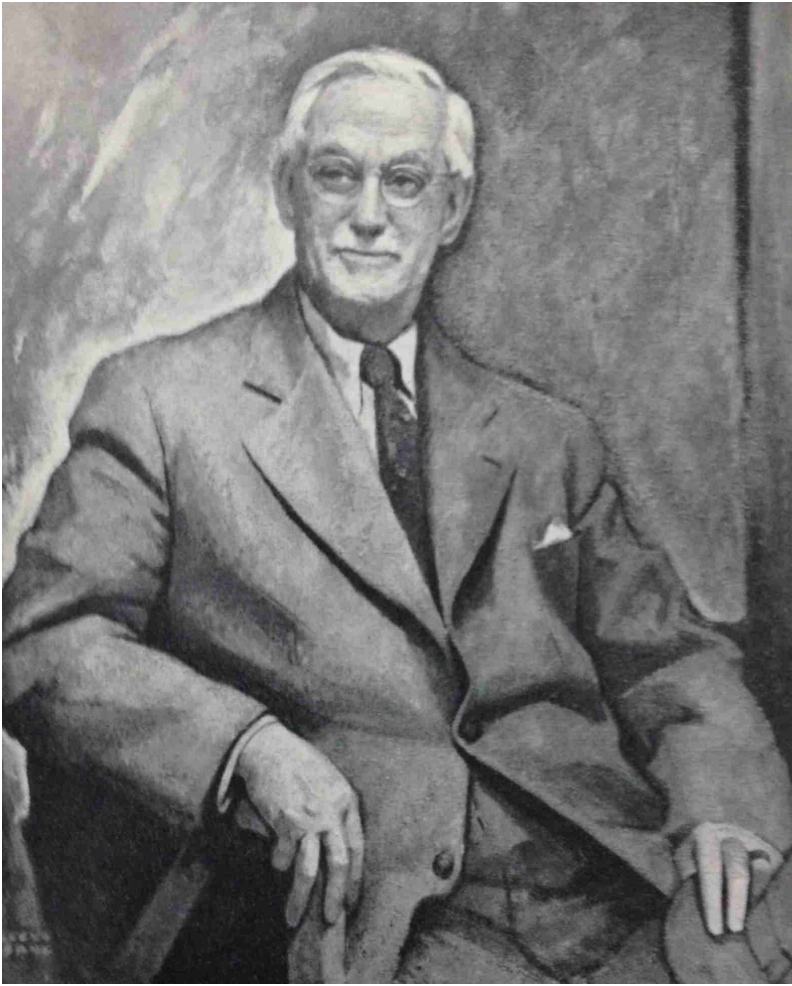
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A SENSE OF URGENCY  
Memoirs of a Canadian Merchant



*From a portrait by* CLEEVE HORNE  
CHARLES LUTHER BURTON

# A SENSE OF URGENCY

*Memoirs of a Canadian Merchant*

C. L. BURTON

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are scores of my friends who have made this work possible but it remained for Mr. George H. Baker, for many years responsible for Simpson's publicity, and Mr. Greg Clark, to connive together to convince me that some recollections I had related to them at various times might, if increased in variety, be of interest to the public.

Mr. Clark was especially insistent that the period of which I write is not well represented by reference works in the libraries of today; he was most persistent in prodding me into a continued effort, until the record was complete.

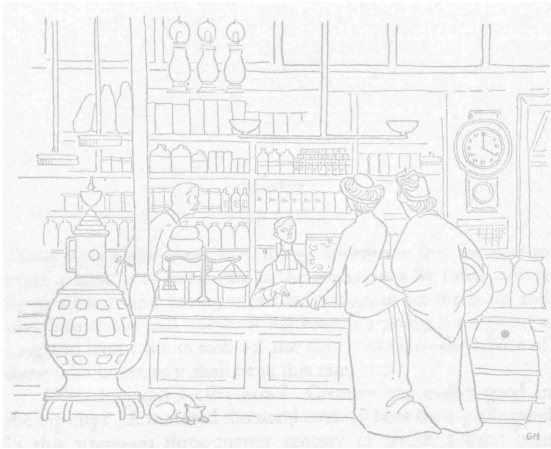
My thanks are due to both of these men for their idea and to Mr. Baker for his assistance in compiling the index to the book. My thanks are also due, in large measure, to my faithful and loyal secretary, Miss Grace M. Hambly, who took endless pains to type my many vagrant thoughts.

To them all, my most cordial thanks.

C.L.B.

TO MY WIFE  
ELLEN MAUDE LEARY

Whose loyal affection and constancy  
and whose motherly devotion have  
meant so much to our home and our  
children; who has been from earliest  
days the sharer of my ambitions and  
plans, this book is affectionately  
dedicated.



## PART ONE

# CHAPTER I

## THE LURE

Those who know about such things inform me that the way to begin a book is to cast a lure to the reader, as a fly fisher casts a fly to a trout; and having raised the victim, to set the hook and play him to the end. Since it has been my policy throughout a long and happy life to seek—if not always to take—the advice of those who know, so it shall be in this case.

What lure can I offer now? Country boy makes good in the big city? A hundred thousand country boys have made good in this strenuous three-quarter century in which I have been privileged to live.

Should I, perhaps, offer to young men in the morning of their lives a book filled with the recipes for profit that have best served me and my numberless fellow travellers through this bright flowering of Canada's nationhood?

Big names? Shall I sprinkle my book full of anecdotes of the great and near-great that I have encountered? Or should I be what I am, a merchant, and invite the reader behind the scenes of a great department store; tell how we buy, and store, and sell; how we gather, from the four corners of the world, all these mountains of merchandise under one workaday roof: and then make such haste to be rid of it.

Frankly, I suspect that I have cast myself a lure, and taken it. Near the middle of my seventies, I find myself kicked upstairs to the chairmanship of the board of the company that has consumed my energies for forty years. Yet I discover myself with some energy, good health, and a sound recollection, crowded with a good deal of joy, and not a little sense of gratitude to God and to my fellow man for the share I have been afforded in the bountiful years of a young country's enormous expansion, material, social, political and spiritual.

It has been an era of immense national activity. Few of my contemporaries have had the time—I never supposed that I would find the time—to sit down and make a personal record of what happened in those abundant years. It is a period no doubt generously documented in year books, blue books, factual records of every kind. But our library shelves contain pitifully few intimate accounts of that period, from 1880 to 1950, in most of which to be a Canadian was, or should have been, a sheer delight.

Our novelists, poets, artists have not been greatly encouraged during this time. Maybe it is presumption on my part to suppose that, taking time out from my fishing and such other amusements as a chairman of the board can find, I may give to the novelists of the future some of the homelier material they will require to fill in the broad outlines of the picture. We shall see.

My recollections, of necessity, will centre largely in Toronto, though throughout the really formative years of my life I had little opportunity to acquaint myself with this city which was my home. I shall have to take you far afield in this book: across the West in the great boom days of the century's beginning. You will ride with me and my eight trunks in a wagon across the gumbo and the sloughs of Saskatchewan; and doubtless I shall read you a little Dickens from the wagon box. You will have to hold your breath before the majesty of the Kaiser and King Alphonso XIII of Spain, as they ride amid the lofty banners of Berlin, and you and I watching from a window, all unaware of the welter of two world wars which this pomp and circumstance presaged for shrewder minds than ours. For we were young buyers, remember, en route to the house industries in the Thuringian Forest of Germany to buy dolls and toys.

We shall be in Britain often, puzzling out in some dismay the wilful ways of the Old Country in business dealings; in Germany, France and Italy, both before and after the two wars.

Big names will crop up all through our tale. I have had my moments, many of them bizarre. One Prime Minister will offer me a portfolio in his cabinet, and another, to whom I went in righteous anger—that was R. B. Bennett who became a lord—calmed me with complete agreement, and inveigled me into telling him, at length, the story of my life. I am a loquacious man. Yet in these memories will be recorded the brief six words I had, upon what doubtless was the crisis of my business life, for Sir Joseph Flavelle. His late Majesty the King will be here, too, gravely observing me as I, dressed in the rented finery of a Levee uniform, make my bow to him in all propriety in the Court of St. James, in doing which I almost lost one of my rented patent leather pumps.

As for hints and mottoes for young men with their lives ahead of them, there will be plenty. My own pet has been: "*Put all your eggs in one basket, and watch that basket!*" Yet circumstances beyond my control have thrust me into both community and national affairs, so that I found myself carrying several baskets at the one time, full of anybody's eggs but my own. None was broken, if I remember.

But above everything, I hope to recapture here some quality of the years of Canada's vital expansion, and some appreciation of the people, great and small, who shared it. It would be a pity if they were forgotten.

These personalities will be presented, therefore, in the order which my memory offers them to me, which, of necessity, begins at the beginning with my own family circle.

To enter this, on September 9, 1876, in the small village of Malvern, Ontario, now on the edge of the suburbs of Toronto, I was born. But it was above the general store, in the nearby village of Green River, that my infant breaths inhaled the ascending odours of merchandise, apples, coffee, butter in wooden tubs, bacon, wool, cotton, and tinned ware pendant from the ceiling.

It was in a village general store that my life really began.

## CHAPTER II

### THE STORE

A village, in 1876, was a vastly more important social and economic centre than it is today. Except in remote areas, a village nowadays has for its hub a service station. But in '76, villages grew around a mill, a blacksmith shop and a general store. They were basic and essential to the farm community surrounding them.

My father, George Burton, kept the general store in Green River. My mother, Eliza Barclay Burton, shared the job. My father was a sociable man, a shrewd and good-humoured trader. He was fond of a trotting horse, and would take a nip if it were not too ostentatiously offered. My mother was a whole-hearted housekeeper. She had not only her home, above and back of the general store, to keep; but it was only her sense of order and cleanliness that kept chaos from descending upon the store, as it always threatened to do in those old days when barter brought as much produce into the store as it took out. She did not approve of nips.

Four sons in a row—of whom I was the second—and then three daughters, came to bless her home and name. It was from her veins as well as from her tireless demonstration that I acquired the respect for housekeeping which stood me the greatest service in the long years of merchandising ahead of me. You cannot keep store unless you are a housekeeper. You cannot operate a great department store unless good housekeeping is in the forefront of your mind, all day, every day.

Our store was on the north side of the road in the village. We had the post office, of course. The post office was a vital feature of general stores in those days, serving to attract the whole community for miles around. The post office made the general store a mecca not merely for each family, but often for each member of the families within the district.

Our side of the village boasted all the industrial and commercial activity of the place, and was owned by P. R. Hoover, the miller. The opposite side of the road was farm land, on which Obadiah Ferrier operated the farm and a slaughter house part time, its odours doing a full-time job.

P. R. (Peter Reesor) Hoover was Dutch, as was his wife, and he owned all the north side of the road; we didn't have streets in villages. My father

owned his stock-in-trade, but Hoover owned the store; and thereby hangs the tale of our family's move to Toronto in 1888.

My father was the youngest of his family. From his love of fun, good company and fast driving horses, I imagine he must have been allowed as a child certain licence which ordinarily would be denied to older children. He was a good salesman, knew his business and worked hard at it within certain limitations. His first experience of merchandising was in a peddling wagon. That particular activity was not specially high in the social scale, but in those days a peddling wagon was an important link between the early settler and his fellowmen.

The peddling wagon was as familiar a part of the country scene as the delivery van of the big stores is in cities today. The itinerant merchant would drive to Toronto and stock his wagon with certain staples, smallwares, hardware, cloth in bolts and even clothing, such as overalls and work shirts. Being mobile, he could suit his small stock to the seasons. Then he would drive the long road back to his familiar territory, and visit the farms, particularly those at a distance from the villages, or those occupied by families tied by numerous children or other circumstances to their work. He was always welcome. Many a farm wife watched for his coming, with his travelling store, as the modern farm wife watches for the arrival of the resplendent mail order catalogue today. The mobile merchant was invited to dinner wherever it befell in his travels, and stopped the night with old friends along the way.

It was a wonderful way to learn merchandising, for the peddler could not buy rashly, because of his limited space; and in visiting the homes of every variety in his territory, from the well-established farmer down to the most precariously situated newcomer, he learned the public taste on the widest front.

In after years I met, from time to time, some of those early settlers who praised my father's work, his standard of merchandise and his dependability. These experiences formed the foundation for his successful career as a general merchant, which he became in 1878, two years after I was born.

He seized the opportunity presented by one of the slumps which characterized the period between the end of the American Civil War, in 1865, and the abounding prosperity engendered by the railroad-building era of the Canadian Pacific Railway. He disposed of his peddling wagon and bought the business at Green River, and I can only suppose he got it at a good price. Since he had done his travelling from farm to farm, as a young



man, through this very territory, and since the post office assured him of plenty of customer traffic, it was a busy store that my very earliest memories conjure up.

A country general store in the horse and buggy days served only a few square miles of territory. Most of the trade was by barter. The postmastership carried with it a sort of guarantee of traffic and trade. The merchant had to keep posted on the requirements of the customers, ensure that his suppliers' accounts were paid up and his credit clear, so that he could always buy the needed supplies.

Heavy commodities like salt, sugar, tea and other staple groceries, nails and hardware, were shipped in by freight to the nearest railroad station, Markham village; but most dry goods and fancy groceries were personally selected on trips to the city and brought home in the light wagon drawn by a good team of drivers.

A country general store could not put on "style". The two show windows, one on each side of the door, were seasonally full of "cow's breakfasts", as the universal farm straw hat was called, work gloves, seeds, lanterns, work boots. The post office and the grocery were on the left, as the customer entered; but immediately inside the door was the ubiquitous rack of whips. The Burton boys learned to their sorrow not to come in through the store if they had been, as was often the case, in any mischief—that is, if my father were in the store.

Green River store had a dry goods side too, but aside from remembering vaguely such words as winceys, ticking, drill, moleskin, woollens, blankets and linens, all of which were carried in stock in limited supply, my memory does not stir.

My father would often buy whole pieces of suiting woollens, which meant that for the next few years all the Burton children were dressed alike. As there was no such thing in country stores of those days as ready-made boys' clothing, my mother, with the assistance of a very inferior old Howe sewing machine, and what aid she could get from domestic help and village seamstresses, was accustomed to cutting out and finishing the suits and overcoats which we wore. Four boys of different sizes had to wear suits of the same material and generally of the same weave, colour and cut.

Sometimes my mother would have to leave her work, even meals or the wash tub, to wait on women customers whose needs were too intimate and delicate to discuss with or to expose to masculine minds. She was too busily occupied with her growing family and household duties ever to be much use

as a saleswoman, and I know these diffident women would have been better served by the men in the store, all of whom were quite familiar with all the facts of life.

On the grocery side, tea was not packaged but came in chests from China, Japan and Assam. My father had a reputation for blending tea—Oolong, Young Hyson, and other famous Chinese teas. Many drank green tea; Japan Gunpowder was a favourite. The present-day demand for packaged, advertised brands of India black tea was either unknown or in its infancy. After we moved to the city and I had been a few years at work, I remember P. C. Larkin's Yonge Street shop, in which I suppose Salada was first packaged, with its window displaying a number of ebony elephants from India. These elephants were evidence that Larkin knew all about India; or at least about India tea.

Sugar, flour, salt, pork and oatmeal came in barrels, and it took considerable slugging by able-bodied men to handle and place these "heavy" grocery items. The great trouble with oatmeal was the hulls of the oats which had to be got rid of. Tillson's of Tilsonburg was the first to "kiln dry" his oats, and thus get rid of the unpleasant hulls. However, hulls or no hulls, oatmeal was the universal Canadian breakfast.

Barter was the normal, everyday method of doing business. Farmers had little or no cash. Butter and eggs, hides and wool were brought into the store when purchases had to be made or accounts brought up to date. Cash transactions were the exception rather than the rule, because part of the function of the country storekeeper, as recently as my childhood, was to serve as broker for a considerable range of farm products that he could handle, store and get rid of to buyers who regularly came through the country collecting these goods from the general stores. In some cases, the store keeper would have to transport the produce he took in, in barter, to the wholesalers in city and town, or else handle the shipment of it by rail. My father, on his routine trips by light wagon and team to Toronto, to buy his own stock for the store, would generally take a load of butter, eggs, hides, wool and other produce, which he would first have to dispose of, on his own behalf, in a process, you might say, of double-barter.

Compared, therefore, with the store keeper of today, who conducts a fairly simple cash or credit business, the country merchant of the seventies and eighties had a highly complex enterprise on his hands. He was a broker, middleman, agent, as well as merchant in the present sense of the word. He was integrated into the community he served to a far greater extent than is

the case today. He had to know the price not merely of the goods on his shelves, but the price of the bartered produce he took in exchange.

It was a complex enterprise in more respects than in prices. My father and mother had a mental catalogue of those farmers whose butter and eggs were above suspicion. While the majority of the farmers were wholly dependable, and had as much pride in their produce as my parents had in their store, none the less butter-tryers would sometimes reveal foreign substances, or badly-churned sections in the tubs, firkins, crocks and other containers of butter brought into the store. A butter-tryer was a metal tube that was inserted into the contents of the tub, bringing out a section of the contents for inspection, as a miner's drill, for example, brings forth the samples of the rock. After inspection, the sample was re-inserted into the solid bulk of butter in the tub.

Many a night my mother spent "working over" inferior butter. My parents well knew those farmers whose produce did not come up to the mark. The tubs or crocks of butter brought in by those individuals were not sampled by a simple, straight-down thrust of the butter-tryer. Ah, no: the metal tryer would be thrust into the butter at different angles, so as to explore the contents thoroughly. If there were badly-churned sections, white streaks and other evidences of poorly-churned and poorly-worked butter, my mother would remove the contents into the large wooden butter-bowl, a sort of super salad bowl, and, with the butter-scoop, a small corrugated paddle-like wooden implement, would patiently proceed to "work" the butter, expelling the buttermilk, blending and salting and bringing the butter to a proper consistency.

Early spring saw bushel baskets of eggs up and down both sides of the store, which in my childish eyes was one of the longest aisles in the mercantile world. Every one had to candle eggs, father, mother, store and house help, and even members of the young family. As far as I can figure, I was eight years old when I first candled eggs. As I claim some ability in telling a bad egg from a good one, in more fields than hen fruit, I ascribe my powers to my early egg introduction to the art.

A fragrant memory of these childhood experiences involves the hides which the farmers would bring to the store, in the raw state, of course, and often smelling to high heaven. I can hardly imagine what the merchant of today would say or do in such a case: but one of my father's duties, as general store keeper, was to salt these hides and arrange to transport them to Toronto at the earliest opportunity. The spirit of business was that everything was grist to the mill. And the community had to be served.

By such familiar examples and experiences, I became a merchant. Some of my parents' customers were lost because they, offering inferior produce, would insist on top market prices. My parents were willing, as were most country merchants of their day, to go a reasonable distance in making good the deficiencies of some of their customers. But there were others whose produce could not be accepted, and they traded elsewhere. I mention these incidents as illustrating the fact that the human element entered very largely into merchandising in practically all its aspects. In these days of standardization, it is a far cry back to those times in which the customer had no way of knowing what he was getting.

My father had the reputation of being a good provider, and my mother and her growing family were on this account somewhat envied. However, living was actually on a frugal scale. Sometimes, in a burst of generosity, he would bring home from his buying trips to Toronto a new fur coat. Persian lamb was the favoured fur. My mother had a special set of table silver, and some rather nice hollow ware. She usually had a "good" set of dishes. There were other items of household adornment; nothing, of course, in the order of the "gadget" or "labour saving" device. None of these possessions was exempt from being sold, if a cash customer came along.

I remember my mother showing signs of a furtive tear when on one occasion she had to lay out her prized "E.P." ware, only to have it seized and sold by my father to a customer whose need might evaporate unless the sales opportunity were grabbed by the forelock.

It was sometimes two or three years before the prized silver was replaced. This shows how fickle the intentions of the human male can really be. But these episodes, painful for my mother, were soon forgotten in her constant family duties. My father, to do that volatile merchant and husband foil credit, eventually replaced most of the items sold with something better.

In those days "E.P." ware with English hall marking was much prized. The forks and spoons were at least twice the weight of the modern mass-produced silverware. The Sheffield goods lasted a lifetime. Sterling was not plentiful, although many an "antique" with hall markings has turned up from the very surroundings to which I refer. I remember with what inordinate pride my Grandma Barclay, when "company" was coming, would trot out and preside over her highly prized solid silver Queen Anne chased tea service. There was nothing around the country like it. I suspect those evidences of pride sometimes evinced by her descendants is of the same kidney as my grandmother's pride in her tea set; especially the tea pot.

Every night was a farmers' shopping time—closing time was when the last customer's wants were met. Saturday night, of course, was an "off" night, especially for the checker player. My father was considered a good player, though not by the "book".

Saturday night found customers crowded in the store, and several games proceeding at the same time. Spittoons, of course, were necessary; but generally they were from one to three inches from where they should have been. Many, however, there were among the "black strap" addicts who claimed they could spit within an inch of their aim.

It was part of my mother's religion that cleanliness was next to godliness; so at eleven-thirty p.m. Saturday, our store and domestic help being out or asleep, and as a notice to all that it was time they got out, my mother would bring her pail of water and her soap; and making first one group and then another move, would proceed to get down on her knees, not in any form of supplication to powers above, but to scrub the wood floor of the store, especially around the base burner coal stove, about which the checker players clustered. During her scrubbing, my mother apostrophized the assembled players, directing them from that moment to use the spittoon, or not spit. Mother insisted that Sunday morning, when her young tribe marched out to Sunday School, the premises they left should be clean as she expected all in the household to be both in body and mind.

Every community has its "daft" body, and Green River had at least one. Sanford Doten grew to man's estate without much mental capacity to burden him. He, however, had one of the most luxurious growths of beard you can imagine. No need for him to wear collar or tie, and no one knew how long he wore the same shirt.

Sanford, however, was a chewer of tobacco, and invariably came along to watch the players on Saturday night. One such night, after my mother had cleaned the place up, Sanford, who had no idea either of distance or direction, was lectured by my mother not on any account to mess up the floor. In the innocence of his kind, Sanford let go and splashed the chaste white floor. My mother caught him in the act, and offered her opinion of him. The daft body could only say he did the best he could.

The beards, the shrewd, the kindly eyes, the daft body, the checker players crowded around the stove, the shadowy lamplit store with its stacked shelves, its indescribable blend of aromas, its murmurs, chatter, its comings and goings of a Saturday night—this was my country in little, on the eve of its great increase, and the morning of my life.

## CHAPTER III

### THE VILLAGE

From villages like Green River came a large part of the generation that seized Canada's opportunity when it offered. They moved into and populated the cities, went West to town and farm, invading industry, commerce and agriculture. We must not forget the Old Country people, the Americans and many European nationalities who swarmed by the hundreds of thousands into Canada at the turn of the century, after the great era of railroad building had opened up the Dominion, not merely in the West but throughout the older provinces, setting up, as it were, the skeleton steel structure of our economy as a nation. But the Green Rivers of Ontario and the Maritimes were busy breeding and outfitting a generation equal to the occasion as well. My family and our neighbours were representative examples of that generation, and from my boyhood memories I should like to grasp some fragments that have to do with school, with church, with the way the hours and the days were used in the villages of the seventies and eighties.

There were few settlements in Upper Canada earlier than 1817, the year my maternal great-grandparents came from Cupar-Fife and settled on the 7th concession, Pickering, on what was called the Brock Road. Here the new Barclay family from Scotland took up land in the midst of the bush, built themselves a log house in which they lived for over forty years before circumstances permitted the erection of a large Georgian house of clear white pine with a verandah on the front and continuing around the south end. The house was large, and still stands. It is occupied by the fourth generation of Barclays. As far as I have ever heard, no ill repute ever tarnished the good name of my grandfather and his parents. The whole atmosphere of their lives was one of wholesome comfort and family happiness. This happiness was tempered by my grandmother's disposition to require work to be finished up properly, whether it was the routine labour of my grandfather on the farm, in the bush, or in the barns and outbuildings; or her own household duties, or those assigned to her children—and, if any were around, the writer for one, her grandchildren.

My mother was the eldest of her generation and exemplified in full measure the sterling qualities of those brave early settlers. Industrious, honourable and good hearted, fair and good to look upon, my mother was

one in a thousand. Her name was Eliza. George Burton, the young peddler who came, in his rounds, to the Barclay home, had the good fortune to carry her off as his bride.

This eldest Barclay girl was, I believe, born in the old original log house; but her three sisters and two brothers were born in the big new house.

How this fine new pine house came to be built is a story that might be paralleled in every settled township of the country at that time. War, as I shall have occasion to repeat in chapters far beyond this, is a bountiful jade. The Crimean War, 1853-56 and the American Civil War, 1861-65, poured riches into Canada. Wheat went to \$2.00 a bushel. The prices of most other produce, including timber, rose to fantastic heights. All over Eastern Canada, you can see to this day the fine old farm houses, the old-fashioned mansions in villages, which owe their origin to this period of sudden wealth in what was still, in some measure, a pioneering land. So far as money was concerned, Canada had until then been poor. The older members of many of the families solidly settled in Canada, though living still in rather primitive log or frame houses, could vividly remember the more gracious homes of the Old Country.

Now when money poured into Canada, long-nurtured dreams were realized. Fine farm houses of brick or frame, decorative, spacious, with gardens and ornamental drives, sprang up all over the land. You will see them yet, though many of them are fallen into decay. Compared, however, to the modern farmhouse, they have a certain old dignity. It was war that built them.

For the first time, the Barclays had some cash—several hundred dollars!—and Ever Green Villa was built and gardened. Such a house would cost \$30,000 or more today. The farm's own white pine, clear white pine, was the chief material of the new home. White pine, at that time, was currency. It was bartered, stick by stick, for all sorts of needs. The day had not yet come when the railroads would facilitate the cutting and removal of all the white pine that stood in the woodlots of the farms throughout the land. The pine was part of every farm's wealth, and stood there as ready cash.

From the Barclay's own pine, the house was built. The actual building was done by the family and the neighbours. The only cash laid out was for masonry, brick chimneys and plastering. The total of cash spent was \$800.

Round about Green River, many such prosperous homes were established by the time I took my first view of life. And they were part of the community Green River served with its mill, its forge and its store.

Family names were simple, and often singular. For instance my grandfather was Eli, his wife Maria. My scientist brother was named Eli Franklin Burton, after his grandfather Barclay.

The Barclay house was an open house, and neighbours were neighbourly. The horse-drawn buggy was a leisurely vehicle, and nearly everyone who passed by drove in for a visit or to see my grandmother's famous garden. As a child I have seen as many as thirty, all unexpected guests, drive in for a cup of tea and an armful of flowers. Those were the days when nearly every family was a large family, though practically every family had its record marred by the death in infancy of one or more children. The youngest of my mother's brothers was only a few years older than my older brother. He was Charles Augustus Barclay, a great chum and adviser when I spent my summers on the Barclay farm. He inherited the property; and my Aunt Carrie, his widow, lives comfortably in her own cottage on the 7th concession front of the farm.

My father, being the youngest of his family, had little he could tell us of his family background in the Old Country. It was commonly believed that his father and mother were both Burtons, born in London, England, but no relation to each other. It would appear my grandmother was a grade higher, socially, than my grandfather. However, the lady in question fell head over heels in love with her cockney fellow citizen; and they were married, promptly disowned, and sailed for Canada. Their offspring have thriven. In Malvern's old Primitive Methodist churchyard they lie side by side.

A few years ago, a lecturer named Clifton from England came to the University of Toronto as an exchange professor; and my brother, who was at the time Professor of Physics there, got to know him well. Clifton claimed to be of Burton descent. He had spent a lot of time working out a family tree and he claimed that Burtons were originally of French Huguenot stock settled in Bethnal Green with their weaver friends from France. The name was originally "Bertin", and this particular forebear was occupied serving the weavers with their supplies and personal needs. If there is any truth in this tale, it may suggest that it was natural for Burtons to be merchants, as has been and is the case in our family.

Whatever their background, no one in the close-knit community of farm and village had much difficulty finding a useful level. Mutual service was instinctive, though often canny. Social service was everyone's personal obligation, not to be disposed of by cash donations to social agencies.



The Hoovers took over the care of a whole tubercular family, with the exception of the father, and one other who had already died. The widow, well advanced in the disease, as were two daughters, soon died, leaving, however, the two lovely girls of about my age who miraculously survived the disease, and grew up to be our constant companions and school mates. I cannot guess what would have happened to me if I hadn't moved away to Toronto. I was badly smitten by the elder of the two.

The ravages of scarlet fever, diphtheria and typhoid, as well as tuberculosis, were appalling. Appendicitis, then called inflammation of the bowels, took its toll. I have recently read that the late King Edward was successfully operated on for appendicitis in 1901. Before that date, most people affected, like my older brother, died in a few days beyond human help. This older brother, Edgar David, when only three years old, climbed on to a high stool in the post office and fell on a sharp pen held wrong end up. He grew up blind in one eye, except for which he was as handsome as a child could be. He died at nineteen, in Toronto. Three days of suffering ended a promising career as a prospective minister of the gospel.

The village mill dam was a constant source of anxiety to the village parents, providing all the worry that modern parents experience with regard to the present-day hazards of traffic. What more enticing to childhood than a stretch of water dammed to provide power for the mills? When I was about eight years old, on a November day, my companions decided to have their last swim in the creek for the season. Obedient to our parents, we always chose shallow holes for our swims. We had stripped, and all were in the water but myself when along came Mr. Hoover, father of one of the boys, who, when he saw I hadn't taken the plunge, asked why I hadn't gone in. My answer was that it was too "darn" cold. That story followed me to manhood.

Most of the millers in saw and grist mills chewed tobacco. It was supposed to be necessary to protect them from sawdust and flour. In any case the appeal to the village children was irresistible. The boys of the village expected my brothers and me to show evidence of our friendship and sportsmanship by bringing out for their consumption samples of any newly opened biscuits or confectionery. Having in mind the romance of tobacco chewing, the boys thought it would be entirely fitting that we should bring out some tobacco that some experimenting might be done. On a fine Sunday evening, we commissioned my younger brother Frank to venture into the store and bring out the tobacco. We were all too young to be discriminating; and when Frank brought out two plugs of Macdonald's smoking tobacco, we

took turns biting it off and eating it. It was disappointing. It was too hard to bite off but we none the less managed each to get a share. Soon every village household had a sick boy or boys. Our distress was considered severe enough to justify suspended sentences.

Anyone who has not lived in a small settlement in which fire-wood is the universal fuel will hardly understand the menace of the fire hazard. “The chimney’s on fire” was a familiar cry, and the wonder was that the village was not wiped out on several occasions. Only the constant vigilance of the householders prevented it.

Another menace was the “tucked away” oily cloth used to clean up and polish. Well I remember an early hour alarm, my mother’s staccato call, the house full of smoke, and finally the discovery behind the kitchen sink of the offending charred cloths which burst into full flame when exposed to the air. Fortunately a pail of water doused the flames and we were saved.

The Burton well at the back of our store was considered the best in the village, and one of the well-observed rituals by all thirsty visitors (there was no liquor) was a resort to the tin cup hanging on the pump.

We had no church in Green River. The present Baptist church was built after our family moved away. However, we were not without religious training and study nor without the example of Christian people. Our village hall served as a meeting place for a Sunday School, where scripture passages had to be learned by heart and where we exercised our lungs and vocal chords in song.

One’s idea of religion in early life probably survives throughout later years. Those who in realms of higher learning try to explore the Supreme Being, and mend theology and tidy up the prophecies and the miracles by reading and research, merely muddy the pure clear water of our early faith. In the case of our forebears, faith was a simple matter.

The second and succeeding members of a family, if they arrive not too far apart, have an advantage over the oldest. As I was but two years younger than my older brother, I learned from him in pre-school days my A B C’s and some words and figures. Children were considered ready for school at five years. Prior to that age, children were expected to do nothing but grow and survive the numerous and familiar epidemics that beset the very young.

Green River school is still the same old rather high, one storey white building—a one room affair. The only separation of age or sex was in the small “specialist” houses at the back. All up to twenty years of age were

taught in the one room. Some actually learned. The seats and desks were built for average-sized children; so that when we were five year olds, our feet couldn't reach the floor, whereas the near adults had to straddle into the two aisles. This provided a great temptation to trip any one passing up or down, if the misdemeanour could be covered by feigned innocence.

My first two teachers came and went without making much of a dent in my memory, except the latter of the two, who, when he left, took with him the heart of the miller's daughter, Libby Hoover, and soon returned to claim her as his wife. This event was to prove a critical turning-point in the Burton fortunes. The bride was the best "catch" of the neighbourhood. I had a sort of special resentment against the man, because "Lib" was not only the big sister of my daily playmate, Frederick Wheaton Hoover, but like a sister-mother to me. Fred, the youngest of the Hoover family, insisted on having company, so even before I have any memory of the circumstances, his sister Lib would come across the driveway to our house, collect me, and the day's play between Fred and me was on.

As we grew to school age we were daily chums, made rifles of broom sticks, and fought all the imaginary Indians we could trail up and down the creek. In these days when the radio and the "funny" books and strips tease the present-day boy into buying Hopalong Cassidy or Roy Rogers and other outfits, one can look back upon the many skirmishes we won without benefit of special hats or shoes; barefoot and bareheaded, but with our trusty homemade wooden rifles, we laid all the Redskins low. Our imaginations made up ten times over for the commercialized things boys now must have before they can go out and fight Indians.

Donald Hankey in his *Student in Arms*, devoted a chapter to "The Beloved Captain". As I read it during the first war, I was thrown back to my early school years when we had "a beloved teacher", Sam Brown. His influence was immediately felt by every pupil. Those with imagination, he captivated; those of duller wit could hardly escape his inspiration.

Sam Brown was our hero; and everything he wanted us to do, we did. What a contrast was this one-room school, with its various classes, all small, to the big consolidated or city schoolroom where one teacher has to do her best to minister to classes of thirty-five to fifty. In our school Sam Brown would sit down beside us and see that each one individually was helped. No wonder we were ready for the entrance to high school before our twelfth birthday, as the majority was.

Our study of geography was none of your modern “physical geography”. Starting at home, we knew the counties and county towns of Ontario; the provinces and territories of Canada; the states of the United States and their capitals, and the order in which they appeared on the map. Then followed the countries of Europe, the territories of the Empire, the shires and counties of England and their capitals. It was a formidable exercise of memory.

Many years after, in my mid-manhood, younger people under other systems of teaching seemed amazed that I could run off these facts of geography. Especially were Americans impressed when they found a Canadian able to name the state geographical divisions and capitals which they themselves had not been required to learn.

Sam Brown’s interest in his pupils was constant and pervading. He helped us in our sports and recreation, took us on jaunts to the woods on Arbour Day when all worked for the school yard improvement. On one such day we planned for an all day job; had our lunch, picnic style, in the woods; and later, tired, hungry but happy we fell upon a big patch of wild leeks. The atmosphere in the various homes was redolent for twenty-four hours at least.

One of the highlights of Sam Brown’s popular activities was his employment of the new-fangled “high” bike. I suppose even oldtimers will barely recall the huge front and diminutive rear wheel of that extraordinary vehicle. Imagine the thrill of being taken home on the shoulders of the teacher, he perched high on his “high” bicycle. This beloved teacher later served as a minister of the gospel and pastor of a church in the Eastern Townships of the Province of Quebec.

School trustees in those former days served without remuneration, took their duties seriously, paid teachers the smallest possible wage, and often unwisely interfered with the discipline and conduct of the school. However, it was local self government in its flower, the kind of democratic process our fathers were willing to fight for, and which today we seem so ready to relinquish into the hands of paternalistic institutions of government.

Our village pride and joy were our Green River Brass Band and the Green River Football Team.

The cornet was the instrument most favoured by the younger members of the audience, and our admiration for Alph Hoover who played the cornet was always near the bursting point. The band played in the village, at picnics, strawberry festivals, and in all sorts of out of the way places up to twenty miles distant, and at competitions where the bands of the other communities performed. The band was decked out in “flossy” uniforms,

with plenty of red and gold braid trimming. It was equipped with a specially built band wagon painted with quantities of gold stripping with rear mounting steps and a semi-circular contraption to hold the big bass drum. The wagon was drawn by two spanking teams. Green River Band had no need for drum-majorettes. The sun by day or the moon by night were quite unnecessary. The band and its personnel and equipment attracted all, especially the fair sex, who swarmed like bees about the boys as they paraded and played. Alas, the radio and the motor car and the movies have cancelled out the old village band. The motor car has taken possession of the day, and its glaring headlights, the night.

The village band was not the only musical treat. Nearly every house in the country had its reed organ, and some of these were monuments to the ingenuity of the joiner's and cabinet maker's art. Only the old baroque buildings in the cities of Europe, built after the Renaissance, can compare, in their grotesque variations, with the case designs of the family organ.

Music teachers were itinerant, and came around to the various homes giving instructions on the organ. There were always one or two members of the family who could play, and the evening sing-song was the most popular activity, because not only could we benefit from the artistic ability of our musicians, but we could join, as stentoriously as we cared to, in the family or group singing. Today, to inspire any group of us to song, we must have a cheer leader or master of ceremonies.

Sunday nights, of course, were given over to the singing of hymns. While the practice, I suppose, is largely forgotten, those early experiences taught us to read music readily, and to learn hymns by heart, which children nowadays are seldom acquainted with.

In one of my early summer holidays, an effort was made to give me music lessons. I had an interesting old teacher, Ira Boyer. He was practically deaf, and his sight was none too good. My difficulty was that, with close cropped hair and bare legs, the flies used to take advantage of my hands being preoccupied to go to work on my head and legs. I studied one quarter; and then everybody concerned gave me up as a bad job. I was very pleased to be relieved of the drudgery of practice, especially as the streams and all outdoors were constantly calling.

The game of football was a great rural sport, because it took no more than a football and a boy to provide absorbing play. My younger brother Frank was always a fat, pudgy little fellow as a child, and he took to football like a duck to water. He won early distinction when later he went to the

University of Toronto, taking with him all sorts of scholarships. He was a Psi U and Naughty One—the first of these referring to his fraternity, the second to his year of graduation. He was called Bunty Burton because, when he started on the soccer team, he brought to bear the early practice and training he got at Green River, bunting the ball with his head whenever opportunity occurred. He used his head in more ways than one.

Later on, when I visited England yearly in the 1900's, on landing at Liverpool I always stayed the weekend to see a football game at the famous old Anfield.

How mild and unspectacular this life of the village and the township sounds when set down in print amid this age of almost frenzied entertainment, enjoyment and far-faring activity on the part of man, woman and child! Yet it seems to me, though I am incapable of communicating it, that I lived in that village, and in those days, a life as full and furious as it could be.

Life, if you have the bent for it, is a beautiful thing. It consists, I do believe, of having a sense of urgency.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CITY

When the school teacher who had carried away my beautiful Libby's heart returned to claim her hand, a wholly unexpected crisis developed for the Burton family. Mr. Hoover, the miller, decided to set his new son-in-law up in the general store business in Green River.

He owned the store, which my father had rented for eleven years and had built into a flourishing enterprise. It may be that in these days, a more considerate attitude might prevail in a situation such as that which involved Hoover and my father. But I am not sure. Much of the tooth and claw principle in business has been eliminated, partly because of the importance of public opinion and goodwill to business, and partly because of an increase in the understanding of the ethics of business, if not an improvement in the ethics themselves. At any rate, my father faced the crisis with complete cheerfulness. It was cold-blooded business, such as prevailed in the 1880's, and it never occurred to him that he was not being used as well as he should expect.

When Hoover, about a year after Libby's marriage, served notice that he required the premises for his son-in-law, he also intimated that he would not be able to purchase the stock-in-trade, as it was the intention to set the new man up in a smaller way of business than that which my father had conducted. I may record here that indeed it was a smaller way of business; so much so that, after a few years, it was bought out by one of my father's former clerks.

There was no other building in Green River suitable for a store.

It was my mother who decided, wisely, for my father and all of us, that instead of seeking a store in some other village, we should sell out and move to the city. At this very time, in towns and villages all over the province, the same decision was being taken by countless families and individuals without any compulsion such as affected the Burtons. Toronto was exercising a powerful attraction. The contrast not merely in earning opportunity but in certain standards of living between city and country, which were to increase vastly in the next thirty years, was already manifest. With four young boys on her hands, and three girls to follow, my mother felt that the loss of the store in Green River was a blessing in disguise. We should be able to realize

a comfortable little amount of capital from the sale of the stock-in-trade, which would serve to launch us in the city. The growing boys would have the opportunity to attend city schools and high schools. My older brother, for example, was at this time having to walk daily five miles each way to attend high school in Markham. Here, also, was I, about to try my entrance; and next term would be faced with the same journey.

I was eleven at the time, and if my memory holds true, not particularly enchanted by the prospect of leaving the country. Like the other members of the family, I had been to Toronto, accompanying my father on a buying trip. It held no special allure for me. But for my parents, it was a tremendous and exciting venture. Two things had to be done: the stock-in-trade liquidated, and a new store found in Toronto to support and house us.

The word that the Burtons were selling out spread immediately throughout the district. What then transpired is an interesting commentary on human nature. It is safe to say that my father had been popular and well-liked all through the neighbourhood. The store had been, for eleven years, something of a community centre. A spirit of friendly service and liberal dealing had characterized it, stemming, I suppose, from my father's apprenticeship in merchandising in the peddling wagon.

It was estimated that the stock-in-trade was worth around \$12,000 with an additional amount of \$3,300 in accounts receivable outstanding.

The sum realized, in the end, came to about \$8,000 all told. The first step was to announce and hold a sale, to be followed by an auction of the residue. The sale attracted farmers and villagers, as well as some merchants of neighbouring communities; and as is usual in such cases, bargains fell to those who had the cash. There was no barter.

It was in the collection of those outstanding accounts of \$3,300 that the Burtons found out about human nature. I suppose a certain amount of perverse community spirit entered into the matter, since the Burtons were quitting the community. Some of our customers paid up promptly. A few simply refused to pay, and these my father took to court. This proved in almost every case a very unwise course, because even when judgment was obtained, the debtor's assets were in the wife's name; thus to the amount involved were simply added the costs of the litigation.

The strangest cases were those who had been "good" accounts who took the stand that they had paid my father hundreds of dollars in past years, and they would be ding-busted if they would pay the amount now owing. It was a curious experience for the merchant who had enjoyed such happy relations



with his customers, especially those Saturday night sessions around the stove with the checker boards, winter and summer.

Out of the \$3,300 accounts outstanding, only \$1,000 was collected. However, with a total capital of \$8,000, which was a respectable sum in 1888, the family felt fairly secure in their descent upon Toronto. In the spring of that year, they made the big move, leaving me behind, at my grandmother's, where at a one-room "little red schoolhouse" near her farm, I was to toil through the final few months of my preparations to try the entrance examinations.

The family had bought, lock, stock and barrel, a small grocery store at the corner of Oxford Street and Augusta Avenue, a district about midway between the downtown section of Toronto and the then new suburban regions of Parkdale. My father was filled with determination not to be trapped again in rented premises, and this proved to be a sad mistake. More of his capital went into the premises than into stock-in-trade. In operating a small city grocery, he was on unfamiliar ground. We had about five years of strenuous experience, trying to make a go of this small store. In retrospect it seems to me this was not at all a bad atmosphere in which to bring up a boy through his teens.

My introduction to the city was delayed several months, until after the summer's end. In the new school near my grandmother's farm, there were two other candidates for the entrance examinations besides myself, and we received excellent coaching from a schoolma'am who, like teachers everywhere, was eager to produce winners for the entrance. It seemed a bigger day to me than any family move to Toronto when I went, with my two fellow-candidates, to the county town of Whitby to write our examinations at the collegiate. We three were all under twelve, and rather diminutive in size, I being the smallest. We had the distinction of being mentioned in the press. The *Whitby Chronicle* commented editorially on the questionable wisdom of allowing such young candidates to write the examinations, cluttering up the educational facilities and requiring special supervision and expense. But I passed my entrance; and about half a century later, I had the pleasure of meeting the publisher of the *Chronicle*, and taking issue with him on that editorial.

While living at my grandmother's at this time, I had one very important experience. In the recesses and shelves of the stone fireplace of the living room of the big pine house there were a number of relics of the candle-lit era now past: brass candle sticks complete with snuffers, ornaments, bowls, small implements, *objets d'art* such as my grandmother used to decorate the

big stone hearth and mantel. Among them was a pair of brass-rimmed spectacles with old-fashioned Scottish pebble lenses. I tried them on. A miracle sprang to life before me. I could see with incredible clarity. The texture of cloth, the print on the page, objects all about me stood out with unimagined brilliance and definition.

I brought them forth in triumph; but my grandmother forbade me the use of them. She said they would ruin my eyes. Surreptitiously, however, I did a little of my entrance studying with them. It was three years later that the discovery was made that I had been suffering from infancy with a very serious sight defect.

That summer, I stayed on the farm for the holidays, while my family in Toronto wrestled with the problem of their new store. When I finally moved to the city, in September, 1888, it was into a menage already settled. I was taken to Toronto Collegiate Institute, then the only high school in the city, and enrolled at the age of eleven.

Our new home, as in Green River, was in rear of, and above the store. I found it a very cramped existence, compared with the country. All about me, as far as I could see, were houses and more houses, stores without number, and of every variety. A spirit of practical purpose seemed to govern our every hour and our every act. The familiar pace of the country and the village was entirely gone. If we were sent anywhere, it was for some definite small purpose—to the hardware store for nails, and no time to be wasted. School had a new and mechanical feeling to it. When you stepped forth in the morning to go to school, you found the streets full of children all purposefully bound the same way. In the country, you wandered to school.

On my arrival in Toronto, I found my family already in the clutch of this new and rather forbidding spirit of the city. In short order, my mother had us associated with a church, and services morning and evening, with Sunday school in the afternoon, became another feature of that programme of ceaseless activity which characterized life in the new surroundings. Apparently in cities, people are not allowed time to live. They must be up and doing.

Our new store astonished me with its furious activity, which began first thing in the morning and continued throughout the day, well into the evening or night. Since the merchant lived on the premises, customers were supposed to be welcome at all hours. The Saturday night foregathering in the Green River store, with its checker games and its friendly loungers, had no counterpart in this small city grocery. Most city shoppers seemed to start out

on their weekend buying at nine o'clock at night and the last minute rush at eleven-thirty was a phenomenon. We all helped. My older brother had quit school to work full time in the new store, with its stable in rear. We had brought from our country establishment, only one horse, Old Nell, who drew our delivery wagon around the neighbourhood, and brought our supplies from the wholesalers downtown. We had also brought an Irish maid with us, from Green River. All hands took hold to stem the Saturday night tide of shoppers in the small and crowded corner grocery. To me it seemed a hive of commerce, but it was doomed to failure. For a man as ambitious and hearty as my father, it was always a strain to confine himself to the narrow limits of groceries alone, when he had dealt all his life in general merchandise. I had some understanding of the fact that a struggle was in progress at home. But I was having my own struggles, of their kind.

The Toronto Collegiate Institute was the only high school in Toronto at this time. Harbord and Parkdale collegiates were planned, or in process of building. My old alma mater later became Jarvis Collegiate.

When I enrolled in it, Toronto Collegiate Institute had certain characteristics that deserve recollection. Its principal was Alexander MacMurchy, M.A. He was not called head master. He desired to be addressed as the Rector. This naturally entitled him to be familiarly known to his students as "the Old Wreck". But old as he may have been, he was far from being a wreck, and had about him a doughty band of teachers. I think the most interesting feature of the Collegiate, by present-day standards, was its segregation of boys from girls. Mixed classes were out of the question. So thoroughly was this principle carried out that two sets of doors separated the boys' side of the school from the girls'. That is to say, when a master went from a boys' class over to a girls' class, he had to open the door out of the boys' side, and close it; then open the door into the so strictly-guarded precincts of the fair sex. What is more, it was most stringently commanded by the Rector that boy and girl students should not walk together within one half mile of Toronto Collegiate Institute.

For me, at the age of twelve, this was no hardship. It was a mile and a half from Augusta Avenue to the Collegiate on Jarvis Street. I used to go by way of College Street. The car line ran along College, and one-horse cars clattered busily east or west every few minutes. The driver of the one-man horse cars sat up front, naturally. It was the procedure for passengers, on boarding, to walk forward in the car and deposit their fares in the box beside the driver. This was most convenient for schoolboys. We hooked on behind, clinging to the back steps or to the outer fixtures of the slow-going horse

cars. Occasionally, the more irate type of driver would jump off and chase us. Now and then he might even call a policeman's attention to us, which necessitated, perhaps, detouring around a block or two. But for the most part, hooking of rides by schoolboys was part of the picture in the horse car days. There was less danger in it, actually, than in trying to hook a ride on one of those high, two-wheeled butcher's carts that raced spiritedly through Toronto's streets, contributing such an air of speed and dash to big city life.

The subjects presented at the Collegiate were mathematics, Latin, modern languages, literature, history and commercial forms. There were others, doubtless, which I have forgotten. But I rather like that contiguity of commercial forms with all the more high sounding humanities. Though I was destined to become familiar with commercial forms in all their mounting complexity as the years rolled by, I felt no premonitory attraction in them. In fact, there is no particular subject that stands out in recollection as having either any special appeal to me or having any bearing upon my future course. It would be comfortable to look back upon a boyhood distinguished in school, whether in scholarship or sport or social activities, of which there were practically none in the nineties. But my high school career is one of the least treasured of my memories. It was brief—only three years. It was sandwiched in between two periods of my life that were filled with far greater significance for me. And on top of that, my high school days were spent under an unsuspected disablement.

I have already mentioned the old brass-rimmed spectacles with the Scottish pebbled lenses I had found in my grandmother's fireplace, and how they had revealed to me an astonishingly clear and vivid world.

In my second year at the Collegiate, our form master named Grant, the only teacher who did not wear a university degree, and at the same time probably the most humane and best-loved of our masters, had me under sufficient kindly observation to note that I had some sort of defect of vision. This was particularly evident from my standing in algebra and other subjects that were taught principally by the use of the blackboard. I had never really seen the blackboard throughout my schooling. The farther I fell behind in my mathematics, the farther back I had to sit in the classes, as my marks declined.

It is a curious thing that neither my family nor any of my various teachers had detected this defect of vision. Nor was I the least conscious of it. I assumed I could see as well as my chums. In games, I could see the football. In the open fields and woods, I could see the birds, the sky, the flowers. How was I to know I was seeing them as in a glass, darkly? Mr.

Grant sent a note home to my busy parents, recommending that I go to an oculist. To the old General Hospital on Gerrard Street I went. There I was given the prescription which remained much the same degree of correction that I used until my seventy-fourth year.

It would be hard to convey the transformation of the universe which immediately ensued for me. It was sheer delight to behold the world around me in its true detail. The unconscious handicap removed, I discovered a new zest in my school work. My entire attitude to everything about me was quickened. I had never been fond of reading, which had been difficult if not painful. Now, in my early teens, the boundless universe of books was suddenly opened to me, and I developed a passion for reading that stays with me to this day. Within a few months, and before I had really caught my balance in the new freedom my glasses afforded, I was to quit school for keeps, at the age of fourteen.

In 1891, one of those recurring depressions hit Canada and lasted until 1893. I have spoken so frequently about the prosperity that pervaded the country in these years, it may come as a surprise to learn that we had depressions too. But, as a freight train suffers jolts and jerks in the process of getting under way, so did the economy of Canada suffer sundry dislocations during the period of its great expansion. It was a plunging economy. Between each successive phase of railroad building there would come a pause, as if for breath. Political disturbances of a large order played tricks with the smooth operation of trade and commerce. Throughout the eighties, there had been great prosperity due to the building of the C.P.R. across the West, the consequent arrival of tens of thousands of new immigrants, whose needs had to be supplied; and a vigorous lumbering enterprise was exploiting to the full the massive timber resources of the Ottawa and the Georgian Bay, as well as of Quebec and the Maritimes.

Old Sir John A's reign of thirty-eight years was coming to a melancholy end. His era of high tariffs and railroad monopolies had undoubtedly expanded Canada's industry and commerce. In 1891, the country was torn with dissension over Imperial preference and reciprocity in trade with the United States. It was to be nearly fifteen more years before Sir Clifford Sifton's immigration policy would solidly settle the West. In 1891, thousands of the newly arrived immigrants to the West were trekking across the border to the States; others were going home to Britain and Europe.

It was in 1891 that my father informed me, very practically, that the grocery store was not doing well enough to afford my fees at the Collegiate, and that I would have to go to work.

The news did not irk me in the least. It was the normal thing for boys to go to work as soon as they were big enough. Educational status did not play the part it does today in securing jobs for energetic youths. My standing in school was not such as to suggest that I would be improved by further study. Anyway, we had one scholar in the family already. My younger brother, Frank, took scholarships as easily as he breathed.

Besides, I had already been at work. In the summer holidays, I had a clerical job with a commission merchant, S. K. Moyer by name, handling fruit and vegetables on Colborne Street. What I had learned of commercial forms at the Collegiate was put to practical use in writing out account sales for each shipment of produce. With the aid of my glasses, my handwriting had improved to the point of legibility, and was shortly to become almost Spencerian.

In addition to this summer job, it had been my all year round practice to hurry home from school to share in whatever work was required of me around the store. Saturdays—especially in the evening and night rush—I was expected to take a full hand at waiting on customers and delivering. All this was the normal life of teenage boys in the early nineties. It was a working world.

So, at fourteen, I said good-bye to school, without so much as a parting kiss for it, and started to hunt for a job.



## PART TWO

## CHAPTER V

### TORONTO

The city in which I was about to “serve a term, as office boy in an attorney’s firm”, was already well advanced in that growth which has continued, unchecked by a series of national and world wide depressions, to this day.

A quick appreciation of Toronto’s place in the sun, in the years immediately preceding and following my first acquaintance with it, can be gathered from this population table:

1870	55,000
1880	77,000
1890	167,000
1900	199,000
1910	342,000
1920	513,000
1930	622,000
1940	648,000
1950	670,000

These figures are in round numbers. The huge leaps of population in the 1910 and 1920 censuses were occasioned by annexations of suburban areas, as well as by the actual growth of the city itself. The lag in the year subsequent to 1930 is due to the expansion of the city into a dozen or more great and populous suburbs that had not as yet amalgamated with the city.

Toronto’s population, then, at the time of my arrival in 1888, was in the process of leaping from 77,000 to 167,000; and it is encouraging to think of oneself as part of that increase, though in 1884, the suburbs of Brockton (High Park) and Riverdale, were annexed; in 1887, Rosedale, and what was called the Annex north of Bloor but not west of Avenue Road, were included. In 1888, Sunnyside, and the district north of Bloor Street and west of Bathurst, called Seaton Village, and in 1889, Parkdale, were added to the city’s rapidly increasing bulk. That region later known as the Annex, west of Avenue Road to Bathurst, did not enter the city until 1906, when North Rosedale also came in; and not until 1908 did East Toronto and Deer Park



join the city, with Balmy Beach and West Toronto succumbing at last in 1909.

In 1891, the city I went to work in bore little resemblance to the Toronto of even ten years later, let alone to the metropolis it is today. That very year, a thirty-year-old franchise for a street railway system expired. For one and a half million dollars and the assumption of a mortgage of \$600,000 the rising young city, whose working ranks I now joined, bought out the company that had been operating our transportation system. For that sum Toronto got:

8,069 miles of single track,  
90 two-horse closed cars,  
56 two-horse open cars,  
116 one-horse cars,  
99 horse-drawn buses,  
110 sleighs,  
1,372 horses, sound in wind and limb.

I imagine from that you will get as good an idea of my city as from anything else. In those areas where track was not laid, and where the horse-cars could not go, the horse-drawn buses served. In winter, the buses were sleighs.

In 1894, three years after I first went to work, the last horse-drawn car was withdrawn from public service. The city, in deference to a firm public determination against municipal ownership of the street railway, sold within five months of the purchase, a new franchise to William Mackenzie, for the same price as it had paid for it, on the understanding that the system would be electrified within three years. I vaguely recall a great scandal that surrounded this purchase, charges of corruption and bribery being examined by a judicial enquiry, and half a dozen city aldermen abruptly closed their public careers.

In 1891, the city hall was down at St. Lawrence Market, the new magnificent edifice not appearing on its present Bay and Queen street site until 1899. The city was moving its centre westward. Yonge Street was rapidly being transformed into the main thoroughfare of commerce. In 1877, in fact, the staff of Mr. Timothy Eaton's emporium had been increased to twenty persons, and as a sign of the trend of the times, a delivery service was instituted, consisting of a pony wagon. Mr. Eaton that same year had shaken convention by reducing store hours, closing at six p.m. instead of ten p.m. daily.

In 1882, a Scottish merchant named Robert Simpson, had opened up a fine new store just above the corner of Queen and Yonge. For me, as I hustled about my new chores in downtown Toronto, these and many other mercantile houses had a great fascination. How noble they were, compared to a country general store, or to a little grocery out on the western suburbs beyond Spadina, which was my home. But when you think of Eaton's and Simpson's, you must rather, at this stage, picture in your mind the sort of drygoods store you find today in small Canadian towns. They bore not the slightest resemblance to the giant city block stores of today. But in their time, they were big. Bigger than my dreams, for one thing.

While Toronto bore no physical resemblance to the city it became in a few years, there was a much more profound difference between that world and the world of today.

It was a world dominated, owned and operated by rugged individualists. Income taxes and taxes on business were not merely unheard of; they were undreamed of. What a man could make was unquestionably his. Wages were, as the saying was, "prevailing". Not a vestige of the social sentiment towards the less competent or talented sections of the community was either felt or expressed by the wealthy or the merely comfortable. Charity, of course, there was on every hand.

The charities were the incumbencies of the wealthy families. It was part of the dignity and office of wealth to support a charity. The older established families or family associations had what amounted to personal charitable institutions, which they supported and governed. Woe betide any upstart, in those days when \$100,000 constituted an adequate fortune, who trespassed or tried to trespass upon one of these essentially private charities.

When I say an adequate fortune of \$100,000 that is exactly what I mean. It had not been difficult, in the abundance of the seventies and eighties, for a shrewd and hardworking man, employing his boot-straps among other aids, to amass that amount of money. Immediately upon doing so, he stepped forth into the ranks of the local gentry. He would buy a fine home on Jarvis Street or Sherbourne Street, on Beverley, or in later years, St. George, and up into Rosedale's newly fashionable curvatures; and he would cultivate a beard. He would blossom forth in a square-rigged morning coat and top hat. And, of course, he would have a carriage and pair.

Toronto's greatness, in the years prior to the eighties, was based upon its function as a distributing centre. Therefore, the business world into which I stepped as a boy was one in which the wholesalers were the great men. They

were the nabobs of Toronto. They had the wealth, the power and the social authority. There were, of course, wealthy bankers, manufacturers, lawyers; but the circle of wealth and influence that governed Toronto in the closing quarter of the nineteenth century consisted chiefly of wholesale merchants: and they took some pains to keep that circle closed.

His wealth was the criterion of the wholesale merchant's authority. It is a little hard to convey how great that authority was. It was much more than merely social and financial. In these days, when what the public wants is the first and only criterion of business, and both manufacturers and merchants most sedulously govern themselves accordingly, it is difficult to appreciate the power of the wholesaler who ruled our world within the lifetime of men like me.

The wholesaler told the manufacturer what to make. The wholesaler told the merchant what to sell. He was the king pin of commerce. The public took what it was offered.

He was a whiskered autocrat, this wholesaler. Yet I have not the faintest recollection of any resentment of him or his authority, either on my part or on the part of any of my fellow citizens of Toronto in those interesting—and so suddenly to vanish—days. They were the last days, perhaps, of an authoritarian world. The churches, of all denominations, were immensely active and immensely important in the city's life. Christianity, in the eighties and nineties, did not yet concern itself with social service or any such extraneous interests. Each denomination devoted itself heartily to the presentation of its tenets, with considerable emphasis on the differences of those tenets from others. What need was there for social service, when charity was comfortably in the hands of the city's first families each of which was a pillar in one church or another? The charities were numerous—havens, homes, hospitals, missions—and of a size commensurate with the wealth of the families or family associations that were the patrons of the institutions.

A man's wealth was his own, untaxed either on the personal or at the business level; and apart from expanding his enterprise, building a fine home, living in style and driving to the office in a carriage and pair, what better could a man do with his money than adopt a charitable enterprise that would shed a decent lustre upon him? Besides, the public expected it of him. How else were the destitute to be looked after?

I do not suggest that the great multitude of us in the lower social strata of the time were a subordinate and supine generation. Far from it. It seems to

me that there was more spunk in the individual fifty years ago than there is today. There had to be. Our betters demanded it of us. There is the secret, I expect. In the eighties and nineties, we still had our betters. Nowadays, the species is quite extinct.

No one who lived through the period of my life can help but marvel at the revolutionary changes that have taken place in the economic, social, intellectual and spiritual life of our time. The vital force behind the changes was doubtless the enormous strides in technology. This affected every sphere of our lives, from transportation to accounting, from craftsmanship to religion. Each new development in technology, in the processes of industry, produced not only fresh wealth, but liberated new people into the field of authority; and they were not wholesale merchants. I came upon the scene, as a boy, it is true, in time to savour to the full the era of the wholesaler, and just in time to witness the great change that was stealing over the economic and social microcosm of Toronto.

I mentioned the Crimean and American Civil wars which had such a powerful effect on Canada's economy in the sixties and seventies. There is another factor to be borne in mind: the Hungry Forties. Most Canadians think of that tragic decade in terms of Ireland's famines, which sent thousands of immigrants to this country. But the Hungry Forties involved Britain and Europe in struggle and pain far wider than Ireland's. It was a period of revolution and revolt that sent pioneers from many a country besides Ireland. The memory of its hardships was still strong in the minds and hearts of the older generation in my boyhood. There was among us all a spirit of thankfulness, and an awareness of our opportunities in this glorious new land, which may explain the social and economic atmosphere which prevailed in Toronto in the eighties and nineties. The nineteenth century may have fatally challenged the authoritarian principles of society. But in Toronto, we had not heard much of it. We were busy. Whiskered gentlemen were the only authority we were conscious of. We respected them, revered them, obeyed them.

At the same time, we were free to indulge in the supposition that, as a consequence of hard work, obedience and loyalty, we might look forward to growing a crop of whiskers ourselves, some day.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE JOB

In my life, I have met little experience that has been wasted. My first job, on quitting school, lasted only a few months. I was off on the wrong foot. Yet in those few months as an office boy in association with men of outstanding character and integrity, I obtained a working demonstration of what these qualities mean in human relations.

This first job was in the law office of Thomson, Henderson and Bell. A friend of mine named Frank Smith, who wore long pants and was being promoted from office boy to junior clerk in this law firm, got me the job and instructed me in my duties.

These duties were simple enough. They consisted of copying letters in the old-fashioned tissue-leafed copying book and indexing the same. Careful clear copies were essential and precise indexing as well. A single telephone instrument served this busy office and hung on the wall near the office boy's desk. The number, 957, I well remember, but I was required, like a walking encyclopaedia, to know by heart the numbers of all other legal offices, also the names of all practising lawyers and the style of their firm's name. McCarthy, Osler, Hoskin, Maclaren, Shepley, Middleton, Smith, Rae and Greer, Macdonald, Kerr (pronounced "Carr"), Barwick, Moss, Aylesworth and a dozen or so others, which I can recite after sixty years as readily as I could then.

The telephone was an instrument at the time thought to be inclined to transmit false information, and so as not to be in a position of having to commit the speaker to a course he might regret, it was customary simply to use the telephone to make an appointment. Most people found it easier to cross the street or run up a block or two and discuss personally any business on hand. The business and professional area of the city was small. There were no skyscrapers. A professional or business conference involved a walk of two or three short blocks and not more than one flight of stairs.

As I advanced in the confidence of the law office and began to be noticed by the members of the firm, I had opportunities to do things considered above the conventional office boy's job. I wrote subpoenas and served them; and attended the Division and County Courts when a messenger was needed. I had the opportunity of attending criminal trials and

murder cases, sometimes defended or prosecuted by the great B. B. Osler, Q.C., who wore a moustache of walrus proportions, and was a past master in court. I remember G. F. Shepley, Q.C., who was a fine lawyer and gentleman, although built much on the lines of the proverbial bull-frog. He was in great demand as counsel, and along with most of the lawyers of the day, had the confidence and respect of the members of the bench, who themselves were giants in those days.

My own employers were notable men in the law. The senior partner, D. E. Thomson, Q.C., was trustee of the McMaster Estate, of which McMaster University was one of the large beneficiaries. He was a learned man of distinguished character, who bore himself with the dignity that, in 1891, went with distinction. But what best I recollect about him is the fact that he was one of the worst penmen I have ever encountered. You see, I had my own standards.

Mr. Bell was our barrister, doing most of the court work. He had a high, almost a falsetto voice, and he was a figure of tireless activity, always coming and going. W. N. Tilley was our senior student. Somehow, in that first contact with working life, I had the impression that I was a spectator, rather than a participator in the activities around me.

Mr. Henderson was the conveyancer of the firm, and he remains in my memory all through my life as the prototype of the perfect gentleman. He took an immediate personal interest in me, as he did in everyone around him; and it was on his advice, after he had learned my family circumstances, and had revealed to me the limited income, the long years of apprenticeship that lay ahead of me if I desired to become a lawyer, that I gave up any idea of that career and went to work in a wholesale house.

It was now November 1891. The depression was deepening. Conditions in the small store out on Augusta Avenue were becoming serious. It was to fold up in another year. When I discussed Mr. Henderson's advice at home, my father wasted no time in seeking for me a more promising job among his numerous acquaintances in the wholesale business. I was therefore fifteen when the Burton inheritance of merchandising laid me under its spell and set me off on the right foot.

My father had a great respect for some of his former suppliers. He took me first into W. R. Brock's wholesale dry goods, where I met Mr. Brock and Mr. Pentecost. W. R. Brock was an M.P. for a Toronto riding, wore the wholesaler's proverbial silk hat and frock coat, had long side whiskers, with bare lips and chin.

I was immediately assured of a job; but I found I was expected to operate an elevator. As I could not see how I would advance myself simply going up and down—in one spot—I declined the job. My father then took me over to H. H. Fudger’s wholesale fancy goods house. I was left with Mr. Fudger, to whom I indicated I should like to be an invoice clerk. Since for two years now I had had the use of eyeglasses, my ambition to become a good penman and do ordinary commercial calculations had soared. In those days the invoice clerk sat on high in the shipping room, and the invoice for the goods to be shipped was “called off” to and written down by him. Speed, legibility and ability to calculate rapidly were requisites. I was small in size; Mr. Fudger sized me up immediately and thought to himself: here is a possible office boy.

It is always entertaining to a man of my years to hark back in memory to his first meeting with destiny. And here, face to face with a medium built, fashionably dressed gentleman with the characteristic beard of the time, though a small and neatly trimmed one, I was in the presence of destiny.

My entire life was to be woven into and round about the life and activities of this man. He was to teach me, with a firm hand, the basic principle of the pain and pleasure of hard work. He was to trust me, within far fewer years than either of us could imagine, with a considerable measure of his affairs. He was to treat me with the greatest liberality, and offer me the critical opportunities of my life.

Looking at me shrewdly and perhaps a little distantly, he tossed me an invoice blank, indicated the pen and ink, and said, “Take this down.”

He held in his hand a sterling invoice for some English jewellery, and from it he called off the items, so many pieces, the price so much a dozen in shillings. Sharply, he said:

“Extend that, add it up, and take off  $3\frac{3}{4}\%$ .”

Then clapping his top hat on his head, he went out and left me.

Forty years later, less two years, he, if not with pride at least with full appreciation of his part in my fortunes, handed over to me the presidency of one of the biggest department store and mail order chains in North America.

But when destiny in a plug hat strode out the office door, leaving me alone with the pounds, shillings and pence, I bent to the chore with a will. Fortunately, Mr. Fudger was detained at least an hour. When he returned, I handed him the completed invoice in sterling. It was, I imagine, the third or fourth copy, and tidy, I thought.

If he was doubtful if I could “do” pounds, shillings and pence, he gave only a flash of surprise, then, finding my work correct, he snapped, “Write me a letter of application and come to work Monday morning.” It happened to be November 30th, 1891. There was no further discussion of my job. I was installed as office boy at \$2.00 per week. I didn’t have the courage to tell him the law firm had raised me from \$2.00 to \$2.50. Law firms had a wide enough reputation for poor payment of their clerks.

Some years later I recovered from the files my original letter of application to Mr. Fudger with his endorsement “\$2.00 per week” and the initial “F” in his characteristic style.

When, a few days after I left the old law firm, one of the partners, David Henderson, met me on the street and asked me where I was working, he took the trouble to come across Yonge Street to see Mr. Fudger and give me an unsolicited recommendation.

What sort of a business was this into which I had been casually thrust? It was, from 1880 until the beginning of 1891, a partnership, Smith and Fudger. Henry Smith was “Yorkshire”, a rough diamond, but a good merchant. He knew his goods and never was in doubt when buying as to what he thought would be a profitable and saleable line. Henry Smith and H. H. Fudger were former employees of the late Robert Wilkes, Mr. Fudger having grown up from boyhood under Mr. Wilkes’ strict supervision. Mr. Wilkes was a Member of Parliament, had an office in London and New York, and a branch in Australia. He and two of his children were drowned while bathing at Sturgeon Point in the Kawarthas. His two young men, Henry Smith and Harris H. Fudger, succeeded to his business in 1880. It consisted of clocks, watches, jewellery, fancy goods, drug and tobacconist’s sundries, mostly items not carried by dry goods, hardware or other wholesalers.

Robert Wilkes was a strict disciplinarian. Mr. Fudger, by inheritance a penetrating brilliant mentality, had learned from Robert Wilkes to expect from employees increasing toil and unswerving loyalty. A few years before his retirement when he was well over seventy, I recall Mr. Fudger saying that he always felt while at work as if “the boss” was likely at any moment to come in and see if he was “on the job”.

After Mr. Fudger and his partner separated in 1891, Henry Smith, with his mature son William Henry, started up in the same business on Bay Street, south of Wellington. Mr. Fudger occupied the old premises owned by the Wilkes Estate, at Yonge and Wellington Streets.



In the depression of the early '90's, few businesses operated at a profit, wages and salaries were low, and demands on employees exacting.

Fudger's opened at eight a.m. and closed, theoretically, at six p.m., but night work was the normal thing. I never knew the proprietor to instruct anyone to work at night, but there never was any doubt as to what work had to be accomplished before closing. It was left to us to get the work done; and the result was three to four nights per week until ten o'clock or later—that is from the 15th of March to Exhibition time. From then on to the following March, it was five nights a week. We received a quarter every night for supper. We usually saved a dime out of that until we became seniors and ate at Harry Morgan's on Jordan Street, where it took the whole twenty-five cents for the best roast beef dinner in town and a mug of ale with it if desired.

The sprinkling can, the broom and the duster were the implements of my apprenticeship to the mercantile trade. Having started my job in cold weather, I had to attend to the base burner coal stove which heated the office. No dust, no ashes, no gas was permitted; and all had to be in order for the boss's arrival at nine o'clock.

I evidently swept the floor with more vigour than effectiveness. One morning I was through sweeping and ready to open the office door and sweep out the dirt into the common hall where the warehouseman took it away. This particular morning Mr. Fudger entered just in time to get the whole force of my sweepings on his striped trousers. I was given a lesson in how to sweep; not to thrust the sweepings forward and into the air, but to pull the dirt towards myself as I swept. I never forgot the lesson: "If you want to sweep your dirt on anyone, sweep it on yourself."

Not many years since, I visited one of Simpson's many small town order offices where a sixteen-year-old was sweeping the floor. Customers standing at the counter received some of the sweepings on their nylons. After the customers had gone, I had the opportunity of relating my own story of how I was taught to sweep. These moderns were rather amazed that I should notice such a service detail.

"Hastings and St. Leonard's are two of the cinque ports." My interest in the historical significance of the five British protective ports was, in my early days with Mr. Fudger, confined to an example of copper-plate penmanship which Mr. Fudger considered an example to all who would excel in penmanship. He was the only man I have ever met whose penmanship in the early days most nearly approached perfect copper plate.

However, his rendering of the work demonstrated speed as well as perfect form, and even after he had reached the age of three score and ten, his penmanship continued to be something to admire.

Our office staff consisted of Mr. Edward Fudger, father of the proprietor; a head bookkeeper, William Quaife Phillips, and an assistant and myself. As we had several thousand accounts, the staff was none too large.

Mr. Fudger's father was the watch-dog of the treasury, and he handled the cash, banking and customs work. He was benevolence itself to me, in fact to all, not perhaps the first qualification for a watch-dog. However, he was always on the job, especially if the proprietor was out or away.

Edward Fudger was no longer young and as soon as we were sufficiently acquainted, he showed me all manner of favour. He taught me customs work, cashiering, banking, and, more precious than all, instilled in me by word and example what is the good and perfect gift of thoroughness and good faith.

Both Mr. Fudger Sr. and I went to lunch at twelve o'clock, and were usually back in the office before one, at which time the rest of the office staff went for lunch. As Mr. Fudger Sr. grew older he would sit back in his arm chair and close first one eye and then the other, meanwhile remarking that if everything was all right he would have a little rest. As I was on the job, I assured him I would take care of anything that came along. One thing I did not anticipate was that Mr. Harris H. Fudger, the proprietor, would arrive half an hour earlier than his usual two-thirty, finding his father, the watch-dog of the treasury, asleep. He was anything but pleased. The poor old parent was taken into the private office and given more than a family lecture.

Mr. Phillips was a gentleman and a dandy; he had immaculate whiskers, and loved the good things of life as far as his limited means would permit. He was a sailor, and would often be missing Saturday afternoons. That was sin enough; but when W. Q. failed to put in an appearance one Monday, having been becalmed near Rochester, that was the end for him, and his place was taken by a very hardworking young man. This new head bookkeeper had a coarse red beard which gave him a slightly forbidding air. Although he was only doing his duty, he got credit for doing it in a way objectionable to those about him. We had several travellers on the road who came home to Toronto Friday nights, and as they had to give an account of their week's work and expenses, it was the duty of this new office chief to check over the accounts of these travellers. He seemed always to delay this

process until the last minute on Saturday, which often meant the family engagements of the travellers could not be kept. He was well hated on this score alone.

Earlier than I had reason to expect, I was called upon to be head bookkeeper. My predecessor had been really fond of work. In fact, many an evening I sat ready to do my part as assistant bookkeeper, only to have my superior laboriously, and as secretly as possible, work out the balancing items in an active but involved account. It was soon manifest that I was not to be allowed to learn the higher mysteries of accounting. About all that happened was an unnecessary overload of work for my senior, and a constant waste of the time of his assistant. Mr. Fudger was growing impatient of excuses for accounts constantly falling behind. Accounts payable, already overdue, had to be remitted for, on certain known final dates. When it was found that one month after the other, these final dates were not observed, there came the day when my senior was discharged.

What was my employer now likely to do? I was just nineteen, and getting the rather proud sum of forty a month. Mr. Fudger called me in and explained that he could follow one of two courses: hire an experienced outsider to do the head bookkeeper's job; or give me the responsibility. The question was—did I think I could do the work? My answer seemed to please. I said I thought he knew better than I whether or not I could do the job; and then, to keep the stream flowing, I quickly added that if given the job, no one, I believed, would work harder to prove he could do the work than I. The job was mine and \$50.00 per month. I had 6,000 ledger accounts to look after. The only stipulation Mr. Fudger laid down was that no pen other than mine should make the ledger entries.

Auditors were unknown. Mr. Fudger himself would periodically call for the ledgers to be tied up and delivered to his house, 279 Sherbourne Street. The ledgers would be returned next morning with various interleaved questionnaires, all requiring a stand-and-deliver answer.

On one such occasion, Mr. Fudger called me into his presence and soberly enquired if it was understood that these ledger entries should be in my own handwriting. I, of course assented, whereupon he said, "Well!—why have you not done so?" My answer was I certainly had. He disagreed; whereupon I remembered a balancing item of four cents in an account which required a great many efforts to collect and keep in balance. My assistant and I had worked till midnight, an hour or more on this troublesome account, before I ran down the elusive four cent difference. The reason for it required a journal entry, which I made; at the same time telling my assistant

to post the item in the ledger. This was the figure Mr. Fudger had noticed in other than my handwriting. As soon as I explained, and assured him that all other items were in my own handwriting and would be in future, he was satisfied. But he did not fail to point out that I should not profess to have done all the entries, as I had agreed to do.

There was only one other occasion when my word seemed to be doubted. It was shortly after my engagement as office boy. The British mails usually closed at four p.m. on Thursdays, and when the mail was ready, usually consisting of payment of accounts overdue, it was my duty to take the letters in to Mr. Fudger who would himself check the addresses and postage. One day he was in a querulous mood, as the mail was ready only at the last minute. When I took the letters in for the final inspection, I was instructed to take them to the Post Office on Adelaide Street at the head of Toronto Street.

Our office was at Yonge and Wellington; and having only three minutes to reach the post office I rushed out. Mr. Fudger had told me that if the chimes on St. James Cathedral rang the hour before I arrived, I was to take the letters inside and request that they be put in the foreign mail. I reached the post office in time; and as I turned away, the bells of the Cathedral started the Westminster chimes. Arriving back in the office about three minutes after four, I heard my name cracked out from the private office. Mr. Fudger, watch in hand, asked why I had not done as I was told, and asked me if I had dropped the letters in the nearest post box. I, of course, stoutly declared I had followed instructions. His rejoinder was that if he thought I was lying I would be fired on the spot. My answer was, "Mr. Fudger, I am not lying." He still wanted to know how I had gone to the post office and back in about six minutes. My self-righteous answer was, "Well, sir, I ran both ways." Aside from the ledger episode, I never knew Mr. Fudger in over forty years of association ever again to doubt my veracity.

At all events, to come back to our narrative, at \$50.00 a month I was head bookkeeper.

My mother, my best girl, my father—all were pleased, and obviously proud.

About two years before this, my father, finding in one of the 1893 months that he was just a little short of being able to pay all his accounts, decided to sell out. The small corner grocery was unable to command enough trade to keep up the expense of a growing and always hungry family. My father in his early fifties wound up with a house on Clinton Street, near

Bloor, a Gladstone cart, our faithful old horse Nell, and a small stock of notions.

He now entered the smallwares trade, and drove through the country selling to stores within a thirty-mile radius of Toronto. After buying his supplies and paying his expenses, little was left for family expenses. But we were rent free. My older brother was in a grocery store; I was in the wholesale office; and we were able to keep the family fed and cared for.

The conversion of a country family to a city family was complete. My next younger brother, Frank, was clearly destined for a university education, towards which we were all eager to contribute.

And Mr. Fudger, when he spoke to me now, while still retaining the distance that became an employer towards his employees, had begun to salt his comments to me with a quizzical and friendly smile.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FAMILY

To a sense of urgency I owe much if not most of the credit for the active and happy life that has been mine.

What do I mean by a sense of urgency? It is a phrase that will crop up frequently in this story. In later chapters, some of the reflections and conclusions with which I have been troubled regarding our Christian, or at least, our Protestant democratic way of life are bound to come up. In that connection, it seems to me that we have lost, in perhaps a much wider field than Canada, our sense of urgency with respect to the agencies, governmental, social, educational and religious, which are the implements of our way of life.

By a sense of urgency I mean more than merely the sense of the imperative nature of things requiring to be done. As soon as one thing is done, another immediately takes its place. It is the awareness of this ceaseless continuity of things requiring to be done that marks, in my view, the man with the whole sense of urgency.

How does one come by it? It may be in the blood-stream, from hardworking and aspiring forebears. Or it may be inspired and stimulated by environment, and the example of others who possess it. In my early years, I had the good fortune to be beautifully situated among those who had it and those who had not. The consequences were apparent to anyone.

There is nothing like a little hardship in a young man's surroundings to encourage in him an alert frame of mind. I started to work in the very onset of a three year depression. Both in the Fudger warehouse and at home, I was surrounded by a mounting anxiety. At home the grocery store was to cease as a means of livelihood. At the warehouse, everyone had to work with increasing energy and for longer hours. It was all accepted by the employees with a resignation that is unthinkable in these days. No great structure of a paternalistic government, of public welfare, social service or labour relations was there to shelter us. It was every man for himself. My memory harks back to the elementary features of our daily and family life in those times.

For example, busy as our family was, on moving into the strange environment of the city, with four boys and two girls all under fourteen

years of age, we were not so busy that my mother did not, almost immediately on coming to the city, go exploring for a church.

There had been no church in Green River. Both my father and mother had become interested in one of the new sects that had come into being during the middle of the nineteenth century, the Disciples of Christ, to which a farmer named Leng, near Pickering, had given a site for a small church. Nothing remains of it now but a cemetery on the Kingston Road, just east of the Brock Road.

To this congregation my parents had attached themselves at the outset of their married life. But when they moved to Green River to take over the general store, the distance to church, together with the increasing family of small children, made it difficult to continue the association. My mother's joy was great, on looking around our new neighbourhood in Toronto, to find a congregation of Disciples on Denison Avenue, within three blocks of us.

In the middle years of the nineteenth century, Ontario was invaded by evangelists of considerable power who were on fire with the new idea that only scriptural names and practices were acceptable in God's church. This "disciple" movement came over from the States, where two Scottish Presbyterians, father and son, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, preached the new message. The younger Campbell, a Presbyterian minister, who proclaimed the doctrine, was considered by orthodox Presbyterians as heretical. The Campbells had no intention of leaving the Presbyterian Church; but they were cast out, and in a number of cases, whole congregations went with them.

The Disciples, who were known as Campbellites in some communities, spoke "as the Spirit gave them utterance". Each disciple was a priest unto God in his own right, and the new body had no ordained ministry. Each congregation was its own authority; and no matter how tiresome a conscientious elder might be, he was bound to have his say, even though some members were induced to break away and leave by reason of that very characteristic of the sect. There came some strong evangelistic preachers, such as Moses E. Lard and Isaac Errett, from across the line. The Church of Christ gradually shook itself down into a vigorous though small denomination in this country's religious sphere.

It was one of the several sects which separated from older bodies chiefly because of a conscientious desire that scriptural truth should be followed. The Disciples would take second place to no one in their adherence to the doctrine that the Church should practice the same things as the Church in the

New Testament, formed on the day of Pentecost, and be called only by the same scriptural name. They drew the line at washing each other's feet, and sharing all things in common. These and other things were apparently not "doctrinal" matters; but the name, the ordinances of baptism, and the weekly Lord's Supper, were essential and cardinal points. The Disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. Therefore, we were "The Church of Christ", and were disciples of Christ. No Westminster confession, no thirty-nine articles, no creed, except the statement of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the Living God".

Under our mother's enthusiastic direction, we threw ourselves into the new church with zeal. Services both morning and evening, with Sunday school in the afternoon, were decreed for all of us. That was characteristic in all denominations in the nineties, and is an important fact to remember in attempting to recapture the sense and feeling of the close of the nineteenth century in this part of the world. The *fin de siècle*, the end of the century in Britain and Europe may have been coloured with decadence in literature, art and philosophy. No whisper of such scandals penetrated the small residential streets of Toronto.

Lest it be supposed that we were a narrow, bigoted lot, I may say we often visited about among the churches Sunday nights. Old St. Phillips, corner of Spadina and St. Patrick Streets, and St. Stephens on College Street, at the corner of Bellevue Avenue, were favourites. The Anglican forms, while foreign to us were interesting; the prayers were so much more satisfactory than the extemporaneous efforts of some of our Disciple ruling elders. St. Mary's Catholic Church was occasionally visited. How impressed we were with a church filled with as many men and boys as with women and girls! The Latin ceremony we were instructed at home to regard as so much mummery; but none the less the mystery and majesty of the liturgy was a feast to the eyes and ears of boys raised in the spare severity of our domestic faith.

I would not have you think that we spent our Sabbaths in pious exploration and our week-days in toil. There is little difference between the mischief of boyhood from one generation to the other. In a city, there is less opportunity for wholesome or harmless enterprise for boys than there is in the country. My companions and I stole any number of ragmen's wagons from the lanes which intersected every residential block in those days. Back of every house ran the lane. Where else would your stable or shed be? In those lanes we purloined the wagons, upset ashes, and challenged trouble to



find us, as boys always will. One thing a boy should have no difficulty discovering in himself is a sense of guilt.

The Denison Avenue church soon moved to bigger premises on Cecil Street, near Spadina. The church is now a synagogue, and the Denison Avenue premises a Catholic church for Polish people. Our congregation, to which I still belong, moved in the course of the years to quarters still farther uptown, in conformity with the movement of population. I am inclined to mention these particulars for a curious reason. The powerful and fashionable denominations in Toronto in these years were the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist. The latter Church was at this period at a resounding stage in its history. It had become a fashionable church, its fortunes augmented by the membership of many of the city's wealthiest men. Sherbourne Street Methodist, for one, was a name to conjure with. Among that church's most militant young businessmen members were three who were class leaders. Their names were H. H. Fudger, Joseph W. Flavelle and A. E. Ames. As a boy of fourteen, I started to work for Mr. Fudger. At nineteen, I was his head bookkeeper. My friends have always been curious to know why my employer and mentor never made any attempt to recruit me for his Bible class. If he had, I would have had the interesting experience of meeting three gentlemen who were to be involved so deeply in my future, some fifteen years sooner than I did. But Sherbourne Street Methodist was a fashionable church. It did not recruit.

About the time our Denison Avenue congregation moved to the new building on Cecil Street, an English family came to our neighbourhood, having emigrated from South Shields. The father was a carpenter, and got steady work without delay. There were two girls under fifteen. The son, Tom, was a sailor who sailed on a tramp steamer over the seven seas. Nellie, the older girl, came to work for my mother, especially to help with the soon-to-arrive baby girl at our home. My sister Nellie, when she arrived, was named after Nellie Sisterson, whose influence in our house was admitted by all. Nellie's family were English Methodists, and were the most devout people I had ever known. Nellie went to work on us, and when soon in the new church a famed evangelist held forth, the Burton boys were prepared ground, ready to repent, be baptized and start on their new life.

My older brother Edgar had already made up his mind to train for the Christian ministry. A few months after I started to work, I was putting aside so much a week out of my small wage towards the return of Ed to school. He had quit school to help in the store.

By the time he was eighteen, Ed was holding evangelistic street services Sunday nights after church at the corner of Spadina and Queen Streets, and I, sixteen, along with all the friends we could muster, was helping with the singing at those street services.

Ed's death in 1893 was a great grief to us all. He had a more serious bent, and led me and others of our crowd to attend such things as political meetings. This was long, long before the era of movies, radio or any of the other facilities for entertainment that today steal away the public mind from its own best interests. The bicycle age was just dawning, and the horseless carriage was a fable so absurd that nobody wasted a thought on it!

Political meetings in the nineties were not confined to pre-election campaigns. To comprehend the era, you must realize that it was a poor month indeed that did not provide Toronto with at least one rousing political gathering. Massey Hall had not yet come upon the scene, and the two favourite halls were Shaftesbury Hall at the corner of Queen and James streets, and Association Hall on McGill Street, both, I believe, now owned by Eaton's. On foot and in the new electric street cars, the population would stream to the political meetings, no more popular entertainment being conceivable. Sometimes, the street cars, if they were the open type, would be dressed up with red, white and blue lights to carry excursionists to the gatherings.

I have heard and seen and cheered the great Sir John A. though he was on the wrong side, poor old man. The year 1895 marked the end of eighteen years of Conservative Governments. Those eighteen years covered the span of my existence until that date. My father was not a Conservative. He was a Reformer. In fact, the township of Pickering, in the County of Ontario, was a "Grit" hive. There had been few, if any, Tory votes in our neighbourhood. The Conservative party was associated with the pre-1837 Family Compact era, and had for us a stigma attached to it on that account. William Lyon Mackenzie's rebellion was already history to our generation, but there were more intimate considerations in our family. Lount and Mathews were hanged for their part. There were two Barclay young men, brothers of my grandfather, who were arrested, charged with treason and sentenced to be hanged. They were reprieved at the last moment; and although my grandfather was at the time only twelve years of age, the injustice of the treason charge never was allowed to be forgotten in the family.

Everyone now will admit that had it not been for "John A.," as Sir John A. Macdonald was universally called, the Canadian Pacific would probably not have been built, and Canadian Confederation itself long delayed. Those

who thought that protection by prohibitive duties was always justified, and in the best interests of the country, were, or became Conservatives. They all liked John A.'s policies. Undoubtedly he was a great man, and a great leader. But the boys of our family were taught never to believe it.

Here were the men who not only governed us but afforded us free and incomparable entertainment! Hon. Edward Blake in our youthful opinion, was good riddance as a leader. But Sam Blake, a dignified Irish legal luminary, was something to see and hear on the hustings. He wore a fringe of meagre whiskers under his chin and reaching up to his ears, that must have been the virgin growth of a beard that had never been subjected to the razor.

On taking his place on the platform, the first thing Sam did was to unfurl a huge scarlet necktie about two feet long and six inches wide. That alone brought down the house. It was good preparation for a long series of jokes at the expense of the Tories. No sarcasm was as biting as his, and to hear him once was to wish to hear him every time he spoke.

Then there was the old war horse, Sir Richard Cartwright, blowing and roaring flame from both nostrils while he described the ruin being piled up by an incompetent and dishonest government. Hip! Hip! Hooray!

Tait, the Baker, was something like the late Rt. Hon. Ernest Bevin, a man who could always get a hearing and rouse the crowd. William Paterson of Brantford had a voice several sizes bigger than the acoustics of any indoor hall, and what he lacked in ideas he made up in sound. Sir Oliver Mowat and his group of Ontario Liberals had always been in power, and if he hadn't gone to Ottawa, and later passed from this sublunary abode, he would probably still be head of the Government at Queen's Park.

Then, of course, our loudest cheers and deepest worship was reserved for that peerless leader, young Wilfrid Laurier, who in and out of power was a figure of sublime magnificence. Toronto always cheered him and then voted the other way. The Ontario County Liberals couldn't understand anyone being possessed of so little discernment, or to be of such feeble conscience as to oppose the Liberal arguments, or to support the sinful and despised Tories. It took us time to get on to Toronto.

Imagine George Eulas Foster trying to match wits with Sir Richard Cartwright! We saw him only as a thin, sarcastic, vituperative interloper. Sir Charles Tupper we considered might at any time blow up from the over-inflation of his own importance.

Many of these great men, who served Canada long and faithfully, I find I still recollect with a faint touch of the rancour I entertained for them as a youth howling at political meetings as we now howl at hockey or rugby games. For it was entertainment in its time.

But for old Sir John A. we had a curious weakness. He was coming to his end. Yet what a character he was on the public platform, and how he seized his audience and cast them under a spell. He had the human touch; and it was impossible not to roar at his jokes, and applaud with traitorous hands his shrewd, wise, ingratiating words.

We sang “God Save the Queen” for them all, Tory or Grit.

As country youngsters, we had been accustomed to singing and were genuinely fond of it. As soon as my voice changed, I became a member of our church choir. I had to stand on some books in the men’s section in order to be visible, and to be visible in a choir is, of course, one of the inducements to join it.

But there was another inducement in the choir, a girl of my own age. Apart from a few misunderstandings due to the green-eyed monster, when she seemed to prefer taller fellows—I must have grown a foot between my sixteenth and seventeenth year—we have never had any serious disagreements in more than half a century, and we celebrated our golden wedding in 1950.

So, in the days of which I speak, I had a job, a best girl, a place in the choir, a share of the expense and responsibility of my home, a high delight in political meetings, a two-mile walk to work in the early morning, and a two-mile walk home in the deep of night. And when my brother wanted me to come down to Queen and Spadina and stand forth around him to sing in the streets, I was glad to.

A sense of urgency was taking quiet possession of me.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BUSINESS

Back in the '70's and '80's, the wholesale fancy goods business like all wholesale businesses, had been a highly profitable enterprise. People were literally hungry for such amenities of life as watches, clocks, combs, hairbrushes, toys, mouth organs, tobacco pipes. By such *minor* possessions does prosperity assert itself at all levels of the community.

In such merchandise, a businessman, buying cheap and selling dear, with no imputation of greed or disservice, could amass a modest fortune. The Wilkes fancy goods business, of which by 1891 Mr. Fudger was sole owner, had been one of those so rewarded.

The bulk of his wares came from Germany; and Emil Kantel was head buyer, who went each year to Europe to choose the samples that were later the stock shown by the five travellers on the road, and displayed in the Toronto warehouse for local and visiting buyers. The whole staff consisted of about twelve in all.

If I had been a young man of nineteen or twenty when I began work, as most are nowadays, I might have settled into my appointed niche and confined myself to it. But a boy of fourteen or fifteen is a bundle of curiosity. It may well be that I owe to the evils of my time, which included children going to work before they were sixteen, the first opportunity of the many that followed.

The depression that began in 1891 afforded any enthusiastic boy all the chances he could desire. Business was hard to drum up, salaries and wages low, jobs hard to get and not easily kept. Starting to work in such an atmosphere has a great deal to recommend it. Everybody in the place was ready to find jobs for me to do. Naturally I assumed that these increasing hardships were characteristic of business; and anyway, each task they gave me was more interesting than my first job which was sweeping out the office. There was both a pleasure and a dignity about using a pen on an invoice. It was old Mr. Fudger who could think up the most fascinating chores for me.

The customs house to which I went bore little resemblance to the noble but already dowdy edifice which today serves this purpose. It was located at Front and Yonge.

My work in clearing entries at the customs was my first contact with civil servants. By common report of those days, each member of the customs service got his job because of political influence. There were some square pegs in round holes, but on the other hand there were notable examples of work well and conscientiously done. We used to watch our chance and get our entries before one of the more industrious computers. However, we could not be too obvious in this device, and were often obliged to put up with one of the boys who did little work any time. One very good-looking loafer would invariably find he had to go away to get a pencil before checking entries, or he would hold a protracted conversation not far from his post. Goods coming by freight were nearly all in wood packing cases. These were examined by appraisers, say one case in ten, and if the goods corresponded with the invoice everything was fine, but if there was any deviation from the billing, everything would have to be opened up and checked; and woe to the importer who was in a hurry to get delivery.

Nowadays most suppliers sell their goods for cash; but in the wholesale trade of that time, the goods were either for spring trade or for fall and Christmas. Terms were five percent discount, if paid in thirty days; or net four months from April 1st or December 1st, depending whether it was spring or fall. Long terms were the downfall of many a retailer. There were few who had a sufficient sense of accounting to keep their affairs tidy, and in the days of depression, they faded away. The list of business failures in the early '90's was very long.

Mr. Fudger's business was always sound. His bank credit was good, and although manufacturers, especially Old Country suppliers, were often kept waiting a whole season, or even a whole year for their money, there was an idea, mostly fanciful, that because the manufacturer was British or Continental, he was wealthy and didn't need the money. Accounts receivable mostly dated months ahead, meant the use of bank credit; and later on when I was in charge of the accounts, we made drafts on customers as soon as possible after goods were shipped, and this "paper" was given to the bank as collateral for advances. It was a delicate calculation to determine how much money we could borrow and still be reasonably sure of being able to pay up each January, after which date we started over again. By this experience I learned early in life to arrange finances for business expected to be done.

Not the faintest conception of budgeting, as we know it today in all business, had as yet occurred either to the average merchant or to the bankers and financiers in the upper levels of enterprise.

Although I was promoted to head bookkeeper in 1895, the function of bookkeeper had already impressed me as a rather uninteresting career. For one thing, experienced bookkeepers could be readily hired and their wages were small and fixed. While it was gratifying to have the job and so to obtain a grasp of the whole picture of the business we were conducting, and while it was a step in the right direction, which is up, none the less I had, for some little time before I was nineteen, accepted with alacrity any chores that had to do with the merchandise. Nobody had to ask me to lend a hand in the warehouse. I had not been head bookkeeper for long before I was assuming warehouse supervision. I seized any excuse to wait upon customers.

My first savings of \$31.00 were spent for a new White sewing machine for my mother. What joy for her—no more pierced fingers as had been the case during the days of sewing on the old worn out Howe, which had been brought with us when we moved to Toronto.

In 1895, the new safety bicycle was well on the way to becoming a craze. My next savings, \$195.00, went for a Victor bicycle. No Cadillac of the present day could inspire more downright pride of possession than filled my young ambitious soul. Gone the days of walking to work—two and a half miles each way—with my lunch in newspaper under my arm. I was now making around \$8.00 per week, pretty senior wages for junior work. All through my first years at work my lunch time was spent in the basement packing room, presided over by Michael Cavanagh, a stout Protestant of the Puritan or Plymouth Brethren type. His wholesome conversation, his wisdom and deep Christian conviction were a treasured feature of my eager day. Now with a bicycle, I could spin home for supper and come back for my evening's work. I could, on the way, call in and spend a moment or two with my best girl.

One of the practices of these days was that the warehouse keys had to be called for at Mr. Fudger's house in the early morning and returned there after closing, even though it meant eleven o'clock or later. It became my job to call for and deliver the keys. The proprietor, by asking about the keys, could be assured that the warehouse was opened on time, and that at night it was properly locked up. After I got my bicycle, the extra jaunt around to Sherbourne Street was little extra effort.

Ten minutes to eight each morning was opening time, and nearly all the staff was waiting on the door step to get in for the day's work. There were none of your present-day practices by which, after work, all cleaning up is done by a special maintenance staff. We had to clean up for ourselves.

All kinds of dealers took up bicycles to sell, and Mr. Fudger was no exception. All well-known Canadian lines were already placed with dealer agents so we had to look abroad. We were agents for Victor Sporting Goods, made by the Overman Wheel Company of Chicopee Falls, Mass., and what more natural than that we should become agents for their Victor bicycle? Emil Kantel, our buyer and a great special salesman, undertook the job of selling bicycles. Such was the universality of the craze, that almost any kind of merchant could be a bicycle dealer. Imagine a jeweller selling bicycles! One of our Victor agents was a jeweller in Hamilton. This man was not in too good credit, but he was easily convinced that if he took the agency of our bicycles, he would soon be on easy street. He bought four bicycles, two of which he soon sold. These machines were guaranteed, and with each one was a rather elaborate printed certificate of guarantee. In case a part went wrong it had to be returned, express paid, to the factory in the States, if it could pass American customs. Then, if the factory judged the part defective, they would replace it, charges collect, if and when it passed the Canadian customs. Of course it was all too much trouble, which the guarantors very well knew; but the certificate helped sell the bikes.

This new Victor bicycle was claimed to be a big improvement over existing models. It had a single tube tire; no more taking off covers, repairing inner tubes, and all that messy trouble. The difficulty was that these single tube tires were not puncture proof; and although the repair kits were science itself in a small package, the tires almost always defied efforts to repair them, which meant the expense of a new tire.

However, our Hamilton agent had sold two out of four; but having to pay for four did not ease his precarious financial situation. He was a man who accepted draft after draft, and finally would not or could not pay any more. I was instructed to issue a county court writ. The amount was just over division court size, and having been in a law office, I suggested to Mr. Fudger that he should retain a lawyer. Mr. Fudger would have none of it—hadn't I been in a law office and didn't I know the routine of issuing writs, serving them and finally taking a case in court? My suggestion that this being a county court, we would necessarily have to have a lawyer appear, was waved aside—again, did I not know that county courts were courts of equity, and that any citizen could appear for anybody?

Besides, did I not have undisputed proof of the debt in the form of various acceptances? True; so we went ahead. In due course, much to my consternation, the claim was disputed and had to go to trial. So I went again



to Mr. Fudger and suggested a lawyer. I was told to go up to Hamilton, appear for the plaintiff and get judgment.

I had all the correspondence, and took the seven-twenty for Hamilton. Arriving there around nine a.m. I proceeded to the court house, and boy-like, sat on the steps of this dignified building until court opened at ten a.m. Hoping to witness the disposal of a few cases before our case came up, what was my surprise to hear our case called—Fudger vs. our customer. I arose and said to His Honour Judge Snider, who was well known for his amiability to the young and inexperienced, “I represent the plaintiff, your Honour.”

G. Lynch Stanton, Q.C., later Senator, then arose and said in a voice that could be heard well out on Hamilton Bay! “I represent the defendant, your Honour.” The late Senator was a legal luminary of the day. His booming voice was calculated to disconcert even a professional opponent.

His Honour asked if I had witnesses to bring forward. I suggested the proof of the claim was in the hands of the court in the form of the defendant’s acceptances. The case for the prosecution was closed—almost. Mr. Lynch Stanton arose and denied the authenticity of the signatures on the acceptances. What was I to say? “Your Honour,” I said, “I can swear those are the defendant’s signatures.”

His Honour, amused, remarked that it was rather unusual for one to appear both as prosecutor and witness; but as I seemed young and inexperienced, His Honour would examine me himself. Whereupon I moved to the witness stand.

After I was sworn, the Judge showed me the acceptances, and I declared the signatures to be the defendant’s.

His Honour now called on the defending counsel to cross examine the witness. Mr. Lynch Stanton’s first question was, “Are you a handwriting expert?” I had to think fast. Turning to His Honour I claimed I was just such an expert. How could I make such a claim, was the next question. I answered simply that I had for years been opening customers’ mail, and in all cases where correspondence was frequent, as in this, on picking up an envelope I would think to myself, “Here is a letter from my friend so and so.” Opening the letter, I found I was right. His Honour remarked that the young man was a handwriting expert; and the trial was to go on.

The defendant was put in the witness box, as well as one of his employees. Most of their depositions could, by the correspondence I held in my hand, be proved untrue; and as my clever friend had neglected to put in a

counter claim, I got judgment with costs. Judgment was however tempered with mercy. The defendant was to be given time to pay. How much time did he need? The answer came in a week or so in a writ against Mr. Fudger for damages, in an amount exceeding our judgment with costs. We disputed the claim and the case came to trial. I was able this time to show that Mr. Fudger and Kantel would have to be prepared to enter the witness box and testify, both having had to do with the original transaction. I again urged instructing counsel. The boss thought differently. When the day of trial came, the two witnesses left on an eight-forty train and arrived in Hamilton close to the court opening hour. Again the case was first on the list. Mr. Fudger tried to secure the service of a lawyer in the court room. This man knew nothing of the case in advance, and judgment was given against us—one judgment offsetting the other.

Thus early in life did I learn the pitfalls with which the law, as it affects business, is plentifully beset.

The commercial community of Toronto was largely confined within the limits of lower Yonge street, Melinda, Colborne, Wellington and Front. The two old ladies of Melinda Street were, of course, the *Globe* and the *Evening Telegram*. Senator Jaffray of the *Globe* and John Ross Robertson of the *Telegram*, like the wholesalers and Senator Cox, wore silk hats and prince alberts. Old Sam Hunter, that unequalled cartoonist who was on the *Toronto World*, often made these three well-known figures the subject of his ridicule.

Senator Jaffray, I think, had somewhat to do with the Crow's Nest Pass railway and coal development; and as the C.P.R. was involved, Billy McLean, M.P., of Donlands fame and publisher of the *Toronto World*, made the C.P.R. and the three Toronto figures above referred to the subject of his satire. They did not all, or any one of them, need to be really connected with the Canadian Pacific, or with coal or the Crow's Nest, so long as Billy McLean could add some circulation. Any story was grist to his mill.

Senator Cox was in nearly all promotional schemes of the era, and one of McLean's telling blows against the progressive Senator was under the headline "Cox can't wait."

For one reason and another the *World* had financial difficulties. Probably they were caused by Billy McLean's outside obligations, especially in holding Donlands, a section of Toronto's suburbs. During the dying years of the old century this property was a source of constant financial embarrassment to Billy. He was probably forty years ahead of his time in

this particular real estate development which ultimately became one of the city's finest residential areas.

When I became head bookkeeper for Mr. Fudger, I inherited some practices that were not strictly part of the business. I had not been on the job long before H. E. Smallpiece, business manager of the Toronto *World*, came in and asked to have a cheque cashed. H. E. was a well-known figure, dressed in the mode with smooth silk hat and prince albert. The latter garment could not hide a considerable corporation underneath. Mr. Smallpiece had his financial problems. He openly complained that the ubiquitous Billy McLean had called at the *World* office that morning, scooped up the carefully-hoarded money with which it was hoped to pay the weekly wages of the staff, and left his business manager to get the necessary cash the best way he could.

So, Mr. Smallpiece with his ingratiating smile would push the *World* cheque for around eighty dollars in our cash wicket, get the money, and then in his most engaging manner suggest that we might hold the cheque for a week. Of course, by this time he had the money, and nothing could be done except comply.

It was common property all up and down the street that this "kiting" paid the *World's* wages sometimes week after week. Eventually, as all newspapers seem to be sooner or later, the *World* was on easy street. It built a fine building on Richmond Street West, which is now part of Simpson's big store properties.

These fragments of memory I select, not to suggest that Toronto was small in the nineties, for it certainly was not. But I do wish to convey some impression of the personal, the almost intimate character of the commercial downtown of the city. Most of us who worked in this busy neighbourhood knew one another; or, at any rate, knew who was who. The vast impersonality that characterizes Toronto today cast not even its shadow ahead of it.

In 1892, the year after I started work, the present Parliament Buildings in Queen's Park were officially opened, and no one who was not there at the time can credit the impression of grandeur and pride these massive buildings conveyed. They gave assurance of the rising power and dignity of our city, our province and our country.

They cost, including the furnishings, the sum of \$1,227,993. What would they cost today? Meanwhile, plans for a city hall in keeping with the times

were in hand. In 1899, the new edifice with its tall tower, clock and chimes lording it over the city, was officially opened at a cost of \$2,300,000.

The last decade of the nineteenth century was in keeping with the fortune that had smiled on Toronto from its very birth. No city in the world has been blessed with luck more than has Toronto. Toronto never had to go through the early painful struggles of a frontier or pioneer community. The guide books refer to Toronto as having begun as a trading post. It is true the French had a small and insignificant trading post at the mouth of the Humber, but only some blackened relics of a chimney remained of that long-abandoned and unimportant enterprise when Governor Simcoe's soldiers arrived in Toronto Bay to clear the virgin forest and lay out a town-site. In 1793, the new governor of the lately established province of Upper Canada had to find a safer capital than Niagara, on the American border. He wanted to press inland and found a capital to be called Georgina-on-the-Thames or London-on-the-Thames. But wise and experienced old Lord Dorchester, who as Guy Carleton had been one of General Wolfe's colonels at Quebec, and who had been Governor General on and off ever since, had another idea. Admitting that Niagara was too close to the Americans, and Kingston too far down the lakes for the capital of a province already stretching its settlement westward along Lake Erie and into the known riches of the land later known as Western Ontario, he set his finger on the map at a spot well away from the frontier, but towards the western end of Lake Ontario. It had a sizeable bay around which coiled a peninsula that later became Toronto Island.

Some strategy, but mostly luck entered into that choice. In 1793, Simcoe brought his engineers and soldiers over from Niagara by boat and sited the town at the back end of the bay, west of where the Don entered. His soldiers found only two Mississauga Indian bark teepees when they started to clear the virgin forest.

Toronto thus began its career as a ready-made community, with a permanent, well and regularly-paid official population, a barracks and troops, government offices and employees. Around this nucleus, a confident community of merchants and tradesmen promptly settled. Fine wharves were built by the government. A more attractive accommodation for newly arriving immigrants could hardly be imagined.

Luck poured on Toronto with the war of 1812, when strategic roads were rushed through to Lake Simcoe and the Georgian Bay. Dundas Street, as well, was built westward towards Hamilton and Niagara, and inland towards London. Out these military roads settlers streamed, and every cabin along

their length added to Toronto's stature as a forwarding and distributing centre for the rapidly expanding province.

In 1825, the Erie Canal was completed by New York interests to link that Atlantic port with the great lakes at Buffalo. Shortly thereafter, the Oswego Canal joined the Erie with Lake Ontario, and Canada immediately built the first Welland Canal. There was Toronto, with its thriving shipping, in direct trade connection not only with Montreal but with New York. As the Pennsylvania coal fields were developed, Toronto was a ready customer. In 1841, Toronto was the eleventh city in America to be illuminated with gas. By the time the fifties arrived, and with them the first railway building boom, Toronto was established as a junction of the most profitable trade routes originating at both Montreal and New York.

All this good fortune came to Toronto unsolicited. Toronto itself had little or nothing to do with those larger forces whose operation continuously worked for Toronto's advancement.

In these nineties, we did not yet know of the billows of luck that were to burst upon us within the decade. But in the nineties, a means of transporting electric energy long distances by high tension cable already was being perfected. We in Toronto were less than a hundred miles from Niagara, the source of boundless and cheap power. Nor did we know that before the century was eleven years old, there would be discovered, straight north of Toronto, the vast mineral riches of Northern Ontario, which were to pour wealth down upon the city.

A sense of enterprise and new daring invested the whole nation. Under their silk hats, the business leaders of Toronto began to feel large ideas stirring. New buildings, new factories, new residential suburbs, sprang up. Young fellows, with bicycles, could share in the prospect.

## CHAPTER IX

### PARTNERS

At the southwest corner of Queen and Yonge streets, a corner previously occupied by Timothy Eaton before he moved above Queen Street, stood the fine new department store of Robert Simpson.

Simpson had come to Canada as a young man from Scotland, as Eaton had come from Ireland. Like Eaton, he had first gained experience of store-keeping in a small Ontario town before moving to Toronto with ambitious plans and a clear-cut design in his mind.

I do not suppose that Simpson had the original intention of entering into competition with Eaton. Timothy Eaton's policies of merchandising were novel in the Toronto of the eighties. The idea of paying cash instead of running an account, the device of stressing price and boldly marking it, the institution of bargain sales on a continuous basis, were disturbing to the easy-going spirit of Toronto's mercantile life.

Robert Simpson had been trained in the Scottish drapery trade, and his intention was to give Toronto a fine store dealing in the best quality and widest range of goods that he, with his forthright and expert merchandising sense, could find in the local market and import from Britain and the United States.

His store was a success from the outset. Whatever his intention, it was inevitable that in some lines his store should come into competition with his active and progressive neighbour a few doors north of him. Competition breeds competition. As time went by, Simpson found himself involved more and more in increasing the lines of merchandise with which to attract customers to the steadily improving shopping centre of Queen and Yonge. By 1894, he had prospered to the extent that he undertook the building of a really splendid store, six storeys in height, seventy feet on Yonge Street and one hundred and twenty feet on Queen, with high ceilings, wide aisles and a grand airy basement.

This new store was hardly finished and occupied before it was burned to the ground, the result of a fire in one of its elevator motors.

Nothing daunted, the doughty Scots proprietor secured temporary premises and ordered a new building to be erected on the site of the one

destroyed. The design of the former building was retained, but this time it was fireproofed and sprinklered. In a few months, it was occupied. It is interesting to observe that the Burke and Horwood design of that time has proved to be the best unit of construction for department stores, and has been widely adopted all over America. It has been little improved upon over the years.

The courageous Scot was not long spared to conduct his beautiful new emporium. He died suddenly in 1897.

What was to happen to this fine business? Money was by no means plentiful; and those who had it, after the experience of the recent 1891-93 depression, looked askance at the risks involved in conducting a large retail business. They could not know, of course, that a profound change in the very principles of commercial enterprise was already on foot. The day of the dominant wholesaler was already waning. It is a most interesting reflection that for a year or more after Robert Simpson's death, the business went begging for a purchaser.

The late O. F. Rice was at that time manager of the Imperial Bank at the corner of Queen and Yonge, where, after half a century, the branch still does business. Mr. Rice was a brother-in-law of Fudger's and he made the suggestion to Mr. Fudger that he should buy Simpson's.

After months of consideration, three class leaders of the old Sherbourne Street Methodist Church joined together to buy the business. They were H. H. Fudger, J. W. Flavelle and A. E. Ames.

The story goes that "H.H.," as Mr. Fudger was familiarly known, put his silk hat on the back of his head, walked in to T. G. Brough of The Dominion Bank, and asked a loan of \$45,000. The bank man, of course, asked what for. Mr. Fudger's proud answer was he would be glad to tell him after he got the loan. The loan granted, he told Mr. Brough what it was for. Evidently other transactions of a similar character were entered into by J. W. Flavelle, a director of the Bank of Commerce, and by A. E. Ames, who was a son-in-law of Senator Cox. So, for a total of \$135,000, the stock-in-trade and chattels of Robert Simpson were bought. It was understood \$5,000 went to the late Charles Ritchie, Q.C., in commission as agent in the transaction.

The new group took over a lease of the premises for fifteen years, at a modest rental. Mr. Simpson had few deputies, and none capable of matching wits with his active competitor.

While these transactions were under way, so fraught with importance to the future commercial life of Toronto, I was twenty-two years old. What was happening in connection with Simpson's was to affect, in the most spectacular fashion, the future of all those concerned. It was to be fourteen years before my footsteps entered Simpson's, to begin what amounted to a second career. I had not the slightest idea of the importance of the things that were now happening to me.

I had been head bookkeeper for three years. But, as I have indicated, my interests lay outside the accounting and office end of the business with which I had grown familiar from young boyhood. There had been an easy-going attitude with regard to our periodic borrowings with which to pay our European accounts which had impressed me as capable of improvement; and I had made it my affair to tighten up our banking relationships. This doubtless did not escape Mr. Fudger's attention.

But it might well have been my consuming ambition to wait on customers which gave my employer the favourable opinion on which he acted in the dilemma in which he found himself on the completion of his new purchase.

The simple accounting and operational procedure of a small wholesale house were quite inadequate to the great volume of small transactions in a retail business; but Mr. Fudger, who assumed the active management and presidency of the new Robert Simpson Company Limited, tackled the responsibility with the acumen and enterprise for which he was noted. Simpson's was off to a great new start.

He would have little time for his wholesale business now; and he felt that the retailers in the country did not greatly care for department stores. When it became known that Mr. Fudger was connected with Simpson's, the support of customer dealers with his wholesale business might decline. He decided to become a silent partner in the business he had so successfully built up. In February 1899, therefore, he reorganized his business into the Fancy Goods Company of Canada.

There were older men in the organization, men with a great many more years' service than mine. Yet it throws some light upon my youthful attitude that, having taken charge of the office, having mastered and to some extent improved the banking and financial arrangements involving credit, having for three years dealt each weekend with the incoming travellers with their orders and expenses, and finally, having thrust myself with enthusiasm into every opportunity that offered in the way of waiting on customers, it



appeared to me a natural thing that Mr. Fudger should include me with Kantel in his new set-up for the Fancy Goods Company.

He had already, some years before, separated the jewellery, watches and clocks section of the business from the fancy goods, and under the name of Goldsmiths Stock Company, had placed it under the management of Walter Barr, who, with his handsome Imperial beard, his soldierly bearing, and his charm of manner, was undoubtedly one of the best-liked businessmen in Toronto.

Mr. Fudger proposed to keep a controlling interest in the Goldsmiths Stock Company and in the newly-formed Fancy Goods Company, which came into being in February, 1899. He was never again to take any active part in the wholesale businesses which had founded his fortune and made possible his venture into a much larger sphere.

This, perhaps, is the time for me to give an account of the character of this gifted and very fine-principled gentleman. Trying now to recapture my appreciation of him at the time of these decisive moves in my own career, I find my respect for his devotion to work perhaps my most vivid recollection.

I had witnessed his battle to survive the great depression—the world depression—of 1891-93. Few people outside the top levels of business have any real idea of what a depression means to enterprise. Everyone shares, of course, the hardships of depression. But in Mr. Fudger, I had a demonstration of the energy, the tenacity, the endurance required of the head of a business in hard times that has stood me invaluable service in my own experiences of the kind. In such struggles, no doubt a man's chief incentive is his own salvation; but it is childish to suppose that larger considerations do not enter into the case. A prosperous business has an entity and almost a personality of its own, apart from its owners. A sense of responsibility for that business and for the employees and their families, and for all the unseen assets of the business, human and material, mounts up to burden, but at the same time affords strength and inspiration to the man at the helm.

Mr. Fudger had begun life in modest circumstances. He had been one of those fairly numerous wholesale merchants who, in the eighties had succeeded in amassing a fortune of roughly \$100,000, which entitled him to move into the charmed circle of the business leaders of the community. The great depression struck the very year that Mr. Fudger had launched into his own business. He already was committed to a fine home, a coachman, a carriage and pair, and a silk hat. He was moving in the most exclusive circles of the city. He was an active member of the important Sherbourne

Street Methodist church group. Domestic tragedy in the death of several of his small children in their tender years had marked him with a certain depth of appreciation for life which expressed itself in his activity in religious thought, and perhaps enhanced his strong literary instinct. He was an authoritative scholar of Browning. His tastes were intelligent and fine. His home was beautiful and he lived for it more than for his business. He had become what most of the group of successful business men of the nineties aimed to be, a gentleman of property. When the depression struck, in 1891, I was a witness of the struggle of a gentleman to hold fast to the place he had won in life.

It is a little difficult to capture in words the personality of a man as complex and as fine as Mr. Fudger. He expected everyone to work for him until the work was done. But he worked no one harder than he worked himself. It is true, he appeared a little surprised at times to discover that we worked far night to get that work done. You could never say to him, by way of excuse, "I had too much to do," for he would reply, "You should have brought it to me, and I would have done it."

He had no use for sluggards, was completely intolerant of deception, yet he found it almost impossible to fire a man. His tongue was a rapier, but men took it and stayed on; for jobs were hard to get in most of the years I served under Mr. Fudger. He was vastly relieved when people who irked him finally made up their minds to go.

He thought \$50 a week was ample for a traveller's expenses wherever he went, and never failed to check the expenditure of every cent. If a traveller came in from the road too early on Friday, it was a subject of critical comment from Mr. Fudger. They were expected to stay on the road to the last minute Friday, and spend Saturday in the warehouse. If a man came in with \$50 worth of orders instead of the \$150 Mr. Fudger believed could be expected, it meant a call into the inner office, and Mr. Fudger's voice would be heard in vehement expression.

Yet in his natural manner, he was reserved. To his dying day, his instinct was to keep out of the public eye. Those of us who had witnessed his determined struggle to survive, in 1891-93, and to preserve his fine home together with all it represented of gain in far more than the material sense, were aware of the conflicts within his personality. For his business, he maintained a strict and unremitting attention, demanding of all he employed a full account of each hour and each dollar. He detested waste. For his home, he reserved the spiritual and intellectual aspects of his nature, and with the utmost generosity sought and found there most of the finer things of life.

One little vignette lingers in my memory. When I was newly installed as office boy, Mr. Fudger's son Dick, later my good friend, and four years younger than I, came to the office to call for his father. Mr. Fudger came outside his office to find Dick and me engaged in amiable conversation, to do, I think, with Dick's enquiry as to what church I attended, and what school I went to. I recall vividly the sternness with which Mr. Fudger interrupted the conversation between the lowly office boy and his ten year old son.

It was said of him that he was a Liberal in politics, a radical in religion, and a conservative in business. I believe that it was in a spirit of trepidation that he entered into the adventure of the purchase of Simpson's. This was the man whom I enthusiastically served and assiduously studied, and who did not really surprise me on that day in January, 1899, when he called me in to outline the new situation that faced him, now that he had to devote his full time to Simpson's, and who wished to know if I would be interested in having a share of his wholesale business.

From the outset Emil Kantel, who was to be manager of the new Fancy Goods Company, did not approve of the share I was to have in the new company. He was forty. I was now twenty-three. The new company was capitalized at \$50,000, of which Mr. Fudger would hold 51% and Kantel and I the balance of 49% in the ratio of our salaries. Kantel wanted forty shares to my ten. But Mr. Fudger agreed that I should have ten to Kantel's twenty-four. My salary was \$1,000 a year, Kantel's \$2,400.

Kantel's attitude can be understood. He was a man in his prime, our chief buyer both in Europe and in the local market, and our chief salesman. He did not have a particular field to cover as a salesman, but handled several of our largest and choicest accounts in such cities as Hamilton, Peterborough, Kingston. It doubtless irked him to have a man of twenty-three, who had been head bookkeeper for only three or four years, placed upon a substantial footing with him. But with Kantel abroad from September until Christmas and involved with selling for several other weeks of the year, someone had to be given responsibility for the conduct of the business office and warehouse, and to manage the travellers. Mr. Fudger selected me for this task; and it was characteristic of him that he determined that I should be rewarded in keeping with my responsibilities.

I undertook my work with a good deal of zest. I was officially secretary-treasurer of the new Fancy Goods Company. Kantel and I figured out that we could pay for our shares in the business within five years. Therefore, we made an unwritten agreement that our first arrangement should be for that

period of time, after which we could review the situation. Due to the considerable increase in our business and a necessary recapitalization to \$100,000, we were about fifty percent paid up at the end of five years. But of that more later.

From the outset of the new venture, I was kept busy with the accounts, with the financial arrangements, with meeting the travellers on their periodic return from their territories, putting into effect their orders, watching over the receipt of goods from abroad and from our local sources, and seeing to the shipment of orders; in short, all the multifarious activities of a thriving wholesale business. There were always local and out-of-town customers calling at the Fancy Goods Company, and it was a pleasure to attend them.

In 1900, I married my boyhood sweetheart. Lest it be supposed that I was the sort of young man in whose well-laid plans nothing ever went awry, I should relate at this point the particulars of my wedding.

When one views the elaborate arrangements for the modern wedding it comes as a wonder indeed that we in our simple rite could claim very much except that we were man and wife. We were married in the parlour of my wife's home in the morning. Just a handful of people and those of our immediate families witnessed the event. We were twenty-three. We were teenage sweethearts, and looking back on it I find it was good.

Most of our companionship, and indeed a good deal of our courtship was in church and the various activities connected with it. Young people today who quit church attendance and have no constant church duties and who give up the social contacts thus so naturally, easily and wholesomely developed, are taking the big chance of making a wrong choice in life. I have always attended church regularly. I formerly taught children's and young people's classes in the Sunday school. I have sung in the church choir. I have been a member of the young people's society in the church. My experience in these things is that boys are better and more worthy, the girls always even again better and almost always more worthy, than those who have not had the opportunity of church association.

In these days when the so-called standard of living is higher—or should it be called a high standard of extravagance and self-indulgence?—it seems to me that young people have more chance of a happy and useful life if the activities of the church are one of their constant and principal interests. The church is the most natural matchmaker, and even college life takes second place to the church in promoting healthful contacts among young people.

At one time in our experience my best girl was a little taller than I, but long before our wedding date I had managed to gain on her height by several inches. I never did match her in many other ways. She was not only affectionate and devoted but she always knew what she wanted both for the present and the future.

We were married on June twelfth, 1900.

Like the well-prepared bridegroom I was dressed in my best for the wedding. My bride was a vision of heavenly beauty such as is seldom seen today. Anyhow that's my recollection of her.

We were to spend our honeymoon in Muskoka, on Mary Lake. The train left the old Union Station around two-thirty. I made inquiries beforehand and bought my railway tickets and made sure of the hour of the train's departure. Even the day before the ceremony I confirmed the train time. So our embarrassment can be imagined when we went down to our train to find it had already departed. The very day of our wedding a new summer schedule had gone into effect.

We were in the old Union Station around two-thirty p.m. The next train north was scheduled for five-thirty p.m. As it changed to a mixed train north of Barrie, I suggested we should go to Hamilton for the night. Mrs. Burton didn't approve, as we had no money to waste. So we sat in the station until the evening train. So long as we were together here or there it made no difference to this bridal pair.

So as not to be encumbered with too much baggage we had, the day before, checked our grips. We were met as arranged at Utterson station at two-thirty a.m., but found our luggage had been carried on to Huntsville, the custom on the night train. The moon was bright, it was a cool sweet June night. But no baggage! Those were the days when the well dressed bridegroom by day wore a stiff, starched-front shirt. It was, of course, difficult to arrange all details to a nicety, but what we lacked in suitable night attire had to be improvised. So my wife modestly adopted my starched shirt, while I was quite all right in my summer underwear. Next day we got our baggage and we were from then on a normal bride and bridegroom on honeymoon.

Having lived in Muskoka every summer for thirty years or so, I can truthfully say that of all the earth's summer attractions, many of which I've seen, there is no place on this earth below more heavenly in summer than Muskoka. It is also a superb place for a honeymoon.

We rented our first home on Manning Avenue, next door to my wife's parents, and her sisters; and a few years later purchased two houses—a pair—across the street. Into one of these we moved with our three children. This was a more fortunate arrangement than we imagined at the time. We were settled very comfortably as a young and thriving little family, and I looked forward with confidence to my life ahead as a man of business. But I reckoned without the restless instinct which besets all those infected with the passion for selling. In later chapters, I will have occasion to refer more fully to my wife and the matchless support she gave me in various crises of my business adventures. I can say here, however, on the eve of the first demand I was to make upon her, that it is a good thing for childhood sweethearts to marry. Boy and girl sweethearts cannot dissemble, as older sweethearts may. They know each other's faults and virtues, and are on a basis of understanding often denied those who marry after a brief and sometimes theatrical courtship in which neither is really at par. My wife took the greatest interest and pride in my advancement in the Fancy Goods Company. We lived on \$20 a week, every cent of my income from my shares in the company going to pay for them. Aside from our parents, the family and the church, we had few social interests. My twenties were illumined by a steady glow of pleasure in being alive in a wonderful world full of work and immediate plans, and a sense of gratitude to God for it all.

My situation in these respects was not unique. Hundreds of young Canadians were enjoying similar opportunities. For at that time in Canada, and doubtless in the whole western world, wealth was still in the hands of individuals rather than in that of corporations; and it was the custom of wealthy men to invest their surplus wealth not in stocks, bonds or other securities, but in men. What Mr. Fudger had done with regard to Kantel and myself was the normal procedure of business. A wealthy man's conception of investment, when he had money on hand, was to look about for likely younger men and set them up in enterprises that would pay a better dividend than interest, while at the same time profiting the younger men and expanding the whole field of local industry and business. I do not think we have today anything like as efficient a system of releasing the latent capacities of our younger people.

In addition to this very fortunate circumstance, there were several other factors bearing on my life which should be mentioned. The West was filling up at a tremendous rate. Toronto, which had been serving as a distributing centre in the east was already contriving to serve as a distributing and manufacturing centre for the new West, regardless of the distances involved.

And our little Fancy Goods Company was showing a steady expansion each year under Kantel's and my direction.

Mr. Fudger's visits to the premises were extremely rare. In fact, he hardly ever came to see us. He was wholly engrossed with Simpson's. But in the third year of our new company, he called one day and was kept waiting in my office while I was occupied in the warehouse getting a shipment of goods under way. Mr. Fudger was not in the habit of being kept waiting. When I came into the office, he remarked that, as far as he could see, I was undertaking a considerable number of things about the business that had not been contemplated in the original arrangements made three years earlier. He suggested that at the approaching annual meeting, I should bring up the question of an increase in my earnings from the company. Kantel was abroad in Germany at the time, but would be home in time for the annual meeting. While I do not recollect just to what extent the fancy goods business had increased in those three years, a notion of the extent of the increase may be gathered from this fact, that the year Mr. Fudger went to Simpson's, we did an annual business of \$188,000; and in 1911, we did \$550,000.

But in 1902, when Mr. Fudger made this suggestion that I make a move for an increase in my earnings, I had already adopted the principle of putting all my eggs in one basket and watching that basket, as Mark Twain puts it. In the years that followed, I must confess my living expenses increased considerably over the \$20 a week that sufficed at this time. But the principle then adopted of ploughing back every dollar I could spare into the business has never been departed from.

At the annual meeting early in 1903, I failed to bring up the question of the increase, and at the conclusion of the brief agenda, Mr. Fudger was obliged to broach the question himself.

"By the way, Charlie, you have something to say with regard to your income from the business."

I replied that Mr. Fudger himself had brought the matter up some weeks before, but that I did feel the work I was doing probably did deserve a more adequate recompense. Kantel had nothing to say. On Mr. Fudger's suggestion, therefore, my salary was increased by \$500.

This incident proved one of the important turning points of my life. The considerable and, to some extent, unexpected increase in my income had several immediate consequences. Though Kantel had not expressed a single word in the matter, I was suddenly aware, for perhaps the first time, that my

function in the company was a progressive one and that it could not help but conflict in time with his. There are certain moments, instances, contacts in our personal affairs after which nothing can ever again be as it was. This was one of them. The relation between Kantel and myself, whatever it had been, could not improve.

I decided to take lessons in German against the day that I might have to go abroad on buying trips. I determined to take a more authoritative interest in the selling end of our business, the department that had always attracted me. My days as an accountant and office man may be said to have ended with that decision. Yet, as can be seen, it was not a decision I chose to make, out of my foresight or wisdom. It was a decision into which I was delivered.

By the end of that year, 1903, I had decided that I would go on the road the following spring.

Forces far greater than any private and personal ambitions were at this time operating upon Canadian businessmen old and young. It would be opportune at this stage to recall what had been happening to the country in which I found myself so fortunately situated.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier had been swept into power in 1896. The blood transfusion for Confederation had come from railway construction and operation—the Intercolonial in the east, the C.P.R. from Montreal to Vancouver. The national policy, following, had greatly augmented the production of manufactured goods in Canada. But the doughty old Tory Party could not weather the gales that arose on Sir John A. Macdonald's removal from the scene. While it must be admitted that Sir Wilfrid Laurier took over the reins of power at a moment of greatest opportunity, he did so with vision, courage and authority. Sir Oliver Mowat, W. S. Fielding, Sir William Mulock, Sir Clifford Sifton and all the others in the galaxy of cabinet stars the new Prime Minister assembled, were men of tremendous energy. The policies of the new government brought immediate and lasting results. The French speaking people of Canada felt more in harmony with the rest of Canada than they had ever felt before, and lent their increasing weight to the movement into the new century.

Trade discouragements were removed, the immigration flow, which had experienced several false starts, began to flood in earnest. The Liberal policies of British preference rounded out the impression of Canada as a nation in the making. The outbreak of the South African War in 1899 had the effect that war always has—war, as I have said, is a bountiful jade, and spreads her perquisites through the nation as soon as troops are enlisted.



Conditions at home and abroad all combined to Canada's advantage. Besides the multitudes in Europe who were eager to migrate, the filling up of the American West had produced a generation of young people anxious to come north into the free land adjacent to their own rich Iowa and the Dakotas.

In 1900, the population of Manitoba had been only 250,000, and that of the two as yet unorganized provinces to the west, combined, was not as much. Yet in 1904, when I reached the decision to do a little migrating myself, the West was already flooding with the European and American invasion Sir Clifford Sifton's constructive and powerful immigration policy had inspired. Within three or four years, villages and towns were thriving all across the prairies and out to the Pacific, in consequence of the expansion. Mackenzie and Mann had, beginning in 1896, founded their railway empire by building branch lines throughout the West. In 1903, the Grand Trunk bill was passed in Ottawa for the building of the National Transcontinental, bringing with it another onrush of railroad-building prosperity.

It was into the West that I felt the Fancy Goods Company was not expanding to the extent it might.

My duties had been increasing; and during the weeks my senior, Mr. Kantel, was absent each fall on his annual European buying trip I was responsible for the conduct of the whole business. Leaving my office duties more and more to others, and spending as much time as I could selling goods, I learned to know the lines so that I, too, would eventually be able to buy. As a goodly percentage of our lines came from Germany, I undertook some lessons in German from the Rev. Mr. Mueller, then the German Lutheran pastor. He was a fine teacher, but it was difficult for me, with other work, to give very much time to these studies. After I had taken "zwanzig stunden", I had to postpone further lessons.

It was part of my duty to check the work of all our travellers, and their routes, and to know whether all existing customers had been properly served. It was manifest in 1903 that our western field was not fully worked. I proposed to my colleagues that I should take a set of samples out on the road the coming January, and do, say, half the territory between Port Arthur, Ontario and Victoria B.C. This created a sensation, especially in the mind of our sole western representative, Alf Thorne. However, the decision was made; and I asked Thorne to put down in black and white all towns we should visit on our two, and in some cases three, customary calls; also the likely dates of the visits, showing the time necessary to cover the territory. I then suggested that Thorne could begin at whichever end he preferred, but

that he must not leave out any towns en route. He chose the Pacific coast end, to come east on the main line of the Canadian Pacific to Virden, Manitoba, leaving me from Port Arthur to Brandon, including all branch lines of the Canadian Pacific and Canadian Northern, both north and south of the C.P.R. main line.

As travellers were paid a commission on all sales over, say, eleven times their salaries and expenses, I felt it wise to agree that my sales and my expenses should be added to the sales and expenses of my fellow western traveller.

This was, in many more respects than I had any conception of, a critical and decisive action on my part. It showed me, for one thing, Canada, and its prospect. It placed me in contact with men of all sorts and conditions. I had daily the opportunity of selling my wares, which for me spelled accomplishment.

Riding almost daily on trains, it enabled me to read, read, read. It gave me an opportunity I had not had, and would never otherwise have had, to catch up on the reading I craved.

I might conclude this chapter with the reflection that, whereas in 1903, our entire western business had totalled \$32,000, on my first trip West in 1904, on my half of the territory, I did \$35,000; and Thorne, on his western half, alone, did \$40,000.

The Fancy Goods Company, began, in fact, to pick up.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ROAD

The West was a bonanza to the businessmen of the East. In 1904, the vast territory flooding with immigrants was also swarming with travellers bent upon supplying and servicing the communities springing up like mushrooms across the prairies, and down through British Columbia to the coast.

Commercial travelling, in those years, divided itself into three seasons; and our system followed the usual programme. There was the spring trip, begun on January 2 and continuing until March, in which spring goods and staples were shown.

This was followed by what we called the "import" trip, lasting from March 15 until about June 10, in which we carried samples of what Kantel had ordered from Europe. On the fall trip, lasting roughly from August to October, we re-covered the territory, checking our contacts to assure their satisfaction and to obtain repeat orders; and on this trip we spent a good deal of time developing new customers.

It was with considerable excitement that I left the familiar office and warehouse at Yonge and Wellington, and my cosy home with wife and bairns, on New Year's Eve, to arrive in Port Arthur on January 2, 1904, and there to open my ten trunks for business. For me, it was beginning at the beginning with a vengeance. I was secretary-treasurer of the company, and had, of course, been in correspondence with many of my new contacts. I was also stepping into a new sphere in which I had to justify myself not only to the company, of which I was a partner, but to my fellow travellers of the company, who might view with considerable interest, if not with amusement, my intrusion into their field.

From the very first hour of my experience of commercial travelling, I never failed to find it interesting, exciting and intensely satisfying.

My routine was simple. I had a clear-cut itinerary or schedule worked out. Letters were written ahead, advising the customers of the date of my intended visit. All movement was by train, this being long before the advent of the motor car. On arriving at a town, I would secure a sample room, generally but not always in a hotel, and lay out my trunkloads of fancy goods, from dolls to brush and comb sets, from tobacco pipes, pouches and

match boxes to ladies' purses—everything in cloth, leather, metal and porcelain which comes under the heading of fancy goods. It took time to lay out. It took time to repack. But when you love selling, you never grow tired of the necessary routine, either unpacking or repacking. In 1904, the West was filled with people eager to see what you had brought.

On my first trip West, I had, on arrival in Winnipeg, an incomparable picture of the vast power that Sir Clifford Sifton's settlement policies involved. Our feeble trade efforts in recent years are much in contrast to the Sifton drive for the settlement of the West. I suppose in peace time it is too much to ask that such a constructive and powerful figure as Sir Clifford should appear more than every other generation or so, if at all. In war, such powerful figures as my friend Clarence Howe emerge, but it seems in the days of peace that no one is willing or able to go out in front of public opinion and lead us into new promised lands.

Winnipeg was a boiling cauldron of activity. The Canadian Pacific station platform about a mile long was daily covered with the moving mass of humanity from other lands. From all the countries of Europe and from Britain came the hundreds of thousands of stout looking, sober faced people—from Russia, Eastern and middle European countries, their all with them—their children grouped about, their belongings in bags, chests and frequently in blankets or sheets tied by the gathered four corners. What rejoicing and hope, what pathos and pain, what heroic aspirations for the new land and future home, what heart-wrenching memories of the old lands and homes. But kindly and efficient colonization organization seemed to be at work to place all these newcomers in their chosen locations

During 1904 I spent eight months of the year as a travelling salesman with eight to ten trunks of samples. I visited practically all points where the trains regularly stopped, and although many of the towns were small and required no more than a twenty-four hour stop, I had an unique opportunity of seeing in action the various stages of the settlement of immigrants on our western land.

There were a great many immigrants and settlers from the United States as well as from Europe. These were mostly young people, experienced farmers, coming to Canada to settle on "free" land, which in many cases was better than the high-priced land being worked by their fathers and cousins in the States. The Americans came not only with experience and "know how", they had equipment, household effects and cash.

In April, 1904, I was in Estevan, which is not far from the border town of Portal, N.D. Twenty solid vestibuled trains of American settlers came through Estevan that day, sometimes not more than ten minutes apart. Every so often a long freight train with the settlers' effects would pass through. That was a great day, but only one of many such sights during that and succeeding years until 1912.

I recall the sunset of that April day, at Estevan. Silhouetted against the western horizon there pulled into town a large wagon load. The pole of the vehicle had been extended as long as was practicable. It was drawn by two teams of horses. The young settler, the driver, pulled up and got down from his load to buy some provisions. In doing so he had to hand two sets of reins over to his wife, seated high on the big load of miscellaneous effects for household and land use. This young woman not only held the reins but had one arm around a two-year-old child, while the other held a young baby to her naked breast.

As the husband returned I seized the opportunity of talking to him. They planned to sleep on the prairie under the wagon as they had done for the preceding three nights, and as they expected to do now on Canada's soil for the next three nights.

Thirty years later I was to be in Estevan again—deep in the drought area—and as my train out stopped at Pasqua Junction I encountered a young man and woman with a twelve-year-old child who were on their way out of the country, travelling on money sent out from Leicester, England, by the woman's sister. What a contrast with 1904!

The year 1904 was a "wet" year on the prairies—the sloughs were full of water. That year was in a wet cycle which I have good reason to remember. The branch lines ran to and from Brandon and Souris, Manitoba to Estevan and south to Arcola. The new line being built was more or less parallel the one to the other.

Coming north from Estevan I stopped at Oxbow, at which point the railway crossed the Souris River on a high wooden trestle. The train bearing me and my precious samples came in to Oxbow along in the afternoon. While I was waiting on a customer the next morning we heard a commotion outside. The flooded river had carried out the railway bridge, only five minutes or so after a freight train had crossed. I suppose one could be forgiven for speculating upon what would have resulted if the previous day's passenger train had gone down with the bridge.

A few days later on the 24th of May, thinking to save a day, I decided to drive across the prairie from Alameda to Carlyle, a distance of forty-five miles. I found all ready at eight o'clock, a heavy wagon loaded with my eight trunks, a good team, a logging chain on the wagon box—here it was, driver and all. Away we went. When we were about a mile and a half from our start, we had to cross a small creek of muddy water at the foot of the grade. When the front wheels reached the inoffensive looking wet streak of water and black muck they dropped into mud up to the wagon axle. The horses then started to sink into the gumbo. I called to the driver to get down and unhook them. He didn't know how. This man had arrived from England the day before. He had never handled a horse and he was completely helpless. It was up to me. Fortunately I was born in the country and unlike this new arrival knew one end of the horse from the other. I loosened the double tree, drove the beasts up the bank, to firm ground. I then realized why the liveryman had hung the logging chain on the wagon box.

My weight about this time was around 140 pounds. Here I was with a useless driver. Eight trunks, averaging 185 pounds, had to be unloaded over the dash board and rolled to dry ground, and as my companion held the reins I had to unload the trunks alone. Unloading was one thing, but I then had to reload them after rolling them one by one up the bank. First I had to secure the chain around the wagon axle, take the reins from the driver and drive the team myself in order to pull the wagon through the mire and up to safe ground.

After my experience of that day, and after I had reloaded the trunks one by one, I consider that I know what is meant by "horse sense". If that team hadn't been equipped with a big share of horse sense I suppose I'd be there yet.

Our progress on the Carlyle trail was slow. Occasionally there was a small slough to encircle, and then slowly on and on. Being stuck in the slough for two hours was soon to be followed by another unscheduled occurrence, that of being lost on the prairies for several hours.

After being extricated from my first disaster I met a farmer driving into town, who, seeing me and my load covered with mud, realized that I was a tenderfoot. He stopped and said, "You have had some trouble." I agreed. He then said: "Now you will have quite a few of these places over the trail going to Carlyle. The next one you come to, go through the grass bottom and drive like hell. Don't go through the mud hole." Following his advice, I got through successfully, but not without some anxious moments.

I now invariably carried a pocket edition of Dickens, and to employ the time for an hour or so before noon I was reading *David Copperfield*. I was just at the point where David was steeped in Dora when my conveyance stopped, and lo! before us as far to the right and as far to the left as eye could reach was a huge uncharted lake. My disgust with my driver was rather impressive, but not to him. We apparently had gone off the trail. He stoutly declared we hadn't. We turned face about and tried to recover our trail, but it was no use. Whether to go east or west around the big slough was the question, and even if we did get around it, where were we anyway? It seems simple, but we didn't know the answer. The only object that could be called a landmark was a small cabin sitting like a pillbox on the higher ground over to our left. As anyone who has travelled on the prairies knows this could have been three or thirteen miles away, but it was a guide. The next thing was to guess whether it was easier or shorter to the left or the right of our limitless lake.

Although the house was to the left we judged that to go right was better. After two hours' plodding drive, we got around to the south side. We could still see our little house, but it looked, if anything, farther away than when we first saw it. Trust the prairie to provide illusions of all things in the distance.

We drove on only to run smack up against an apparently larger slough. This was in the same country where no drop of water could be found for seasons on end during the 1930's.

Our efforts, however, were finally crowned with success and we reached the small house around four o'clock in the afternoon. Just as I was about to get down off the load to see if I could make enquiries regarding the trail to Carlyle a sweet, sad-faced woman came to the door. We were only a few hundred yards from the trail to Carlyle, which was still fifteen miles away. What a sight of hopeless loneliness was this woman on the lonely prairie. She and her husband and two small children had settled at this point. They were miles from neighbours. One of their horses had died. She had seen no one, except her family, since the previous fall. The water was so high there was no means of communication with those outside, except when her husband rode horseback to Carlyle and back with supplies.

It's always the woman who suffers. It was so in the early Ontario bush. It was so on the bare prairies in those early days. This lonesome soul seemed starved for the sight of a human face and desolate for the sound of a voice from the outside world.

But on we went. After a short distance we could plainly see the elevators and other new buildings of the young town of Carlyle. It was a welcome sight. But wait a moment! We drove on another hour but Carlyle, which had appeared so clearly, was nowhere to be seen. Suddenly, upside down and right side up, and again upside down, we saw in a mirage the whole town. We arrived around eight p.m. We had had nothing to eat since seven a.m. and young men's stomachs are not at all partial to that kind of treatment.

When it comes to knowing which is the best place to stay, ask a man on the road. We were told the hotel on the left as we entered town was the place to stay. The hotel across the road was "poor", so we went to the good one. The proprietor, however, took only a casual interest in our situation. He was pretty well filled up and he couldn't give us anything to eat. His cook had gone for the night.

Over to the "poor" hotel we went. Here things were different. The proprietor called his wife, and while she prepared a good meal for us the husband helped us get clear of some of our mud and travel stains. But I saved a day's travel and next day did much more business in the new town than I expected—so all was again right with the world.

This western trip having begun in mid-winter, I had, of course, heard the old chestnut, "It's cold out here, but you don't feel it." January of 1904 was rather kind—it was comparatively mild—but I had prepared for the worst. I had a heavy fur-lined coat with heavy otter collar and fur cap. For the two weeks of my first stay in Winnipeg, water dripped from the buildings during the day. Business was good, and the wine of western optimism had an exhilarating effect. After two weeks, I had to leave the rather easy pickings in the big city of Winnipeg. As the train left for Brandon, the wind began to blow, and it seemed sometimes as if the old locomotive would be stalled or leave the track. However, all that really happened was a big fall in the mercury, which continued until, for two weeks or more, we were treated to 30° and 45° below zero. The blizzards of the western prairie winters must be seen and experienced to be appreciated.

My first trip along the Deloraine branch found us marooned for four days at the small town of Boissevain. The country around this area was largely settled by former Ontario farmers. They were great pioneers. One of these, around sixty years of age, was unable to get to his home, only a few miles out of town. When after three days a train from Winnipeg was in sight, which we hoped would take us on our way, the engine ran off the track, having hit a drift a few inches high. The snow had been driven and packed so hard by the wind that the engine itself made scarcely a dint in it.



The train to Yorkton ran three days a week. My first trip there was in January. As I travelled with trunks and always saw them off and on each train, the boys on the road who did business out of brief cases and hand grips had the drop on me when it came to getting hotel accommodation. We arrived in Yorkton Saturday night, too late to do business. The train left for the east early Monday. I was obliged, therefore, to remain over to Wednesday morning. What was my dismay to find on reaching the hotel that all rooms were gone. The extension of the line west of Yorkton to Sheho was under way. The railway building crews required accommodation and consequently rooms were in demand in excess of the supply. So there I stood after ten p.m., abashed enough and wondering what I should do. Those were the days before electric lights in frontier towns; but there was acetylene gas. What a wonderful light, but not without some drawbacks. For instance, that Saturday the acetylene plant had been cleaned and the odour was terrific. For dinner, they had boiled onions and turnips. The combined smell was about the limit that humans can bear. In those parts, in winter, the windows were sealed by frost around November, and ventilation, until the frost was out, was nil.

As I stood wondering helplessly what could be done, along came the host's wife. Those hotel women were generally wonders. This one was no exception. She came through with the idea that, as the policeman was away, I might have his room. This policeman was no ordinary bailiff. He was a "Mountie", and a real one. In full dress uniform and on his horse, he was away on a regular tour of inspection, and, where necessary, to get his man. In those days it wasn't the R.C.M.P., it was the R.N.W.M.P.

I was thankful to have his room. True it was just under the roof peak, entered by its own small stair. There was no air. The ascending odours were in full strength. The heavy grey woollen blankets between which the mountie had slept for a respectable length of time, were the blankets I got in between; and the pillow and its case were the policeman's pillow and case. However, I slept the sleep of the satisfied and of the thankful, and on the following days did a good business, leaving Yorkton by the Wednesday train.

Having done all the towns on the line on my way up, I had nearly all day Wednesday to read on my way back to a new assignment on another branch line of the C.P.R.

In early April 1904, I had occasion to come east on the Deloraine branch of the Canadian Pacific, on which trains ran three days a week. As I came from a southern branch, it was necessary to stay overnight in the village of

Napinka. The small hotel had lost its licence, and with it went any idea of providing clean beds or decent meals. It was cold weather and the single stove in the front hall died out early in the night.

The train left Napinka in the pitch darkness of early morning. Guests were supposed to be called in time to get the train, the station being no great distance from the hotel.

The goose feathers in my pillow were not properly cured, or however the process of preparation of such necessary comforts is described. My fur-lined coat provided warmth badly needed, its warmth, however, having the disadvantage of bringing into activity certain insect life, which, except for the tired body supposed only to belong to the young or those of good conscience, would have been enough to keep one awake all night.

As it was, I was soon asleep. Maybe I was too hot or too bitten; in any case I awoke. Now the question was had I been called? I didn't know. Not being a smoker, I had no matches, and there were no lights. I had just dreamed that I had missed my train and would be obliged to stay in this establishment for two more nights. I was worried. I got out on the cold floor, felt around for a match, nearly knocked the lamp over, gave it up and got back into bed, where I lay counting the minutes and cursing my luck. After lying awake for what seemed hours, I heard the dull thump-thump of the proprietor coming along to call us out for the train.

In Germany later I found they had a very good expression in common daily use. It was "Gott sei dank". As I boarded the train on this dismal April morning, I still could feel thankful the night, with all its unpleasant sensations, was gone.

The train pulled out on time and around daylight we arrived in the town of Deloraine. Now, surely, nothing particular could be expected to happen in such a well-regulated centre. Funny, although I remember Deloraine, I cannot recall who was my customer there. One thing I do remember; just about breakfast, a bulletin was posted to the effect that a big section of downtown Toronto had been destroyed by fire. The old *Globe* building was burned, as well as a large area around Yonge, Bay, Wellington and Front Streets. The general area described in the message would lead one to believe that the old Wilkes warehouse, in which our wholesale business was conducted, was in the area consumed by the flames.

I went ahead, however, and did business, hoping for the best. Later in the day, in answer to my wire, a message came through saying the warehouse was saved.

These, then, are the impressions and memories of my first venture into the realms of road-salesmanship. That it was a success I have already declared. Added to my own enthusiasm for the job was the circumstance that the territory I covered had not been properly covered before. Thus early I learned a principle that has been extremely useful to me ever since; that where circumstances allow it, it is better to share effort than merely to attempt to intensify it. Human capacity has very definite limitations. In business, as in agriculture, intensive cultivation is generally economical and profitable.

I did not return to Toronto in March, between the spring and the "import" trips, but had my samples of Kantel's imports shipped out to me, and repeated my rounds of the same territory. I came home in June, and after a brief summer in office and warehouse, returned for the fall trip around the same territory.

I had proved my point as to the wisdom of dividing and intensively covering a territory, and could now deal with the organization, in all its aspects save buying, on terms of personal familiarity with its operation.

But this was a bigger year in my life than successful business alone could account for. I had never so far had much opportunity for reading. Just before I quit school, I had discovered the delight of books. But the nature of my job, from the outset, had not permitted much leisure for reading. I could have given up my girl in favour of books, and thereby have lost the wife who has been the perfect partner of my years, in co-operation and participation, in understanding, and in self-sacrifice to the demands of my business career. But on the first trip West, in which I had to spend so many hours on trains and in hotels, and being by strict youthful religious training averse to the convivial life which was about the only relaxation available to the travelling man, I took to reading. It became my unflinching practice to have a pocket edition of a book, Dickens preferred, in my coat. In the seven years that lay ahead of me, travelling the West and Europe, mostly Germany, I read twenty-five thousand pages of Dickens, most of the works of Sir Walter Scott not previously read, George Eliot's and Robert Louis Stevenson's complete works, not omitting the *Child's Garden of Verses* which, in the farthest places, could bring me, as if by magic, into the living presence of my home and my wife and children. While these come most readily to my memory, I read a great deal else besides.

One of my less inhibited journalistic biographers has suggested that there is nothing I like better than getting four or five meetings going in my business, and then dropping into each one in turn just long enough to decide

everything. In other words, I am a vocal person, and one who likes the last word. It may be true. Add this proclivity to the other factors warring against my having done any reading, and these years in my twenties and early thirties, when I seized the opportunity to read, so forming the appetite for reading that has remained all my life, appear as perhaps the most profitable in my life.

To that reading, and to the reflection it naturally induced, may be traced the more useful of the words I have uttered in the subsequent half-century.

## CHAPTER XI

### MANAGER

The autumn trip back over my territory, from the head of the lakes to Brandon, consumed from mid-August to the end of October. I then returned to Toronto and devoted myself to the office and warehouse, awaiting Kantel's return from Europe.

This was the end of 1904; and at the annual meeting to be held early in 1905, we were to face the fact that the five year agreement between us had now concluded, and we had to consider what was to be done for the future.

Not a word had ever been exchanged between Kantel and myself on these matters, all through the five year period. He was not the man to encourage the sort of intimacy of outlook and plan that should characterize partnerships such as ours. His German nature was phlegmatic and a little stiff, no more with me than with others in the organization. He was a shrewd buyer and an excellent salesman. While not secretive, his instinct was to keep all things in their place, to mind his business, and to expect others to mind theirs.

None the less, I had reason to suppose that he had not relented in the slightest degree in his original attitude with regard to the division of shares in the company. The success of my first venture into selling goods on the road had caused him to take a firm stand with regard to his senior relation to me in the company.

What happened was not without drama. Kantel arrived home from Europe around Christmas, and it was shortly after that date that he made his first appearance in the office.

I was sitting in my accustomed place, in full view of him as he entered the door. He proceeded upstairs to the warehouse giving me no more than the most perfunctory greeting. He was never an effusive man; but this action was singularly pointed. I had realized, as far back as 1903, when Mr. Fudger had not only been in full agreement with my \$500 raise in salary but had initiated it, that Kantel had not been exactly happy. At no stage of the development of the business was I uneasy, for two reasons: first, the work was so demanding and so interesting that it left no time for idle speculations; and second, throughout this period of change, on whatever occasion I had to have dealings with Mr. Fudger, the impression I had of his goodwill and

complete faith was not to be doubted. I suppose I enjoyed at this time the independent spirit familiar to young men who have gained several years of useful experience in a business and who suffer no qualms at the thought of looking for a new job.

I picked up the telephone and called Mr. Fudger at Simpson's. I asked him if he would be good enough to see me at two-thirty p.m. He said he would be glad to.

At noon, Mr. Fudger called me back to ask if I would come to see him the following day.

I suspected that Kantel had been to see him, and that Mr. Fudger wanted until the morrow to think over whatever problem Kantel had presented.

To say that I was not excited at this development would be absurd. But adding up all the factors and aspects of the situation, I was not worried. The following day, I went up to Simpson's fourth floor, to Mr. Fudger's office. Not knowing what Kantel's action had been, but supposing it to be the reiteration of his stand five years before that he should have a four to one division of stock with me, I said:

"Mr. Fudger, I think it proper to tell you at once that if what Mr. Kantel has in mind should prevail, I shall have to look elsewhere than in the Fancy Goods Company for my future."

"Charlie," replied Mr. Fudger, "if I have to choose between Mr. Kantel and you, I know whom I will choose; and it will not be Mr. Kantel."

Not long after this, the annual meeting was held, and the chief item of business was the necessity of increasing the capital of the company from \$50,000 to \$100,000 in order adequately to finance the increasing business we had in hand. This had the effect of increasing the obligation we already had because of the additional shares we now subscribed for. At this meeting also, Kantel's position was revealed as wanting a four to one division of the shares between him and me, failing which, he would like to buy me out or have me buy him out. But no definite arrangement was arrived at respecting the five year understanding between us which had come to an end. The business had to be got on with, and I was eager to be on my way to my second trip to the West and my first trip to the coast.

I had determined, before the end of the previous year's trip, to reverse the arrangement with Alf Thorne, I to take the territory from Regina to the coast, while Thorne worked from the head of the lakes to Virden, Manitoba.

This proved to be the first of seven consecutive selling trips I took to the coast. For on July 1, when on the road, I received word from Mr. Fudger that Kantel had decided to retire from the Fancy Goods Company. This news was not as dramatic as might be supposed. I had a presentiment that Kantel, sensing Mr. Fudger's support of me in the business, would not choose to engage in a long-drawn contest with a younger man familiar now with all departments of the business save buying. Mr. Fudger suggested in his letter that I come back to Toronto at once, as I would have not only to assume duties as manager and principal stockholder of the company, other than Mr. Fudger, but that I would have to assume Kantel's role as European buyer. I replied that I would finish off my trip, keeping appointments already fixed, and would be home on schedule.

For seven years, therefore, I went abroad in September, arrived home the day before Christmas; then started on my western selling trip as early in the new year as I could, making in all an absence of several months of the year from office and warehouse, and from my family.

To this day, I look back upon that period in my life with wonder and astonishment at the fortitude of my wife in assuming the single-handed responsibilities of our family. It seems to me not many women would have subordinated their desire for a more conventional family life to the business enterprise of their husbands. But events so befell, each so timed, and each so fortunate for us, that there was really no escape from the course I was obliged to take. Having got into the habit of work, and my work being of a most seductive character, there had been no instance, up to this exacting period, in which I had been obliged or inclined to side-step any opportunity that offered. The opportunities had come thick and fast in the five years. I can only assume that my wife had become reconciled. I wrote to her nearly every day, while on the road in Canada; and by every mail while abroad. While I do not recommend this as an adequate substitute for a husband's presence in the home, I must confess that it is possible to convey, in writing, sentiments that do not come easily to the lips. At all events, we survived seven years of this servitude to work and opportunity, and came out of it with an understanding and affection no less deep, I feel sure, than if we had been privileged to live as most others live through that period of early married life.

The question now may be asked: was I secretary-treasurer of the company, or was I a travelling salesman? I had felt for some time that the important part of the business was the buying and selling, and that office administration, if well set up, was of secondary importance. When I went on

the road, I put my assistant, Charlie White, in charge of the office; and J. H. Wood, the senior traveller, was looked upon as the boss when Kantel and I were both away. It worked effectively. This was long before the days of the long distance telephone, and the telegraph was hardly a means of office administration. Fortunately, business in the early 1900's was not so dominated by the split second that letters could not deal with problems as they arose, and Charlie White would keep me informed of office affairs by mail.

My first trip to the Pacific coast started in January, 1905, the city of Regina being the first stop. At that early date, Regina was called "Queen", but she was far from being the grand metropolis she is today. There was little if anything to suggest that she would shortly be one of the provincial capitals of Canada. It was certainly beyond my wildest dreams, when I first laid eyes on the Regina of 1905, that in later years I should be so deeply interested in the business and social life of a great city whose citizens would show me every kindness the human heart can devise, and, indeed, do me honour on sundry public occasions.

Saskatchewan was not yet a province on this occasion of my first visit. The choice of Regina as capital of the new province that very year changed its prospects immediately. The ever-expanding activity of a government city guaranteed its future. Within a very short time after my first view of Regina as a settlers' headquarters town, it was being transformed into a city of great beauty. The memory of the late Governor McNab will always be cherished for his work while Minister of Public Works in an early Saskatchewan government, in providing the fine park around the provincial government buildings and Wascana Lake. How the prairie people love trees! In the eastern part of Canada, originally all bush, we fail to appreciate the priceless asset we have in our trees which lend the endless variety of beauty to every prospect. The prairie people will travel fifty miles to have a picnic under the trees such as they find now in the Regina parks. The dependence of the West's economy upon water explains what might be described as the veneration rather than the love of the prairie people for trees. One of the saddest sights of the West during the drought of the 1930's was the destruction of countless thousands of promising trees, planted and devotedly nurtured by communities and individual farmers in all parts of the country.

The Regina I first visited, however, offered little promise of things to come. The old Windsor Hotel, on Railway Street, was the best accommodation at that time, and it was well filled on my arrival. Not only were the rooms full, but the basement was full of sewage as well, due to an



unfortunate break that could not be repaired in the depth of winter. I obtained a good sample room outside the hotel, but a cot in the hall of the Windsor was all that was available to me in the way of accommodation. There were only a few dealers whose credit was established at this time, however, and I was soon on my way to Moose Jaw. Here the C.P.R. had a hotel at the railway station which was, as usual, an oasis in a country not otherwise equipped with anything like up-to-date hotels. Moose Jaw was even then one of the best business towns of the West. It had the advantage of being a railway division point. A superior class of settlers had surrounded it by 1905, perhaps by reason of it being a divisional point; and altogether, Moose Jaw had the advantage over many other centres which have subsequently come ahead to challenge her position.

At the time I visited it first, the country west of Moose Jaw and south west, was considered range country. No grain was grown of any account around Swift Current, Maple Creek, Medicine Hat. The Mormon settlement in southern Alberta below Lethbridge, and down to Cardston and the border, was a notable exception. Those earnest people whose religion is an every day and every person business deserve well of Canada.

Even the big general store in Cardston was owned by the church. My first trip into this border country was in springtime. One sensed a spirit of well-being in Cardston. Around ten a.m., supposedly after the store keeper's early work was done, I called and presented myself. I had to wait quite some time and was interested to notice two big Blackfoot Indian bucks who were also stolidly waiting in front of a pile of blankets. When the manager finally came along, he asked me to come in again around four p.m., and he would make a definite appointment. That might sound like a waste of time, but anyone who has travelled on the road, carrying several trunks, has always plenty of work to do on his samples and correspondence. At four o'clock, I went into the store, got my appointment, and as the manager, in a friendly way, came with me from his office and out through the store, here were the two Blackfoot bucks still standing, immovable, gazing dreamily but steadily at the same blankets they were looking at in the forenoon. I remarked to the store manager that these same redskins were standing stonily contemplating the same pile of blankets hours earlier. He replied that was the common thing among these Indians. As a matter of fact, they stood in the same place until the store closed and returned the next morning to resume their vigil. The manager told me later on that around noon the next day they each bought two pairs of blankets. One thing about transactions of this kind is that they stick; and there is never any question of goods satisfactory or

money refunded. The redskins don't buy until they really make up their minds; and when they do, it's a deal.

One has an increasing impression of the importance of Canada's West when, as the prairies pass, the foothills are reached and the mountains come into view. To the layman it seems incredible that anyone, or any body of men, could traverse these gigantic barriers. The Rockies, the Selkirks, the Coast Range all seem to offer their own problems of an immensity almost beyond human understanding. Yet these barriers were crossed and recrossed.

Before the great accomplishment of the spiral tunnels and the five mile tunnel near Rogers Pass, the hazards of transportation were really fearsome, hazards to life and limb of passenger, hazards to life and limb of railway employees, and the risks of material loss. It was not uncommon for the trains to be held up for days while a big slide was shovelled and sawed out.

Passengers have little idea of the wonderful care exercised constantly over thousands of miles of railway during the whole of the twenty-four hours of the day. What is true of our railways generally is more than ever true of the mountain sections where dangers and hazards are so frequently faced, and where over the course of years thousands of faithful men have given their lives that we might travel, not only in safety but in the height of luxury.

Canada's travel media are not too well rewarded. The first consideration, of course, should be for those who work and manage these great properties; but it must be realized that we cannot afford to allow our great railroads to become obsolete, and that we should, indeed, place them in a position that renders available the improvements which science can devise and economy of operation require.

My first arrival in Vancouver in the winter of 1905, was in the rain, but what a spring-like change from the scenes farther east. From November to April rain is the regular daily diet. The rain in Vancouver is something like the cold on the prairies. It's cold, but you don't notice it. On the coast it's wet; but you don't notice it—if you are well protected with raincoat and umbrella.

In 1916 when Simpson's built their Regina branch, the workmen on the building, who came from various points of the compass, were sitting in July outside the new building eating their lunch. The usual banter was indulged in. Finally a very confident Regina citizen, who was in no sense loath to express himself in answer to a question about their winter, said, "Oh sure it's cold, but you don't feel it." "Naouw," responded a cockney fellow workman.

“You don’t feel it. Naouw, you’re too demn numb.” The rain in Vancouver in winter is persistent, but it doesn’t ever push you around; you’re too “demn” wet.

The train from the East arrived in Vancouver in full daylight. The last few miles were along the south shore of Burrard Inlet, which forms the port of Vancouver, one of the great ports of the world. As one would expect, the Canadian Pacific held four aces in every hand when it came to terminal and port facilities: and did any one have a better right? R. Marpole was the coast vice-president. Whoever in those early years held that position was a little tin god; and while the late incumbent, George H. Baillie, would be the last to claim any such divine distinction, the coast head of the C.P.R. still is a big man. Of course, he now has to share his honours with the Canadian National coast head; and in this respect one only needs to know that the present great Hotel Vancouver, built in the days of the late Sir Henry Thornton, is jointly managed by that company in partnership with the Canadian Pacific, which, calling itself the world’s greatest travel system, not only had railways across Canada, and coastal steamers up the Pacific coast to Alaska, but the great fleet of White Empresses regularly crossing the Pacific to Japan and China.

The early 1900’s saw prodigious development on the coast. Vancouver was feverish with real estate development. The only skyscraper in 1905 was the Dominion Trust Building, with its gold roof. How many people’s gold was sunk in it only the associates of the promoters might be able to say.

A well-known Toronto man, whose family bore a good reputation, got into a bit of trouble in the produce business in the East, and found it convenient to go to Vancouver where he engaged in the real estate business. Things were moving so fast out there that it didn’t seem necessary to keep one’s sales arguments within the strict confines of the truth. Our friend from Toronto was no exception. He was accosted by an old Toronto acquaintance who expressed amazement that his friend, a former devoted member of one of Toronto’s many churches, (Toronto was even in that early day known as “Toronto the Good”) should so easily and glibly make statements manifestly at variance with the truth. The old Toronto acquaintance remarked it must have been a sting to his conscience to tell such whoppers. Our real estate friend agreed, but said he soon overcame any conscientious scruples, as he found his lies of the previous week were well within the truth the week after.

Vancouver was a wide open town. No one thought of buying a smoke or a drink over the bar or the counter. First, one played the slot machine outside the door of the cigar store or saloon. Those of us who arrived on the coast, would often take the “first downward step” by playing the machines, even if

the yield or even the jackpot invariably cost more than it delivered. It was a colourful time, now like so many wild pleasures, a thing of the past.

The old Vancouver Hotel was deservedly popular. It was in a class by itself anywhere on earth. I wonder if any building ever has had as many improvements and alterations from its original form as it had from its beginning. The Georgia Street front was, as I remember, mostly of brick, with the upper storeys a sort of emasculated mansard. I doubt if that famous Frenchman could have recognized what I have described as his “roof design”. However, already by 1905, it had added the wonderful dining room wing, with its new rooms above and its famous kitchens. The chef was a well-known Chinese whose culinary accomplishments are still probably not excelled in these days. The rates were American plan \$4.50 and \$5.50 a day. They were high for commercial men who were generally expected to pay all expenses, railway fare, excess baggage cartage, and hotel bills on \$50.00 a week. It couldn't be done in Vancouver; but fortunately business was good enough to justify the higher hotel rates. As most of us on the road were younger men, we set about it to get our money's worth in the dining rooms. Older men might know their way around better than we younger men and they had the lion's share of the business to start with: but they couldn't match us in putting away the second steak and all sorts of dessert extras, not to speak of the Hotel Vancouver's famous cracked crab. An extra fifty cents a day to Ed, our waiter, brought us not only second helpings but extras that only he and the Chinese in the kitchen knew existed.

Vancouver was a favourite spot to all travellers, and it undoubtedly still is! but in the early days I speak of, one got more for his money and more in some ways than was good for him. A great many travellers who worked their way out to the coast with an early spring line, would work their way back with goods for a later season. This was all right for such as myself who had a large range of goods to handle, and great physical labour in moving and arranging the requisite baggage. Those who like myself were generally busy from morning to night from Monday morning to Saturday night, and whose second range of samples arrived before they were finished with the first lot, escaped many of the multitudinous temptations which assailed on every hand those who were idling while Satan was inventing new forms of enticement.

The triangular weekend by steamer from Vancouver to Seattle and Victoria and return was a popular institution. The only trouble was, what started out to be a weekend of joy and felicity too often wound up in pain and disaster. The pain of the “morning after the night before” and the

disaster of getting physically as well as mentally lost, too often resulted in loss of the job and consequences even beyond that. I suppose if I had been less lucky in not having had to work such long hours and so continuously, I might have been among those who didn't have anything but regret after the triangular weekend and other excesses of the time.

Later, looking over the records of this first visit to Vancouver, I was amazed to find that the entire year's business of our company for 1905 was less than I secured in three days in 1911. However, the field was good. Spencer's were the big people, although the Hudson's Bay had a large store. Woodward's, who now lay claim to top honours, were small. The trouble with Spencer's was that if you sold them, you mustn't sell anyone else. I already had sold others; consequently, although for years after, and until recent times, Mr. Christopher Spencer was a good friend of mine, my annual courtesy call was my only business. Stark's had a thriving store on Hastings Street, and they could always be counted upon for a good sized order. Charles Woodward, whose two sons now operate the business, had a good philosophy, as I remember. It was—not to build or add to the business until the money was in hand. Not many could do it; but Charles Woodward did. He had a natural awareness and wisdom that few men are possessed of, or seldom exhibit. If he could not provide the money for a department, he would not hesitate to rent it out; and although such a programme had its problems, he did not refrain. In my lines, there was only a seasonal business to be done, most of it at Christmas time. If Mr. Woodward handled the goods at all, he bought them himself. On my first trip, I landed him as a customer and he continued so for many years, his son "Puggy" being detailed later to look after me.

Farther along Hastings Street I had a customer named Benjamin Honig. Externally, at first glance, his store didn't look too promising; but, from the first, he proved to be one of my best customers. In *Daniel Deronda*, there is introduced a London bookseller named Mordecai, in whose back room was dispensed a constant flow of wisdom and good sense. It was the same with Ben Honig in Vancouver. Jewish people have so much cause for grievance against those of us of non-Jewish persuasion that they are inclined to withhold their real thoughts and philosophies, which, if accepted by us Gentiles, would make us better citizens and even better Christians. As I grew better acquainted with my Vancouver Jewish friend, I often dropped in for an after-hours chat in his office in the corner of the mezzanine of his shop overlooking busy Hastings Street.

All my fellow travellers were by no means weekend play boys. Many were examples of good citizenship and most were as well to be trusted away from home as at home. One of my best friends on the road was a young man who sold medical and surgical supplies. As he called on as many doctors as he could, his work seemed never done. He had one rather sad weakness. He would drink to excess; and when he was the worse for liquor it usually took him days to recover. When sober, however, none was better company or a better friend. On one occasion when this lad was off again, I suddenly found that I hadn't seen him for some days. He was still registered at the hotel. I went up to his room, got no answer to my knock, opened the door and entered the room. There in bed was my friend in the depths. I spoke to him—no answer. I approached the bed. I noticed a thin wisp of smoke coming from under the bed clothes. I folded these back, whereupon a smouldering mass burst into flame. I quickly covered it with blankets and called the doctor. My friend's chest was a roasted mass of flesh. The maid on the floor had been suspicious of just such trouble from his smoking in bed and looked in as often as her duty permitted. His assortment of medical samples were on tables around the room. When the doctor came he grabbed a big sample jar of carron oil and slapped it on the patient's chest. He was removed to hospital; but he had to have several weeks' care. The episode passed, but he still had his occasional binges. He was, in spite of this failing, a good salesman and a good fellow. How merciful is the good Lord above.

One of my friends in Vancouver was the representative of Ward Lock & Co., the English publishers. His name was Clarke. Anyone who has been on the coast, and especially in Vancouver in winter, knows what manifold blessings appear in spring. April, and especially May, bring the balm of freshness to the air, colour of myriad flowers to the gardens, and sights only to be found in this near tropical spring paradise.

Clarke and I together on Sundays went for long walks to and through glorious Stanley Park. Of course, the tangled growth obliged us to keep to the roadway or paths, but on every hand we were regaled with all the beauty of the park with its wondrous harbour scenes, with its huge heaven-high trees and a thousand delights which clear the mind and elevate the soul.

One Sunday, my friend Clarke turned to me with the odd query, "Did you ever contemplate the subject of hair pins?" He was a cockney, and gave these words all the accent for which those born within the sound of Bow Bells are famous. When I found he was serious, he went on with his odd dissertation. Walking west on Georgia Street, he pointed out first one, then another and another hair pin on the sidewalk. Clarke went on: "Now we are

approaching a Methodist church, and you will see numerous hair pins.” On the sidewalk outside the edifice we found a dozen or more. How did he account for this mystery? He proceeded to elaborate his research in respect to churches and hair pins. The reason for so many outside the Methodist church was that the members of that body were above average middle-class people, and therefore their women used a goodly supply of hair pins. Further, the Methodist service, appealing to the emotions rather than the reason, the nature of their restless bodily movements was such as to loosen their hair pins; hence, outside the Methodist church, many hair pins.

Having attended the Presbyterian service previously on rainy Sundays, I asked about the Presbyterian church. He answered at once—very few hair pins. It appeared that most Presbyterians, being Scots, used hair pins like everything else, sparingly. The nature of their service being sedate and quiet, the few hair pins the ladies used were seldom disturbed, any more than their emotions or consciences were. So upon their leaving the service, few hair pins, very few, indeed, could be found.

The Baptist churches, too, yielded comparatively few and for many of the same reasons as in the case of the Presbyterians.

My curiosity was aroused. What about the Anglicans? He, of course, was himself an Anglican. It seemed the Anglicans are better-class people. They, because of worldly prosperity, used more hair pins and those of better quality and of greater ornamental value (in a quiet way). Moreover the Anglican service, with its standing and kneeling, bowing and sitting, had a tendency to loosen the pins. Consequently, in the vicinity of the Anglican edifice more and better hair pins were to be found. Now that most of the older Christian bodies have either united or adopted a more sedate and regular form of service, I suppose the big share of dropped hair pins must come from the various new bodies who, exciting themselves with the terrible consequences of failing to believe every word of the Bible from cover to cover, go early, stay long, sit late, listening to diatribes which in some respects seem less Christlike than the teachings of those less concerned about the orthodoxy of others.

The Vancouver of my early visits was a C.P.R. town, but was, like all seaports, a great cosmopolitan city. It had its share of physical difficulties as well as attractions. False Creek, so called, has always been an expensive feature of the city, although great bridges have been built. Since the Canadian National has developed its terminal in the False Creek area, and since the expansion of the great outer areas such as Shaughnessy Heights and Point Grey, including the University of British Columbia's properties,

Vancouver has become a most attractive city. The industrial and other developments east along Burrard Inlet and towards New Westminster have, with the other features, combined to make this a great metropolis, and, some think, second to none for the future.

I spent the 24th of May, 1905, in Lacombe, Alberta. Imagine being in Canada's newly created provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, upon the occasion of their birth! As I sat in the hotel after dinner at mid-day, a man around sixty years of age came and sat beside me. He had a small Canadian flag in his buttonhole, brought from school by his grandchild. This man had thought there would be a holiday celebration on the 24th; and although he was disappointed to find it was at Wetaskiwin, further up the line, he seemed happy. He told of his coming from Iowa with his son and young family, his own wife having passed on, and pointing to the Canadian flag, in answer to my question as to how he liked Canada, said, "Fine! Any country that's good enough for my grandchildren is good enough for me."

While selling goods on the road I not only saw much of western Canada and Canada's great Pacific coast, but I learned my merchandise. Opening up and displaying almost daily the samples from my numerous trunks, with larger assortments added in the bigger centres, is hard work. It is, however, a great educator. My hours were from seven a.m. to eleven or twelve p.m., unless travelling along a line like the old Canadian Northern from Edmonton to North Battleford. The train left Edmonton at midnight; and as one travelled east, the hours of arrival were from two a.m. progressively to five-thirty a.m., day after day.

At Lloydminster, arriving about four a.m. almost a dead duck from lack of rest, I ran into a circus. The accommodation for the circus crowd, including guests, meant that I had to sleep on a trunk in my sample room. Not only that, but customers were so busy they could only look at samples now and again during the day.

A tired, sleepy traveller is not much of an advertisement for his company; but youth and determination were on my side, and I got through a very trying and not too productive trip with a "that's that" feeling, and "let us go on to the next."

My import samples of what Kantel had bought abroad were shipped out express to me in Vancouver, and after showing these in Vancouver, I started the trek back across British Columbia and the prairies, calling upon the customers I had met for the first time on my route out to the coast.



## CHAPTER XII

### SELLING AND BUYING

The situation I found myself in, on my return home, was supported with almost every advantage. As a very junior youth, I had got the hang of the business and of the personnel in it with an intimacy not always available to older persons. I had spent several years in the office, as bookkeeper, learning the commercial routine thoroughly. Later, I had, by choice, interested myself in the warehouse. To cap the whole picture, I had had two seasons on the road. A better training for new responsibilities could hardly be imagined.

Somewhere about this time, I had become aware of a basic principle of commerce, which is this: you cannot sell until you know how to buy; and you can't buy intelligently until you have had the experience of selling.

If there had been one fault to be found with Kantel, it was his complete dependence upon his own instinct and taste in the art or science of buying. Both his business instinct and his taste were above average; but he belonged to that regime, which was at this very time drawing to its close, in which the wholesaler told the manufacturer what to make, and then told the retailers what he could have to sell. Kantel did not do enough selling, in the few important accounts he attended to in Ontario, to obtain a proper realization of what the customers wanted. By reason of his self-centred attitude towards his fellow employees, he did not hear from his travellers the criticisms, suggestions and ideas they brought in, every week, as the result of their contact with the retail customers, and, through them, with the public.

Not only had I been the recipient of these comments and criticisms for several years as the office man, but I had, in my two years on the road, found grounds for criticism of some of the lines I had to carry and dispose of. To me, it seemed of paramount importance that the buyer, abroad or at home, should be fully conversant with what the retailers had in mind, from season to season. They were the actual contact with the consumer. What our customers had to say of our wares should be of first importance to a buyer.

Before I proceed with the account of how I undertook the new job that faced me, I would like to interject two or three anecdotes of minor experiences that had fixed themselves in my mind. In his lifetime, a man collects a few of these classic little incidents which serve him as constant

reminders of certain basic principles of business. They linger in the forefront, as it were, of his daily memory.

For instance, when I first left my books in Mr. Fudger's office to wait on my first customer in the warehouse, it seemed to be because the customer, often from a small town, only knew the one whose name had been signed to letters he had received, and wanted that person to wait upon him. One Ontario customer always came in to buy in the last days of the year. Most people already had their fall and Christmas goods in, marked and displayed. This customer was looking for bargains and there were in those late days each year many lines the whole stock of which would be brought forward and laid out for sale. This man had a sort of suspicion which served him instead of shrewdness. In any case, if one offered him an article he would almost invariably select another line, as he seemed to feel you had some ulterior motive in presenting the line you offered. One who depends so much on his own judgment gets little help in his selections. One year when this man was in, he insisted that I should leave my work in the office and wait upon him; and of course I did so.

He resorted to his familiar method of always choosing a line other than that recommended. After an hour or so of that sort of thing we came upon some writing portfolios. Two lines were marked each \$12.00 per dozen. One had sold, the other we were stuck with. Here we were in front of two lines, one of which I could recommend, the other I wanted to sell. So, I picked up the good-selling line and began to recommend it. My customer immediately put his hand on the line we were stuck with and asked how much it was. He took a half dozen of it.

Most salesmen are familiar with this type of buyer. I suppose the attitude adopted towards them might be described as one of cheerful malice. Most of them, fortunately, happen to be well able, otherwise, to take care of themselves.

Another type of customer, and another sort of attitude between salesman and customer, remains clearly in my memory. On my first trip to the coast, I was working one of the great diversions from the Canadian Pacific at Revelstoke, the spur line to Arrowhead, where the railway operates steamers on the Arrow Lakes. These great waters of the Columbia River widened out for a whole day's steamer journey to Robson from which point the train takes up the job east to Nelson and west to the boundary country and Kettle Valley. There were three points in this valley, Grand Forks, Greenwood and Phoenix. The smelter at Grand Forks, when operating, distributed fine spending power all through the district. It had bad years among the good,

and when the smelter was closed there was little business to be expected. Today, the Kettle Valley is a fine fruit and agricultural area; the old mining activities have gone the way of all flesh, though the gold mine at Phoenix at one time was quite a producer.

From Phoenix to Greenwood, one could go by train; but to go down the mountain by the shortest route one usually drove. I did it once, but my trunks I sent on ahead on account of a report that the day before a similar load of traveller's baggage had been lost. The horses got out of control and the whole works, including the driver and the traveller, hurtled two thousand feet down into the valley. It was one point where shivers easily ran up and down the spine, and one was glad and thankful to reach the town below.

I had a customer in Greenwood who on my first visit to that town still owed our firm for the goods shipped the previous year. Jack Coles, the customer, was a first class risk, at least later he proved so to be. He was a young man, so was I. He expressed surprise that I should come to see him, as he still owed us money. He was in hard luck as the smelter at Grand Forks had been on short time.

Coles' first remark was, "Well, don't open up your samples because I can't buy this year." I told him I had already opened up. I then asked if he hadn't sold the goods bought the previous year. He admitted he had sold a goodly portion. I suggested he must be buying goods he shouldn't carry, and as incidentally as I could I suggested perhaps there were some goods of competitors he should never be able profitably to carry. We wound up by making an arrangement that I should see him that evening after store closed, around nine o'clock, to look through his stock with a view to seeing which goods he should buy and which he should drop. We worked till one a.m. Together we looked through every shelf and show case, discussed how this or that item sold. He himself came to the conclusion to discontinue some of his sources of supply, those whose goods on hand left him always hard up.

Next day he came to see my samples. I sold him about the same amount of goods as he had bought the previous year.

We avoided including any slow sellers or lines similar to those he had on hand, and he undertook to pass up several lines which others carried but which were not good for his trade.

That was the only trip I made to Greenwood, although my successor on the road called on him year after year. In two or three years Coles was out of debt, and had an established line of credit. Almost twenty years later, after I had gone to Simpson's, a man came to the enquiry desk and presenting his

card asked to see me. It was my friend from Greenwood, B.C., and I greeted him with the question, "What are you doing down here?" He had a successful brother in Woodstock. He himself was now successful. He said he had always wanted to see me again to thank me for pointing out to him that only goods which customers want enable a merchant to pay his bills and get on.

Vernon, B.C., was one of the important points at which our company hadn't a customer. There were two reasons for this. One was that there was only one dealer in Vernon who handled at retail practically everything I carried and he confined his buying to my competitor. The other reason was that our chief competing firm, Nerlich's, had a wonderfully well-liked representative in Billy Davidson, and Billy got all this man's business in our line. This was not the only place in the West in which Billy had the best account, but it was one of the few places where he had the exclusive trade of the only dealer in town who sold our lines.

I was warned of this situation before I visited Vernon. When I called on Smith, the dealer in question, he made it quite plain that I had made a mistake in coming to Vernon at all. In fact my predecessor had realized the situation and for several years he had not bothered to stop at that point. As usual, my samples were all opened up before I went to look for business. Here was a place with no record of business to match or to beat, but here too was a place with no prospect of making a sale. Hopeful, I went up and down the street, calling on any likely looking prospect. I was turned down at one place after another. No! they wouldn't buy because Smith handled the line and didn't interfere with their lines. Feeling a bit low I resorted to a candy shop in order to console myself with a few caramels, to which I was always partial. Looking around I found a large area in the store devoted to tables and chairs, an ice cream parlour out of season. In those days ice cream was consumed only in the hot weather, not like at present when it is often in daily use.

Having nothing better to do, I began to gossip with the smart young lady in charge, who in the "off" season was alone in the store. She confessed that she was fed up, there was so little to do except in summer. One thing led to another. I found out who owned the place, that the young woman craved the chance to put in some dolls, toys and gift goods for fall and Christmas trade. However I should have to see her boss, Mr. Glover, a contractor who lived a good two miles out of town. It was around four-thirty p.m. I walked down to Glover's house, experiencing a little difficulty in finding it, but I was too early. He would be in for dinner around six-fifteen, and I should return at

seven o'clock. Back I went after having my own supper and looking over my samples to see how they might look to such a new prospect. Glover thought well of the idea. His wife said my lines were just what the town needed. The exclusive dealer wasn't giving them the goods they wanted, and those he did offer were too high in price. Glover called his candy store girl on the 'phone. Would she go down with him to the hotel to see my samples? Nothing would suit her better. They came down to the hotel around eight-thirty p.m. By two o'clock the next morning I had sold him over \$500 worth of goods and made a customer who stuck for years. I never heard whether Smith and my friend Billy Davidson were pleased or no.

My final anecdote is one of the humorous legends that hang about a warehouse. Henry Smith, who had been Mr. Fudger's partner in earlier days, was gone before my time. But this story of him was familiar to me as a boy, and I recollected it to my advantage many a time when I had become a foreign buyer.

On one of his trips to Germany, Henry Smith was in Sonneberg, which was the centre of what was called the house industries. In these the work was done in the homes of the workers and brought to warehouses in the central towns or villages. A feature of these Sonneberg house industries was the old-fashioned large composition dolls, known as washable and unbreakable, and being neither, were sold competitively as low as twenty-five cents.

Henry Smith, in charge of his hired commissionaire, spoke no German, but was very fond of German beer. At the conclusion of a day's work in this market, he was taken by the commissionaire to a German Club, the members of which were largely manufacturers and assemblers of house industry toys and dolls. After having a few schooners, Henry inquired of the commissionaire who the manufacturer was who sat next to him and what he made. On being informed that he made so-called washable dolls, he instructed the commissionaire to inquire what his price was for dolls fifty-six centimetres in height. The manufacturer quoted 3.25 marks per dozen, less 10%. This was 10% less than the price quoted by other manufacturers for that sized doll. After having one or two more schooners Henry decided to place an order for twenty cases.

It should be explained that a couple of cases of these dolls would fill an ordinary office about fifteen feet by twenty feet. The more beer Mr. Smith consumed, the better he liked the doll. He finally wound up by buying forty cases, which was about twenty more than his trade would ordinarily absorb.

However, the deal was made and when Mr. Smith returned home he was glowing with the account of the exceptionally large doll which he would have, against his competitors, to sell for twenty-five cents retail.

Finally the goods arrived, and following his industrious custom he got all hands on the job opening cases. The usual routine was to pull the nails, pile the case on the floor, while the lid of the case was nailed on the bottom, and turned on its side to act as a fixture. When his crew opened the first case all the dolls in it were black. Of course that looked like a mistake; but upon opening one case after another it was found that the whole lot were black mammy dolls—this manufacturer making none other. Here was a nice pickle; no competitive twenty-five cent ordinary washable doll; but a large twenty-five cent negro doll which had always been in very small demand. However, Mr. Smith was resourceful to the extent that he took everybody into his confidence, telling them the story of the beer coasters piling up before him while he ordered forty cases. When the Ontario travellers came in at the weekend, he gave them the story too. The joke on him was so well appreciated that they all with one consent determined to market these dolls if it was the last thing they did. The consequence was that each salesman told the story of the negro dolls, and at the end of the season there was not a single doll left; in fact they were short of the demand a case or two.

I do not recommend buying goods under such comfortable circumstances. But I felt that Henry Smith's practice of taking his selling staff into his confidence was at least half the solution of the problem. It seemed to me that a buyer should do two things: take pains to consult his salesmen with regard to the changing tastes and opinions of customers; and take equal pains to explain to the salesmen on his return from a buying trip, what he had in mind as he made each purchase. I will have some examples of this to illustrate the point presently.

But now to my new job. The office and warehouse were well set up and functioning without my presence, as my western trips had demonstrated. The sales staff was in good hands under the occasional guidance of Jim Wood.

Dividing up the western territory among three younger men, I prepared to go to England, France, Germany and Austria around the twenty-fifth of September, 1905. As the German buying took from eight to ten weeks, I immediately repeated with Pastor Mueller the same "zwanzig stunden" of German I had taken two years before, and although when I landed in Germany later in the year I couldn't use my German, I nevertheless pegged away, travelled in tram cars instead of horse-drawn cabs, and had my

German dictionary always on hand. Later I was referred to as “Der junge Herr mit dem Lexicon”.

It was not at all necessary to know German, because, as I discovered on arrival in Germany, which was filled with American buyers, the procedure was to employ a commissionaire or commission agent, who conducted you about the towns and villages around which the “house industries” of Germany were concentrated. The commissionaire spoke fluent English, and translated for you.

## CHAPTER XIII

### BUYER

The prospect of going abroad as buyer for the Fancy Goods Company was a great thrill as it seemed a wonderful realization of many of my long cherished hopes. It was to be the first of seven consecutive autumn trips to Europe, from 1905 to 1911, in which I was absent from September until Christmas, arranging always to be back in Toronto by Christmas eve at the latest. I should again refer to my wife and her entire compliance with these circumstances, placing upon her as it did ever-increasing responsibilities.

While I had very limited experience of the business of buying, I was not altogether green in that field, and of this it would be well to speak.

Even before the last years of the nineteenth century, it was part of my duty to buy some of the staple lines my firm carried and this involved periodic trips to New York. My first trip was in 1898. It was a big event for me. New York was already next to London in size and world importance and probably the greatest natural port in the world.

In the days of my early visits there were no undergrounds. The cable cars on Broadway were electrically operated, but it was still a few years before the old elevated railways were changed from steam to electric power. The first subway was opened in 1904. Even then the crosstown street cars were all horse drawn. The original Grand Central Station, built in 1870, was still doing business, although during my earliest trip and for years after, the work on that great terminal, only completed as it stands today in 1937, was under way. Nor was there any Pennsylvania Station. All except the New York Central trains had their terminals on the Jersey side, served by ferries to and from New York.

Business with which I was concerned was largely conducted south of Canal Street, although the hotel, and theatre and retail district was already on the way up Broadway, Fifth and Sixth Avenues about 33rd street. Even in those early days business was done with dispatch. All places of business were ready at eight a.m. and didn't close till six.

I had a lesson on how to find my way about New York from a friend. As practically all streets ran to or from Broadway one had only to take the New York city directory, turn to Broadway and note on a home-made map the number on Broadway from which the desired street began, or where it



bisected Broadway. Armed with the list of sources of supply in order as their streets met Broadway, all I had to do was to board one of Broadway's street cars and when I arrived at, say, 426, I knew at that number the street I wanted intersected.

I was enabled to visit more than a score of sources of supply, finish my business with them and return home after three days. Just as good speed records in buying should be possible today, because business is mostly further north, where the streets are consecutively numbered; and faster means of transport are available.

Nowadays, business starts later in the morning, quits earlier and leaves the buyer free to indulge in shows and other after-hour enjoyments which were not much in our picture. I made a number of trips to New York, of which the total cost including railway accommodation was \$50 each. My first hotel was the old Globe, around 30th Street at Broadway, rate \$2.00 and upward—not upward for me. The next trip I stayed at the new Imperial Hotel, a block or so further north. The old Waldorf Astoria was doing business, but all I could afford was to gaze wonderingly through the brass rails and lace curtains and wonderingly wonder some more.

The guide maps of today's visitors, showing theatre, hotel and shopping districts, refer to nothing south of East 23rd Street, although John Wanamaker's great stores are still well below 14th Street.

New York's Manhattan Island is shaped much like the foot of a sock, and in the days of my first work there much of the business I was interested in was virtually in the toe of the sock.

World famed for its role as receptionist for the U.S.A., New York was always alive with newly arrived immigrants from the world over. As everyone knows, Italians and Irish were to be seen everywhere that labour was to be performed or the law was to be kept. The bars were wide open everywhere; only a shuttered swing half-door kept the full scent of beer and other beverages from those on the sidewalk.

These experiences in New York, together with my two seasons in the West, at that period of boundless expansion when getting about the country was no mean challenge to a man's ingenuity and capacity for rapid improvisation to meet the emergencies of travel, were ample qualification for journeying abroad.

Between my assumption of management of the company and my departure on September 25th, I worked out, with the other members of the

staff, the details of what our set-up and procedure should be, in office, warehouse and on the road. We had been adding modestly to our staff, in the past couple of years, as circumstances required. When I launched out upon the career of foreign buyer, I did so with the knowledge that the organization I had the privilege of heading was a going concern.

A first trip on board ship was a romance in itself. How few ships sail the seas today compared with before the first great world war. The Cunard, the White Star, Canadian Pacific, Allan Line and other famous lines regularly plied their ships under the British flag, while some American ships, the French Line, North German, Hamburg American and other continental lines, were in full competition.

The days of the old single-screw steamers such as the *Etruria* and the *Umbria* of the Cunard were over. The proud *Campania*, *Lucania* and the old *Majestic* were superseded by the ocean greyhounds, landing their passengers in less than six days.

When the *Oceanic* of the White Star first sailed, her size, speed and accommodation were so far ahead of anything which sailed before that her sponsor seemed stuck for words adequately to tell of her wonders. She wasn't pre-eminent very long. The *Kaiser Wilhelm der Zweite* and *Kron Prinz Wilhelm* and *Kronprinzessen Cecile* snatched away the Atlantic Blue Ribbon for speed. Along came the C.P.R.'s *Empress of Britain* (afterwards the *Montroyal*) and the *Empress of Ireland* which suddenly sank in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1911 with great loss of life. These C.P.R. boats sailing from Quebec city cut nearly one and a half days off the stormy Atlantic trip, but the route further north had its disadvantage due to fog and more inclement weather.

My first crossing in 1905 was on the *Baltic* of the White Star Line. Like her sister ships the *Cedric* and *Celtic*, which were only slightly smaller, the *Baltic* was built principally to carry cargo, although she carried several hundred passengers in her three classes, saloon, second and steerage. The *Baltic* was large, over 24,000 tons, not speedy: she took eight days to cross. The fare, that is the food, was plentiful but plainly English, as English food could in that day be plain; but it was abundant.

Surely there is nothing with which to compare life aboard ship. If royalty were aboard, there wasn't much they were allowed which was not freely ours. Business people travelled first class, but in my case, and generally, it was true that minimum rates applied. That is, we took the lowest priced first class accommodation we could get; and then, after we were all aboard, we

would often be moved to better accommodation. This usually happened to me because my fall trip going east was well after the summer rush.

The first thing was to locate our cabins, get our baggage, sometimes including a steamer trunk, so named because it was low enough when closed to go under a steamer's lower berth. Next, we would secure a deck chair and rug; and finally see the second steward in the dining saloon to get a place at table for the trip.

Tables for couples or small parties, restaurant style, were a later development; in the early 1900's, the dining saloon arrangements were at long tables known as the captain's table, the first officer's, the chief engineer's, the purser's, the doctor's. I formed the habit of asking to sit at the doctor's table. He was nearly always at meals, and was considered the social host, often having little to do professionally.

My first landing in old England was at Liverpool. The Mersey River, the Mersey docks, the Prince's landing stage and the sight of Birkenhead across the river, were very impressive. Most of the passengers travelled directly to London from the docks, but I had two reasons for taking a later train to London. I had some business in Liverpool and Manchester; but, as well, on Saturday, I saw my first professional soccer game at Anfield. The provision for seating and caring for such vast crowds was a thrilling spectacle to me. As a boy in the country and when first in the city, I had always played football, that is, soccer, and nothing else: but when I went to work, football was out. Now I saw the game the way it should be played, and incidentally got an eyeful of a cross section of English life.

While I had been gaining early experience in buying and selling goods, my younger brother was climbing up the difficult ascent to some accomplishment in pure science. Frank was at this time in Cambridge, having won the 1851 Exhibition scholarship which enabled him to take a post-graduate course in Cavendish Laboratory at Emmanuel College under Professor (later Sir) J. J. Thomson. This scholarship enabled him to spend two years in Cambridge, and the work he did while there not only earned him the degree of B.A. (Cantab) but assured his future in the Department of Physics, University of Toronto, first as a demonstrator under J. C. (later Sir John) MacLennan and finally as his successor as Director of the MacLennan Laboratory and head of the Physics Department at his Alma Mater. The Burton Wing of the University of Toronto's Physics Building was named in his honour and in his memory.

My first trip overseas enabled me to visit Cambridge where I holidayed with my brother, lived in his “digs” and spent the days and the nights in the alluring atmosphere of the Colleges of Cambridge, an atmosphere much different from that which surrounded the sordid commercial circles within which the industrial activities proceed. One of the daily ceremonials was the “grind” through and about the colleges and the town. The “grind” was the customary, the almost invariable walk that undergraduates and faculty alike took, at some time every day, around the colleges and town. For exercise, no doubt; but it had a traditional aspect, too, and created a curious spirit of fellowship and social contact among the student body of the several colleges. Walking for Canadians is practically a lost art. Our highways have no bicycle or bridal paths, let alone pathways for the pedestrian. One walks anywhere nowadays at the peril of life itself. Yet walking is inherent in the very nature of man, and it seems to me inevitable, when the full fury of this age of mechanization has been passed, that men and women will again walk, to their great profit and pleasure.

While on this visit my brother and I made a trip to Oxford, and as in Cambridge enjoyed visiting all those gems of architecture while getting a good deep breath of tradition and atmosphere. One of the sights we took in was the magnificent cathedral of Ely, where in the lady chapel the heads of the saints were all ruthlessly broken off by the Roundheads of Cromwell. In a weak moment, I was persuaded to climb up the several hundreds of steps within the spire of Ely cathedral. Never again!

It was thrilling to spend some time with these young men who were a grand lot, on the whole. The young Englishman of that day was ready to defend against all comers any arguments that reflected on the excellence of British institutions. For instance, a young man from Birmingham spent over an hour trying to prove that the ordinary tweed cap, commonly worn to British football games, was headgear superior in attractive appearance to the black derby, which in those days was almost as commonly worn. Since the days of Al Smith’s famous brown derby, one seldom sees or has occasion to wear that famous old head gear.

I had already, a year or so before my first trip to England, begun reading Dickens. Now on the soil and amid the scenes of England, my interest in Dickens’ works was really aroused; and during the seven years, just before and during the years of my annual visits to Britain, I read and re-read the books of Dickens in their native setting.

Liverpool and Manchester did the world’s business in wool and cotton. The Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool and the Midland at Manchester entertained

people from almost every nation in the world. Most of the old commodity exchanges have been closed; and I imagine much of England's importance as a world clearing house has disappeared as a consequence.

Lancashire, in the fall months, is a rainy country and these old trading and manufacturing centres were grim and depressing to the eye. However, as my forbears were all from the British Islands, it was natural that my sentiments were stimulated. The unpretentious moral earnestness of the people was most impressive, and a feeling of pride to belong to that human family took possession of me. There were unfamiliar sights, there was poverty and degradation in forms and of a kind only Dickens could portray. There was evidence of wealth and power. Their trains were quaint and small to my eyes familiar with the massive transportation of the west. But they were convenient, speedy, comfortable and always on time. What impressed me most, however, was the status of their crews, who were uniformed, disciplined and treated as servants. This was in powerful contrast to the railway crews of the Canadian and American trains, rugged individualists who had the status of officers responsible for the operation of the trains. I imagine my first intimation of the differences in social relationships between the old world and the new came to me on my first contact with those British railway personnel.

Arriving in London at Euston station I had to claim my baggage, hail a porter and get a cab. It was before the days of motors. The hansom cab with its single horse, the driver above behind, was the forerunner of the taxis. Buses were horse drawn, and one of the things for the stranger to do was to sit up near the cockney driver and listen to his line. " 'Ammersmith", no "h". Why did he leave off the "h"? Oh, "I drops 'em at 'Ammersmith and picks 'em up again at *Hislington*."

I stopped at the First Avenue Hotel on High Holborn. It was one of the Gordon Hotels, whatever that meant. It was a genuinely old-fashioned place, but comfortable, especially around the fireplace. The hall porter, impressively uniformed, was the encyclopaedia, the one who ordered servants, only slightly less caparisoned with gold braid and red stripes, to do for you anything you wished, that is everything that did not come within the jurisdiction of the head waiter. He was something else again. The chamber maid, she was something else too. The hall porter looked after your mail, gave all outside information, looked after your things, your outside engagements and reservations. The average hall porter had an income larger than the proprietor. It was not uncommon for a hall porter to pay a

considerable lump sum for the privilege of serving the guests from whom of course he proceeded to get back his money, plus a good sized profit.

The London Central Railway, the Electric Underground, was the first of its kind in the world. It ran from the Bank to Shepherd's Bush. Of course there was the Metropolitan steam line, a sort of semi-underground and a thoroughly dirty smoky institution, later on electrified and incorporated in the great London underground system.

It was only a step along High Holborn to Holborn Station. The old gals of London who sit here and there throughout crowded London selling apples, flowers, etc., are an institution in themselves. *Punch* once carried a caricature of old Mary, a flower seller, with the supposed conversation: "Well Mary, how do you put in the time?" "Oh, please sir, I just sits and thinks and sometimes I just sits."

Britain has built up a world reputation for many lines distinctly her own. Irish linens, Staffordshire pottery and bone china, woollens, knitted wear, shoes, carpets and many other specialties are in demand the world over. Electric generating and other machinery, and many items of heavy equipment have held their own for quality and excellence.

The Britisher despises sharp dealings and while he is a keen and even ruthless trader, he thinks as much of his honour and his reputation as of profit; but he seems always to have more sense than to do business without profit.

On my first buying trip I was selecting goods suitable for the Fancy Goods wholesale trade, and this range of goods did not include many of the lines above referred to. In fact I was always looking for things I thought England should be able to make but which I couldn't find.

Thanks to the great British Navy, Britain was still mistress of the seas. The German movement, "Das Deutsche Flotte-Verein", was the oceanic counterpart of the handwriting on the wall. However, Britain could give away Heligoland and witness its transformation into an impregnable fortress and guard for the great Kiel Canal, and still be complacent.

In trade, Britain could be similarly complacent. Let the Germans have their great Leipzig Fair twice annually, attracting buyers from the world over. Britain, as a source of supply, was sacred, and needed only to be known to such as sought these sources out after much fasting and prayer on the part of the seeker. Consumer goods produced in Britain were generally sold exclusively through London wholesale houses. Remember, it was the

day of the wholesaler. But even wholesalers from the various countries of the world, including the United States and the various Dominions and Colonies, had in most cases to buy from the London houses. The obscurity of the manufacturers' location and of the character of his production was thus assured.

All this fine time, German manufacturers and their representatives were in France learning French, and selling goods to the French, in England learning English and selling goods to the English. They were in all countries, including America.

Buyers like myself spent days in England and France, weeks in Germany. The self complacency of England was not disturbed.

Buyers from the United States and Canada and other parts of the world thought they had to learn the language in order to do business in Germany to the best advantage; not so the buyer from England. I used often to meet English buyers on the Continent who took no little satisfaction in declaring that English was the only language they needed. As I grew in experience I could see where they missed out; it didn't disturb me. Even although many bills of exchange for the payment of continentally made goods had to be bought in London, it did not seem to suggest that many of the lines purchased might be made in Britain.

Certainly in many lines British-produced goods were top quality, but the British saw the manufacture of, say rotogravure machines, which originated in England, go to Augsburg, of cutlery from Sheffield go to Solingen. They saw, too, the development of the great dye and chemical industry take place in Germany.

How about the visiting buyer? My company was lucky in that we shared a London office with Simpson's of Toronto and Montreal. We could rightly claim to be a London house, but buyers without such established facilities, and without settled banking arrangements had two strikes on them before they started. Even then it required patient work for years to uncover all the useful sources of supply.

The consequence of all this was that most Americans, the majority of whom were of continental extraction, simply came to Britain once or twice, didn't like the cold, didn't like the food, couldn't find the goods and went on to the continent, especially to Germany. The great volume of German imports into the United States was built up in spite of a difficult American tariff. This trade was of course destroyed partially in the first war, and was finally given the K.O. by Mr. Hitler in the 1930's.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GERMANY

By the time I made my first trip to Europe, my business card carried the designation "Managing Director". I thought comparatively little of the matter. But to my surprise, my amusement and, I must also confess, to my satisfaction, I found myself accorded special respect and even preference in obtaining attention because of the title, "Herr Direktor". This notwithstanding the fact that every day veterans with far more experience and much larger buying power were served only after I was attended to.

My older and more important fellow buyers could not understand why I received such preference. Had they been able to use the title "Director", as I did, I would certainly have been taken in my turn. Thus did a young buyer rush in where angels might have feared to tread.

Canada, too, was rather a magic word, especially among those manufacturers who did a large British business. We Canadians would often be afforded the special prices given only to England, because the supplier in Germany thought of Canada as an "English colony" entitled automatically to English prices. However, where lines were designed especially for the U.S.A. trade, we were quick to make it plain that Canada's money was the same as American; and we thus tried to get it going and coming.

My first entry into Germany was when the eight p.m. train from Paris, L'Express Orient, arrived about two a.m. at Karlsruhe. Old King Karl, for whom the place was named, evidently found peace there, but to me the name seemed anomalous because we were routed out there and had to change trains for my first point, which was Frankfurt-am-Main. Since the end of the last war this city has been the American Administrative Centre. The Hotel Frankfurterhof is one of the "grand" hotels of Europe. Arriving there around seven-thirty a.m., I had my first chance to use my German. The odd thing was that the only need I had was for a cab, and "Droschke" was one word I hadn't been taught. It wasn't my only trouble in getting going in German, but by trying to make some advance every day, and with a good deal of help from the hotel porter, I got from one place to another.

Offenbach across the Main was a great centre for the manufacture of leather goods, and rather good class fancy articles of nickel and glass.



My first Sunday I usually spent in Erfurt which was a Prussian railway centre from which many lines branched out. As soon as I had my breakfast, which on the continent consisted of coffee, a roll, honey or jam, I started my day's work in the hotel with the German railway time table, called a "Fahrplanbuch." These voluminous publications bear very little relation to the ordinary railway time table, but their object is the same. However, with a railway system radiating from Berlin and serving every nook and corner of a country of 60,000,000 people, the Book of Time Tables is a real volume.

The first time I tackled the job I worked from eight-thirty a.m. to midnight, with a short walk before lunch and dinner. On one of these walks I met one or two army officers, who were swaggering along the sidewalk. Officers were some potatoes in Germany, and I was quite content to follow the example of the civilian population in stepping off the sidewalk while the officers marched by, their disdain for the ordinary people being such as only Prussians could display.

Work, going and coming from one town or zone after another where one line of goods after another is produced, was my refuge, my shield against homesickness, lonesomeness and ennui. Constantly studying, I listened, attuned my ear to the language and constantly referred to my English-German dictionary. In larger centres like Leipzig, Berlin, Dresden, Nürnberg, Chemnitz and Vienna, I attended Grand Opera, or sat in a popular café where, to the accompaniment of a cup of coffee and a bun, at a cost of one mark, one could listen to a really top orchestra up to sixty pieces dispensing the world's best music.

I first heard *Faust* in Liverpool, but a much better rendering of it in Paris. In Berlin I once heard *Tannhäuser*, on an occasion when the Kaiser and King Alphonso of Spain were present. I first heard *Carmen* in Dresden, *Aida* in Chemnitz, Wagner in Nürnberg and *Die Boheme* in Vienna.

Vienna, before the first war, was the world's capital of beauty and gaiety. Daily in the Ring Strasse hundreds of grand equipages would drive by. Sacher's, world famous restaurant, entertained visitors from all countries. It was not uncommon to see some of Europe's famous crowned heads in that wondrous spot. Music was so much a part of Vienna that it was to be heard everywhere—in the streets, in the cafés, gay, enticing and melodious. The waltzes of Strauss, the operettas of Lehar and a hundred other presentations could be heard as you ate or as you walked along the street.

I heard *The Merry Widow* first in Nürnberg, and again in Berlin, Vienna, Paris and London. Franz Lehar, the composer, personally conducted one of

his later works, I believe *Katinka*, when I was in Vienna in 1926, and while the old Vienna enthusiasm almost rocked the theatre to its foundations, and although the beloved Franz was given a great ovation, the post-first-war Vienna was a sad shambles compared with the early years of the century, when I shared its loveliness as a mere buyer of merchandise.

A goodly number of some thousands of lines I had to select came from Germany, within whose borders and in Austria, especially old Bohemia (later Czecho-Slovakia), I spent about ten weeks in each of my seven years' experience. I had a rather better than usual opportunity of practising my German while going about in these regions.

As this experience coincided with the late twenties and early thirties of my life, I was in contact with world events that had little to do with my work. If I could not be regarded as observant, I could at least be credited with a good average of inquisitiveness and some sensibility. Consequently the atmosphere of Germany, so different from Britain or France, was of immediate interest—*Nicht* this and *nicht* that—*verboten* here and *verboten* there. Not only soldiers here and there—soldiers everywhere.

Propaganda which under Goebbels in the second world war was developed to the status of a science, was even in the early 1900's, a definite part of German preparation for war. It had France scared stiff, had reached British official circles, but otherwise was not of much effect on the people of Britain.

When in Berlin in November 1905 I saw for the first time Kaiser Wilhelm II, the occasion being the official visit of the King of Spain, Alphonso XIII. Unter den Linden was festooned from the Brandenburg Tor to Der Dom.

This great Berlin thoroughfare with its wide boulevard between two traffic lanes lent itself to effective display. Tall masts were erected from one end to the other, upon which were borne great panels of bunting in the colours of Spain's national flag. There was, however, none of the ease and quiet good order to which one is accustomed in royal processions in London. As the German Spanish royal party proceeded along the wide thoroughfare, military guards and endless numbers of police kept the crowd in line and under constant surveillance. The huge centre gates of the Brandenburg Tor, used only on such occasions, swung open and at a fast clip the two royal mounted figures and their escorts, aides and guards rushed by, entering the Royal Palace at the upper end. The day had been largely spent in huge military parades and exercises on Templehof, which, before the day

of aeroplanes, was the Royal Parade area, and which now is used for peace time traffic of the German and International Air Services.

My second view of the Kaiser was the evening of the same day when, at the Royal Opera House, *Tannhäuser* was performed. In these more sober days it is hard to imagine the refulgent brilliance of these royal personages with their ladies and accompanying attendants.

The withered arm of the Kaiser, however, was difficult to hide, even on such a dress occasion when decorations and insignia were supposed to exalt the individual quite beyond the mundane plane on which such defects might be observed.

Such flamboyant spectacles, however, meant little to me or, I suspect, to most of the businessmen visiting Germany at this time. The taste for military pomp in Germany and Austria seemed to me merely something quaint and characteristic of a race of people in an old and crushed society. If there was menace in it, we did not take it seriously. For all its pageantry and swagger, Germany had goods to sell. And we were buyers.

Travelling from Berlin to Nürnberg on this first European trip, I sat in a compartment in which I found alone a fine-looking German with the proverbial brush cut and square head, who, I soon found out, spoke fluent English. He was a reserve officer on his way to his annual refresher course in the Army.

This man, around forty years of age at the time, had succeeded his father in a brush manufacturing business, and was evidently quite above the average in personal wealth and income. He was well educated and had spent nearly two years in England and a similar period in France, to learn the languages and form his impressions of these countries. Even in 1905 he was confident that war was inevitable if not imminent. He was antagonistic to the French, disdainful of the British.

This was my first encounter with the obsessed German military mind in a person who appeared to be a normal businessman. Within the next two or three years, I was to realize that this brush manufacturer was typical of his whole class and race. The impression his conversation made upon me is as vivid, after half a century, as if it had been a few days ago that we chatted in the Nürnberg train. Nothing I had heard or read at home in Canada, or in the United States or Britain prepared me for the shock of incredulity with which his remarks affected me. And I feel sure that Canadians, Britons and Americans generally were as unaware as I that Germany, which had succeeded in rising to the forefront of industry and commerce and was so

successfully providing so much of what the world wanted, was determined to undertake, at the earliest opportunity, the military conquest of Europe and of the world.

Businessmen visiting Germany brushed aside these impressions as mere vapourings. We were intent upon our business, and Germany appeared to be the ideal country in which to do business. My first week in Germany passed with a minimum of difficulty. The second week started badly. Among my purchases were some lines of low priced German china novelties and tea and table ware. Some other lines had to be left till as late as possible, but on this occasion I found myself in the small town of Oberkottzau, near Hof in Bavaria and no great distance from the Saxony town of Zwickau. My time table was in need of revision as train times changed slightly after I had made up my itinerary. When I had finished my work at Oberkottzau the manufacturer accompanied me to the station, pointing out that I would not likely have time to buy my railway ticket. Sure enough, the train stood at the platform as I came down to the station. The place being small, the manufacturer spoke to the guard and told me to secure my ticket at Hof where the train was due to arrive in about twenty minutes. Looking up my time table, I noticed the train for Zwickau left Hof in seven minutes after my arrival at the latter stop. Hof was a divisional point and from it railway lines radiated in all directions. One of the cardinal principles in railway construction, equipment and operation in Germany was to provide easily available facilities for military mobilization.

However, on the occasion in question I was not concerned with any consideration except to leave the train, get my tickets, one for the journey just completed, the other to my new destination, Zwickau. As I left the railway car I noticed the car number 1232. As it was only a job of a couple of minutes to go under the platform into the station, buy my tickets and return, I left my things in the coupé of the coach in which I had travelled alone for the previous twenty minutes.

On returning to the platform I had left, no train or cars were to be seen. Upon enquiring for my Zwickau train I was informed it left from another platform. Hurrying to the designated platform I found the train all right, but my car 1232, carrying all my things, was on its way in another direction. I accosted a low rank railway worker and tried out my German. My effort caused as much embarrassment to the listener as it did to me as I readily realized I could not make this man understand. So I accosted another. He was of somewhat higher rank but not high enough to make out what I was trying to say. This party, however, politely took me to a third who could

understand enough to know that I had lost something and needed help. He took me to the Station Master.

A Station Master in Germany, in a place large or small, cannot be mistaken very well for anyone else. Like all German railway servants, he was in uniform and on his head was the usual peak cap; but its top portion was a bright red. This official usually possesses sufficient authority to order anything to be done which seems necessary.

By the time I got my story off to the Station Master he understood quite well, but as the car with my lost things had gone out of his jurisdiction he sent me with a guide to the telegraph office where I was confronted by a still higher officer than the Station Master. Being chief of the “Telegrafamt” or telegraph office he was of military officer’s rank and dealing with him was like marriage, not to be undertaken lightly but in the fear of God. Here I stood before the telegraph chief whereupon I began to recite my difficulty. The officer went on with some work and paid not the slightest attention to my plaint. My guide who had brought me into his august presence, touched my elbow very respectfully and repeated several times words which I finally understood. The German words were “Ihr hut, ihr hut!—hut ab!—hut ab!” All I needed to do was to remove my hat, which of course I did as quickly as I could after the necessity for doing so sunk through my incredulous head. As soon as I removed my hat the officer was simply sublime in his courtesy and kindness. Hof was the only fairly large town and divisional point where at that time some one who spoke English could not be found. The chief of the telegraph office, however, understood my German. I had only repeated the same thing over and over to about five people. What had I left on the car? My brown grip, my black grip, my writing case, my umbrella and my travelling rug. I left them in wagon 1232 having newly arrived in Hof from Oberkotzau. Had I been possessed with sufficient musical talent I might have easily written my story on a musical score. I knew it off by heart at least as well as some of my early nursery rhymes.

My polite informant told me my things would return in four hours, and on a return train in four hours they arrived. I claimed them and still had time to travel that day to Zwickau. It’s a good way to learn German.

A range of dolls on the market from time immemorial, but for years now a thing of the past, was a china-headed doll with white unbleached cotton body tightly stuffed with sawdust. The world supplier was a firm called Hertwig & Co., and their factory was in the small town of Katzhütte. I suppose a liberal interpretation of the town’s name would be “Cats’ hats”. The town was in a mountainous area and my first and only trip there was in

deep wintry weather. The hotel was the old-fashioned German Gasthaus. The only heat radiated weakly from a huge porcelain stove about the size of a good sized fireplace. In my innocence I planned my work so as to be obliged to stay in Katzhütte over night. As a matter of fact in several small factory villages in fairly close proximity to one another it was quite common to hire a horse-drawn conveyance. A single horse vehicle was known as an *einspanner*, whereas a team-drawn conveyance was a *zweispänner*.

Driving in wintry weather was cold work. The dining room of the hotel was always well heated, the food and drink good and other facilities quaint. For instance one was just as well off to go to bed after a late dinner. The bedrooms were something, if only a little, above zero; but the bed was snug enough. Beds consisted of a large soft down mattress into which the body simply disappeared. The cover was another down featherbed affair. Bolsters under the soft pillows were supposed to provide protection against death by asphyxiation. As it was, once one got over the first chill of undressing and climbing into bed, the next problem was perspiration.

The Thuringian Forest, *Der Thuringer Wald*, now unfortunately behind the Iron Curtain, was a wooded mountainous section of Germany where house industry was the feature. Dolls, toys and porcelains were to be found in great assortment, and in the jobbing business we bought a large range of goods in the area. One of our standbys was made in Ilmenau, oversize china cups and saucers, moustache cups, among others, with huge gold and blue decorations, some of these protruding from the surface in the form of buttercups, bugs and butterflies of gold. These bore the inscription "Father", "Mother", "Merry Xmas", and so forth.

The railway to Ilmenau was a branch line and while it made a close connection on the trip up one had to await the main line train if coming down. The junction point was a small place called Arnstadt. Those who have travelled in Germany are aware of the many regulations, restrictions and "verbotens" on every hand. There are special practices too in the matter of railway signals. The engines have no "cow catchers", there being no level crossings, and the train whistle is the weakest imitation of a squeal that steam can produce with the whistle as medium.

When I came down from Ilmenau, I preferred, while waiting for my train, to walk up and down the neat brick platform rather than sit in the unaired beery atmosphere of the station waiting room. The attendant (there are always lots of attendants in Germany) eyed me rather furtively and when to help pass the time I began to whistle a tune to myself he could stand it no longer. He approached me saying politely, "Entschuldigen Sie, mein Herr,

Sie dürfen nicht pfeiffen.” “Excuse me, Sir, you may not whistle.” Amused, I asked, “Kann man dann singen?” “Can one then sing?” Seeing nothing humourous or unusual in my question, he answered, “Certainly you may sing.” Evidently my fife-like note in whistling was too near the fife-like note of a locomotive, and he was afraid I might be mistaken for a train. It didn’t seem to me I would get much out of singing so I simply quit whistling. *Pfeiffen ist verboten!* Good old goose stepper: he was only doing his duty.

Another rather obscure Thuringian village was Lauscha where glass is produced, including glass alleys so well beloved of boys in spring. Those who live in the country have many signs of spring in nature, but in the city the spinning of tops, playing with marbles and with skipping ropes are about the only signs the city dweller can take as his real assurance that spring has arrived or is just around the corner.

The buyer must always be on the qui vive for new lines and new ideas. The industries of Lauscha, however, were so old and their lines so well known that one might well be surprised if anything really new were offered. However, one day after negotiating mud up to my boot tops—we wore boots in those days—in a glass alley factory I came across a couple of strings of beads. These strings were much longer, say three times as long, as an ordinary string of beads worn around the neck. The beads were of elementary colours such as blue, green, yellow, red and white, and they were opaque. What were they for? The manufacturer simply tossed them to the floor and remarked they were for small children to play with. Having small children at home I immediately fell for them and bought two lines, one to sell at ten cents retail and the larger and more useful one for twenty-five cents per string.

One of my jobs on my return, and as new lines came in, was to inform our travellers and warehouse staff what this and that were for, and why they were bought.

Pity the poor buyer who, when new goods arrive and are ready to be placed on sale, cannot give a good reason for having bought the goods and why he thinks they should readily sell at the proposed price. Alas! It is so often true that the urge that impelled the buyer to buy the article so seldom is conveyed by him to the sales people when the goods go on sale. Without explanation, or without knowing the idea behind these strings of beads, who would likely know what they were for? More than likely their inclusion in the line might be regarded as due to the buyer not being sober or of a clear mind.

In my buying days, I was also a salesman of my own goods.

When I worked alongside our other travellers as we packed our lines, it was interesting, sometimes amusing, and often aggravating, to find that a line one had almost shed blood to obtain would be left out of the travellers' packing. Even after my explanation of the bead purchase, a number of the salesmen took no interest in their sale. However, it was one of the best "I told you so" lines I ever bought, because later in the year, on reviewing the sales of each traveller, some had sold none, while the bead stock as a whole was oversold. How some salesmen make a living is beyond me.

To record in a chapter or two this seven year period in which I undertook to be the firm's European buyer and at the same time to function as our chief exploratory salesman in the rapidly expanding West is extremely difficult. In later chapters, I shall have occasion to refer to the great growth of the West, not in terms of the fancy goods business but in those of a far greater enterprise of which I, at the particular period now under consideration, had not the faintest premonition.

It is sufficient to say that the seven annual buying trips to Europe followed much the same pattern year after year. Each trip added greatly to my experience of buying, and increased my acquaintance with the sources of supply. As I was salesman of the goods I bought, the mistakes I made as a buyer were not repeated the next year. In those far-off and happy days, money exchanges between the countries I visited and Canada were sufficiently firm as to cause no anxiety or embarrassment to a buyer. He had little difficulty figuring the cost of his goods. There were no fluctuations of exchange and little or no government control to bedevil his buying, as is the case today. Being not only a buyer, not only a salesman, but managing director of the business I had in hand, the seven trips to Europe enabled me to familiarize myself, year by year, with the processes of financing trade, and to learn at first hand what happens, in detail, to merchandise all the way from the manufacturer, however remote, to my customers' counters. It was a unique experience. How unique, I was to realize at the end of the seven year period.



## CHAPTER XV

### DECISION

All unknown to me, these seven years of travel abroad, together with my increasingly prosperous trips into the expanding West, were the period of my education and preparation for the greatest opportunity of my life.

This chapter might very well serve as an illustration of the old truth that no man chooses his own path, but is guided and directed by influences far outside his control.

On those ships in which I set sail with increasing assurance each September, there were crowds of buyers and businessmen representative of almost every branch of trade, heading for Britain and all parts of Europe. They were, for the most part, men considerably older than I, experienced and trusted senior employees from all branches of mercantile America. In their company, not only on board ship, but in the hotels and other meeting places all over Europe, I was exposed to the most stimulating conversations, revelations and ideas with regard to business in fields far outside my own. I made some friendships and many acquaintances among them, all ripening with the successive years. And I assure you it was an inexhaustible questioner who listened to their opinions, anecdotes and particulars related to the art and science of trade.

These men, mostly buyers, were connected with every conceivable field of merchandise, textiles, hardware, china, drapery, woollens, household wares, furniture. In their lively and relaxed company aboard ship, and wherever I encountered them abroad, I could not help but receive a sort of seminar in each of these branches of trade, many of them quite remote from my own business.

It would have been impossible for me, in an office or executive job in Toronto, ever to have acquired an intensive acquaintance with so wide a range of commercial interests as were afforded me in seven years' companionship, for three months of each year, with these excellent businessmen.

In addition to the human contacts thus made available to me was the opportunity both my trips abroad and my trips to the West afforded me to see, in the widest sense, how people lived. Aboard ship and in the fine hotels of Europe, I saw luxury in furnishings, in service, in raiment and in food. I

became familiar for the first time, and on personal terms, with style and fashion. Because of an inborn simplicity in my own tastes, I was not at all beguiled by these things: but I took sharp note of them. I became aware of art and decoration. I saw how great multitudes of well-to-do people lived, and what they used and employed; and what they required. This was a world distinct from that in which I had been brought up and lived, and with which I was not thoroughly familiar.

At the same time, my eyes were constantly seeking out the lower levels of society; for I was now, as I have already stressed, deeply under the influence of Dickens. In my travels both abroad and at home in Canada, I could not fail to observe with intense interest and sympathy the lives, and the way of life, of the less-privileged and under-privileged, whether they were the oppressed and subservient toilers in the house industries of Germany, or the valiant homesteaders of our own great West.

It may appear from all this that a person of insatiable curiosity was loose upon the scene. I fear that such was the case. While I lay claim to no remarkable taste or appreciation in art or music, my eye and ear have both been lively, throughout my life, in quest of the things that pleased them. In these seven years of buying abroad, I had seized numerous opportunities to hear opera and great music in all its forms, as well as to visit the famed art galleries. My reading by this time, in addition to Dickens, had included the works of such writers as Sir Walter Scott, Thackeray, George Eliot and others. It would be impossible to read these authors without a sense of the meaning and implication of art in all forms being aroused, and to some extent shaped. My formal education having stopped at the age of fourteen, some sort of a second chance was being offered me in these trips abroad. I was eager to accept it.

For example, while I bought a limited range of porcelain in my fancy goods purchases, I had among my buyer friends those who were expert in fine china; and it was more to enlighten my mind with regard to my own minor field that I strove to learn what was good and what was bad in china. Yet every such scrap and morsel I learned along the way, in these years of travel, turned out in the end to be essential to my later course.

If I had been told: "Within a very few years, you are to be given the opportunity to rise through the management of a great department store", I could not have chosen, had I possessed the highest intelligence, a better training and education for that ordeal than was afforded me by sheer chance in these seven years.

For the customer, in a great department store, is a cross section of the entire community, indeed of the entire nation, from the wealthiest to the most limited in income. To serve them all is the function of a department store. And to serve them faithfully and intelligently, management must have the widest possible appreciation of how people live, at all levels of the community, in addition to having the widest possible knowledge of the sources of goods of every description, from the most luxurious to the most utilitarian. I almost said the most austere.

In thinking of the occasions I had, in these years, to see at close range how different levels of the people lived, I should pay tribute to the numerous friends, both abroad and at home, whom I encountered in the way of business, and who took me into their homes. These included wealthy European manufacturers and merchants who made the Canadian “Herr Direktor” familiar with opulent homes, in which wealth was lavishly expended on art and fashion in every form from paintings to drapes and furniture, from table linen and silver to garden furniture and ornaments. Also included was many a good Canadian friend, from small-town store keeper to wealthy merchant, whose homes revealed to me what comfort or style mean to Canadians. You might suppose from this that I went about exploring the homes of all my friends. Not quite: but my somewhat troublesome eyes were always open. Could it have been that even my friends were potential customers? Hardly; because I was still a wholesale dealer in fancy goods, which is a very small sector of the broad front of merchandise, lying somewhat midway between dry goods and hardware, and consisting of such things as toys, dolls, combs, brushes, leather goods hairpins, ornaments, pipes, pouches, ash trays—an uninspiring list of things, perhaps. But nobody is without them.

I was, for a fact, in the fancy goods business. Each of the seven years of my managing-directorship of the company was bigger than the one before. My senior though silent partner, Mr. Fudger, was eminently satisfied with the way the business was progressing. We rose, as I have already related, by 1911, to a total of \$550,000, a great advance in the twelve years over the \$187,000 of business done in the year Mr. Fudger handed over the management to Kantel and me.

But some little time before 1911, grave doubts were beginning to intrude in my mind.

By the end of 1911, my life was to take an astonishing turn—much more astonishing than I had any premonition of.

For three reasons, I came to the decision to quit the wholesale business. On the face of it, this may appear absurd, that a man of thirty-six in more or less sole control of a business that grossed sales of \$550,000, and which had increased consistently year after year, should incontinently toss it up.

In the first place, I was in the office and warehouse long enough each year, between buying abroad and selling at home, to discover that every \$10,000 of added business was costing us more to do and with less profit mark-up.

In the second place, on each successive selling trip to the West, I had been impressed by the increasing authority of the retail merchant, a number of whom were beginning to do their buying direct from the manufacturer, some of them even doing their own buying abroad.

And third and last, the impression that grew steadily and consistently in my mind, as the result of all my contacts with my fellow travellers abroad, most of them older, wiser and more experienced than myself was that the wholesale business was definitely declining.

There were doubtless others who shared this opinion, even as early as 1911. But it was not until 1921, in the drastic years of commercial re-adjustment following the first war, that the truth was realized by one and all.

My decision to quit the wholesale business was, none the less, a sudden one. Many of the best decisions of a man's life are sudden. The evidence had piled up slowly, over several years; but it did not declare itself in my mind until somewhere about the middle of 1910. In 1911 while in Vancouver, on my last annual selling trip, I said that I would stay in that city so long as I did \$1,000 a day. I stayed seven weeks. In the face of such liveliness in business, it is curious that the decision to quit was already established in my mind.

During my buying trips to Europe, I had more than one attractive invitation to go to the United States from some of my American buyer friends. I cast about in my mind, during 1910 and 1911, for some course that would lead me into the retail business. There! The cat is out of the bag.

In Edmonton, there was a thriving store, Tucker's, which was one of my best customers, and which bought a great many of my several thousand lines. Tucker's was a 99 cent store—9 to 99 cents. The success of the 5 and 10 business had already been thoroughly demonstrated by 1911, of course. Woolworth's, S. H. Knox & Co., Kress in New York and E. P. Charlton's

stores in the New England states, had for several years been reaping a rich harvest in the field of limited price goods.

Tucker's emporium in Edmonton fascinated me. In selling to them, year after year, I was delighted to go through the store and see how it operated, and how the public consumed the goods which flowed to them in such quantities.

My decision, reached in its final form late in 1911, was to launch a chain of some dozen variety stores dealing in goods at prices in the series of nine—from 9 to 99 cents.

Where I would locate these stores was not clear in my mind. I had the idea of making Toronto the headquarters of the business; but whether there would be a store there or not, and whether the stores would be confined to Ontario or go out through the West were aspects of my problem that had not come as yet into focus.

All I knew was that I was through with the wholesale fancy goods business. My chief problem was to break this piece of news to Mr. Fudger.

I was not home twenty-four hours from my 1911 fall trip to Europe—during which I had reached the decision—before I considered it my duty to tell my friend, mentor and senior partner the news. To say that he was scandalized is putting it mildly. After I had outlined to him my feeling about the wholesale business in general, and the increasing costs and decreasing profits of our own company, he said:

“Charlie, I had no idea you were thinking along these lines. The money you have made me is the best money I have ever made. What are your plans?”

I outlined my ideas with regard to the chain of 9 to 99 cent stores.

He then asked what I thought it would cost and where I would get the money.

I told him that I thought I had some \$40,000 paid up in my interest in the Fancy Goods Co., and that if I had another \$40,000 I believed that would be sufficient capital to start the venture.

“Where would you get that other \$40,000?” asked Mr. Fudger.

I supposed, I told him, that I would get it from him.

“Stranger things could happen,” agreed Mr. Fudger.

He did not waste any time in coming to grips with my proposal.

“Well, Charlie,” he said, “I thought you were a fixture in the Fancy Goods Company. If you think your mind is made up to quit the wholesale business, I must tell you that we need you pretty badly up here in Simpson’s.”

He then and there made me the offer of the job of Assistant General Manager. He would double my salary, with the probability of a bonus. He would give me my money out of the Fancy Goods business.

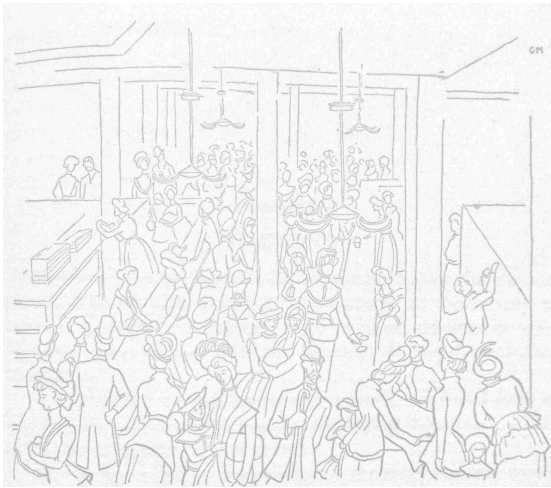
This forthright offer caught me entirely off base. I should have indicated before this that, at this time, I weighed one hundred and thirty five pounds. I was a very lean individual, decidedly health conscious. This was in the days when tuberculosis was the popular terror, and I feared it with a holy horror. I was at no time disposed towards the disease, but in the early 1900’s, there was a fairly widespread phobia with regard to it. I carried every cent of insurance I could afford out of my commitments to my domestic upkeep and my shares in the business. And, among the consequences of my health-consciousness was the determination, and the habit, of spending as much of my time out-of-doors as possible. I imagine I spent fifty percent of my time out-of-doors, making it routine to walk whenever possible in my business rounds, and seizing every opportunity to be in the open air. If I were of a lean and hungry mien, it was doubtless because I worked myself skinny.

I recall now that my health was my first thought when Mr. Fudger made his startling counter-proposal to my quitting the Fancy Goods Company.

Instead of fifty percent of my time out-of-doors I figured this would mean one hundred percent indoors.

I looked with intense misgivings upon the idea of giving up my free-wheeling life, travelling far and wide, to sit cooped up in an executive office. In some excitement and concern, I took the problem home to my wife. She had no trouble with it. Salary doubled? Money out of the Fancy Goods Company? Assistant General Manager? Of Simpson’s?

“You take it!” said she, emphatically.



### PART THREE

## CHAPTER XVI

### SIMPSON'S

Although I have declared in the foregoing chapter that circumstances were shaping to my great advantage in those years of travel in Europe and Canada, none of those advantages were apparent to me when I faced my future in the department store business.

I was leaving a small business that finally employed forty or fifty persons, and was entering one employing thousands. I was, in fact, entering upon a new career.

To say that I had no knowledge of the retail business would be wide of the mark. I had no practical experience of it. But what I did have was a lively theoretical appreciation of it, arising out of my contacts with hundreds of retail merchants of every size and description over a period of seven extremely active years in an era of great business expansion in Canada. Furthermore, I had been given a unique opportunity to appraise the differences between successful retailers and those not so successful in various degrees and from different causes. One would have to be a pretty indifferent and unobservant commercial traveller not to learn to detect the evidences of success or failure in the rapid sequence of stores one visited in the course of a three month trip.

The personality of the merchant, and of his sales staff; the physical property of the store, its fixtures and equipment; the housekeeping talent of the storekeeper; all these were factors in the success or failure of businesses, large and small. Inventory was of interest to me, to learn how intelligently the merchant bought. It was not difficult, at a glance, to appraise the quality of a store by the amount of goods obviously unsold on counters and shelves and in the storage spaces. All this had pointed to one over-riding consideration in the retail business: and that was the customer.

The customer is the number one factor in all business. To have on hand what the customer wants—and as near nothing else as can be conceived—and to deliver those goods in prime condition, at the most reasonable price, and as conveniently as possible, is the function of the retail merchant. This, I suppose, was the dominant conviction in my mind when I undertook to forsake a business I knew intimately and to venture into one in which I was to all intents and purposes a complete stranger.



Before entering upon the story of my experiences as Service Manager—experiences that taught me the structure and mechanism of the department store business—I think I should give some account of the position of The Robert Simpson Company at the period at which I first made its acquaintance as an employee.

The company, from the inception of its new ownership in 1898, had expanded too fast for either its capital or its “know how” of the retail business.

After two or three years of the Fudger, Flavelle, Ames partnership, Mr. Ames’ interest was taken over by his father-in-law, Senator Cox, who had already made some reputation for himself as a financial wizard in recapitalizing one of Canada’s oldest and larger life insurance companies, whose business headquarters were formerly in Hamilton. Cox was a speculator and developer, and there was no doubt a great opportunity for growth in Simpson’s. First the corner of Yonge and Richmond was acquired by perpetual lease from the Rodden Estate, and a mill construction steel framed addition was erected in 1899. Other properties on Yonge, Queen and Richmond Streets were acquired, some by purchase of freehold, mostly by perpetual leases from the old Knox Church. The expansion of Simpson’s was on.

The Simpson corner, 70’ x 120’, at Queen and Yonge, which were the premises first occupied by Timothy Eaton when he came from the western Ontario village of Kirkton, near St. Mary’s, was extended in 1907-08 to the east boundary of James Street. Not many today recollect that James Street, which runs north and south between the City Hall and Eaton’s, used to continue south through Queen Street to Richmond. Being part of the site of Knox Church it became Simpson’s property. In the 1907-08 expansion, the store was extended only to the east boundary of this street. The expansion, of course, extended from Queen to Richmond, including the premises of the Mechanics Institute, and added over 250 feet west on the Queen Street frontage. Simpson’s had now a really big store.

Unlike later additions to the business, each one of which has been the subject of carefully detailed planning and financing, the big 1907-08 addition was projected and finished without any plans being matured either for the departmental merchandise layout or for suitable fittings and fixtures. George Limon, as good a joiner and carpenter as one would find, was set up in a shop uptown and given an open order for fixtures and counters, virtually by the mile. The only specification was that they should follow Altman’s New York designs. These fixtures when delivered had to be adapted to the

goods to be shown. Parcelling and cashiering facilities, two essentials for good service to customers, were done by guess and by God.

This great building programme was undertaken simultaneously with the purchase of the Murphy store in Montreal. The double enterprise ate up more cash and credit than the growing company possessed. Senator Cox, however, being president of one of Canada's great banks, pressed the programme forward with vigour. The result was that when I arrived on the scene, early in 1912, Simpson's owed over two million dollars to the bank and another million more or less to the trade for goods supplied. No one knew exactly how much the latter amount was.

The big question was, I imagine, Simpson's to be recapitalized, as had been done in a previous instance, with another company? Was it to find its way into the hands of one who had, at the time, better credit than either H. H. Fudger or J. W. Flavelle? It was very simple to increase capital sufficiently to pay off debts; and then, if any one of the original partners could not put up his share, it would be taken over by one who could!

Simpson's current credit situation was not good. My duties, at this early stage, did not include accounts or finance; but on one occasion, soon after my arrival on the scene, the President called me in to his office and asked if I would find out why the office counter was lined up two deep for twenty feet or more with all sorts of people waiting for what? Having already noticed this phenomenon on several Thursdays and Fridays, I hazarded the opinion that they were suppliers waiting for their money to enable them to meet their weekly payrolls.

My answer was too quick to be palatable. Did I know of my own personal knowledge that such was the case? I had to confess I had no personal knowledge but that the accountant had so informed me. The subject dropped: but in two or three weeks' time, I had a message from the President to come and see him. There was the tell-tale crowd again awaiting their money. Would I take a week or so and report on the situation? On the following Monday, I examined the accounts-payable ledgers and unpaid accounts. The condition was chaotic and to me incredible. In the hands and the desk drawers of four ledger keepers were literally hundreds of invoices from suppliers. In many cases the goods had been sold, the invoices were not even credited to the supplier or charged against merchandise. This was a desperate situation. First of all, our bank credit was more than exhausted for building expansion, there was none for current bills. Second, it was doubtful if the goods were insured against fire and certainly any accurate accounting of loss would have been impossible.

The problem was solved without resort to the operations of the Senator.

Mr. Fudger was a man of resource, and of deservedly high reputation. As a great Methodist layman, he had entertained and visited such English scholars and divines as L. P. Jacks and Dr. Benjamin Jowett. He had met, when in England, Sir Edward Holden, the Chairman of the London Joint Stock Bank, who in turn had introduced him to the old firm of Rowe & Pitman. Armed with an audited statement, Mr. Fudger arranged to market £450,000 5% Robert Simpson forty year bonds. They were underwritten by Rowe & Pitman, and the proceeds enabled Simpson's to pay off the bank and for the first time for years to have net working capital.

An offering of 6% Robert Simpson Preferred Shares, \$2,250,000, was also made, but the underwriters wouldn't take them. They were returned from London, used as collateral for bank advances on current account and later marketed favourably. That issue of 6% preferred shares of The Robert Simpson Company was finally for 33,500 shares of \$100 each. The annual dividend was paid on them regularly until retired a few years ago at 135. For years they were the highest quoted industrial 6% preferred shares on the London Stock Exchange.

The first report on the balance sheet of The Robert Simpson Company Limited was made by the auditors for the year ended January 31, 1912.

The instructions to the auditor were brief and given by means of a small memo in Mr. Fudger's characteristic precise fashion. As this was a new account for the auditing firm, newly established in Toronto, the auditor thought he might omit pursuing various questions which arose in his mind. He had to admit that Mr. Fudger's statement was clear and understandable.

Instead of becoming at all inquisitorial, as auditors often are, and have the right to be, the young representative of the auditing firm sought to pursue his enquiries with the General Manager, then known simply as "Manager". As there was little sympathy between Mr. Fudger, the President, and his Manager, Mr. Wood, the latter, after listening smilingly to the enquiring auditor, said that he had nothing to add to the President's instructions. The auditor was thus thrown back for all his information on the company's accountant and the company's books. His statement or report was the result of what he found to be entered in the accounts; and in view of the hundreds of thousands of dollars of unpaid invoices in the desks of the accountants, the report made no reference to these undisclosed liabilities.

The purpose of the audit was to support the sale of the issue of bonds and preferred stock above referred to. The prospectus for the new issues was

published on May 13, 1912 in London, the home office of the auditors. The home office cabled its young Toronto manager to enquire how he came to issue the certificate on accounts, to be used in connection with an offering of securities, until he had first advised his London superiors. The answer was, of course, that nothing had been said about an issue, and the appearance of the audited statement in the new prospectus was a complete surprise to him. As the securities offered, both bonds and preference stock, have years ago been all called and redeemed, it is most interesting to note that with the prospectus there was no auditor's report on the earnings of the company!

The statement of the year following ended January 29, 1913 and was also issued without including the earning statement, probably because there was no disposition to show the stock dividend of over \$900,000. However, the balance sheet showed a surplus of \$219,223.84 instead of nearly a million the year before; and the increase on the investment in common shares reflected the amount of the stock dividend. So one can scarcely perceive why the earning statement should not have been shown with the printed balance sheet.

Now for the first time Simpson's had money and credit for all business requirements. Accounts could be prepaid, important current purchases made on a spot cash basis, and a new era opened for the great store.

All this occurred the three first years of my new responsibility. For lack of capital, for lack of management-interest, services had gone bad and often from bad to worse. The wonder to me was that so many able and faithful people, mostly sadly underpaid, served as faithfully and as loyally as they did. Of course, the condition was of great advantage to our big competitor, who got many an experienced staff member ready-made for his new job at higher wages than Simpson's were ready to pay.

It was amid such fireworks as I have described that I received my baptism into the department store business. I was a glorified trouble-shooter. While the President was thus engaged in obtaining money, I was below decks, busy finding how best to spend it.

My move to Simpson's, after twenty years in the fancy goods wholesale trade, created very little ripple on the surface of affairs. It was rather a big day for me.

Although I was engaged as Assistant General Manager by my old friend Mr. Fudger, when I reported for duty at eight a.m. Thursday, February 1st, 1912, no preparation was in evidence for my arrival, nor was there clearly marked out any special field of responsibility for me.

If I expected any great ceremony of installation in my new job any illusions I harboured were quickly and unceremoniously dissipated. I was introduced to James Wood, the General Manager, who seemed to be very casually interested in the new officer associate. As he was leaving the company himself in a few months, I imagine he thought it superfluous to waste much time on me or my responsibilities.

Mr. Fudger was not one to magnify the importance of office location, equipment and routine. He simply suggested that I should acquaint myself with the Mail Order end of the business, for which purpose I spent the first three months, sharing office space and telephone with Herbert E. Burnett, the Mail Order Manager, whom I had known previously when he was in charge of Simpson's London England office. Mr. Burnett's domain, embracing all Mail Order operations, occupied the Richmond and Yonge corner of the fourth and fifth floors of the Toronto store, a total space of 25,000 square feet. In Toronto alone in the year 1952 the Ontario and Quebec services of Simpson's Mail Order division occupy over 1,000,000 square feet in their own buildings. The Halifax, Regina and Vancouver branches occupy another 1,000,000 square feet so that it can be easily imagined the 1912 business of Simpson's by mail was a small affair. Nevertheless even then it required the services of several hundred people.

Titles for jobs are often much prized and sought after and sometimes are in inverse ratio to the importance of the duties to be performed.

For the encouragement of those who have responsibilities thrust upon them without what they may think is adequate space and equipment, I can testify that it never detracted from my importance as an officer to be without title, without an office, a telephone or even my own place to hang up my hat and coat. Free of office trappings, I was enabled to devote my time to the job and to find out what happened to a Simpson customer if and when she sent in an order by mail. Transactions by mail are usually of such size as to obviate the necessity for a special ledger account for each customer or each transaction. Realizing that my best plan was to work with the staff in each of the operations, I helped them open mail, record transactions, sort returned parcels, fill orders and go through the varied but rather simple routine of taking care of the customers' needs.

In those early days Simpson's stocks were available to both Store and Mail Order. As was to be expected, if the Store department could use the goods they were sold over the counter without regard to the fact that Mail Order customers might send in by mail an order for the same articles. On the other hand if a catalogue offered a seasonable article the Mail Order

customers would often order all available goods to be sent by mail, leaving inadequate supplies for the Store customer when the over-the-counter demand began.

Our great competitor had long since separated Store and Mail Order buying and stockkeeping and had as well built a huge branch in Winnipeg. Consequently Simpson's service to customers suffered greatly by comparison. There were other reasons why Simpson's service was deficient, but in reporting in writing at the end of three months, and after several trips to Chicago and other Mail Order houses, I recommended immediate separation of the Mail Order business from the Store, so far as buying and care and filling of orders for merchandise was concerned.

The Mail Order Manager of that day was very enamoured of a New York Mail Order house whose principal offerings could be sent by post—postage paid to destination. As a very large part of the goods in Simpson's catalogue were sent through the mails, the very unwise decision was made to offer only such goods as could go by mail, and to adopt the slogan of "All goods in this catalogue prepaid to destination." The new slogan brought in considerable business, but the programme could not include offerings of heavier lines, many of which were primary needs of the farmer who was at the time the principal Mail Order customer. The correction of this wrong-headed policy cost us many years of good Mail Order business.

In the meantime, in 1914, Mail Order buying and stockkeeping were separated from other operations and in 1916 the large Regina Branch, under the name of The Robert Simpson Western Limited, was built, and similar and even larger premises provided on Mutual Street, Toronto, housing all eastern Mail Order business and many Store services as well.

While I was still studying the Mail Order routine, Mr. Fudger asked me to take over the responsibility for our heating and power plant, which he thought was eating up too much money. From this point forward I took over responsibility for all service and expense departments, and became Service Manager, first for the Toronto Store and then, in 1913, for Simpson's Montreal Store, at that time operated under the name of the original owner, John Murphy Company Limited.

The expense departments included heating, lighting, engineering, receiving, storage, delivery, in short, the care of things behind the scenes, the conduct of the business apart from the high level of administration and the actual selling.

All these responsibilities meant that I was beginning to assume, formally, duties which Mr. Fudger had had in mind from the first when he asked me to come to Simpson's as Assistant General Manager. As a matter of fact that formal title never became official, but the more modest and perhaps more suitable title of Service Manager did.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SERVICES

It was while I was busy at my first job in the Mail Order department, within my first three months of joining Simpson's, that the President asked me to be responsible for the power plant. I found it in charge of the chief engineer, a big Scot, over six feet tall. Now, anybody who had travelled the seas in those days knew that all chief engineers were Scotsmen. Most people took it for granted that all Scots were honest and dependable, and of course they mostly were and are. However, this big fellow was an exception. He claimed he had been chief engineer on a South American liner. Later we found he had been a stoker on a tramp steamer.

This officer had the acumen to hire a first class stationary engineer and a good electrician. He might have held his job if the job had consisted entirely of the daily operation of a plant. He was, however, responsible also for repairs and replacements and for the purchase of supplies.

I had to countersign all orders for supplies. Hardly knowing steam from smoke I was thrust into responsibility for this man who "knew it all". One of his early steps was to ask me to sign an order for six barrels of engine oil for high speed vertical engines of which we had three, all generating electrical current. His source of supply caused me to question it. Here he was buying six barrels of oil from a secondary source of supply of somewhat doubtful reputation for dependability. Well, why? You should have seen him, arms flailing and all! This was a special oil. He could buy (as I already knew) engine oil at twenty-six and twenty-seven cents a gallon, but the forty-seven cent oil he was using was a "special oil" and he for one would not advise changing nor would he take responsibility (with a good burr) for the cheaper oils. I held the order up. He admitted he still had three barrels on hand, sufficient for some time. Next day I ordered him to bring in a sample barrel from each of two large companies, one twenty-six cents a gallon, one twenty-seven cents. After he sent the orders I 'phoned these two companies to deliver the oil next morning at seven-thirty. At seven-thirty the oil and I both were on hand on Richmond Street, and when our big chief arrived at eight o'clock he was surprised to find me in the engine room talking to his staff. He was also surprised to see the two barrels of new oil, even more surprised when I asked him to bring three quart gem jars and give me a sample from the two new barrels and one from his favourite forty-seven cent



stock. He wanted to send them up to me. I wasn't in a hurry and waited for the samples. Having 'phoned my friend, Professor Jocelyn Rogers, well-known chemical and pathological expert of the University of Toronto, asking him if he would do an analysis job for me, I sent along my three samples to him and asked for his report. I explained that not being a chemist I should like him, in addition to giving the scientific analysis, in plain English to tell me which in his opinion was the best lubrication for our engines, with the type of which he was familiar.

A few days later I had his report. The oils were practically alike. Reading the various technical terms I could see the viscosity, the flash point, the moisture content and other features were in practical identical terms. The professor's comment in plain English was brief. A, B, and C the three oils were practically identical. They were all satisfactory. If there was a difference it was in C, our forty-seven cent oil. The difference was that it contained some foreign matter which did not in any way add to its lubricating qualities. For years we had been paying twenty to twenty-one cents a gallon for these useless foreign ingredients.

After receiving this report I wandered down to the engine room. I suggested to the big chief first that he keep all outsiders, especially salesmen for supplies, out of the engine room. Secondly, I ordered the crank cases of two of the three engines emptied of their oil, washed out and filled with my new A and B oil at twenty-six and twenty-seven cents per gallon. The chief protested. He would not take the responsibility for the safe operation of the engines with the new oil. I told him I would take the responsibility myself. He threw up his hands, rolled his eyes and made other gestures of despair. It was no good. He had to give the orders in my hearing before I left. The next morning the three engines were working away merrily. There was no trouble so far with the new oil. So it went for a few days, after which I received a 'phone call one morning on arriving at the store, asking if I could come at once to the engine room where they were in a peck of trouble. From the platform overlooking the engine room I could see that our old Robb engine No. 1, into which we had put the twenty-seven cent oil, was standing silent. As I went down to where it was located I viewed a disaster. The cylinder head was smashed off and the parts were lying all over the floor. There was "my dom oil".

My chief engineer was triumphant, but verra sorry for me. He then reached into the crank case of the engine and drew out a handful of what appeared to be soft soap or stuff of like consistency.

Standing beside the broken engine was the representative of our forty-seven cent oil concern. I happened to notice a trace of white powder on the engine's crank case, and a trace of similar white powder from the overcoat pocket of the visiting representative.

I first of all asked our engineer how crank case oil could cause a cylinder head to smash. It turned his face a deep red. My second question was, what was Mr. Sharp, the outsider, doing in the engine room? He had been called in, in consultation. I turned to this man and asked him how soon he could "high tail" to the street. He went up and out without further ado. I then turned to my big Scotch friend and asked how long it would take him to get his hat, coat and things and get out and stay out. He muttered a weak protest but he got out, and quick.

We saved \$2,000 a month for the next thirteen months and started improvements in power and lighting plant, mostly suggested and planned by those already on the staff whose ideas previously had been suppressed.

As I explored one service and then another, I became acquainted with the staff and the routine, and tried to evaluate the operation in the light of the service being rendered to the customer.

At first, there was no plan or programme to these activities. I took each problem as it came to my attention, or as it was brought to my attention by Mr. Fudger. I made innumerable trips, during these first years as Service Manager, to New York, Boston and elsewhere, visiting outstanding American department stores to see how they handled any particular problem or situation. I could, of course, merely have walked across the street at home. But in those days, I detected a tendency on the part of big department stores, generally, to hold the opinion that the way they did things was not only the only way, but the right and perfect way. It became my habit, in facing each Simpson problem, to see and study that particular aspect of the operation in several of the big American stores, and form my own conclusion as to which was best. These numerous trips added greatly to my understanding of the business. Each one provoked new ideas apart from the one in hand. Incidentally, travelling about in such interesting circumstances served to bridge the gap between my former life as a travelling man and buyer and that of an office executive.

The expense or service departments which I had to take in hand were something like the accounts division, necessary evils. The buying and selling of goods—these were worthy of the best brains in the business. But the incidental and costly services were treated as routine activities, the

importance of which would be magnified if much time and attention were paid them by the high brass of the store. That, at any rate, was my impression. However, time was what I had a hundred percent of, and attention I was prepared to give.

Among the first and most complex of these expense departments that had to be dealt with was the delivery department.

Simpson's greys, the black and red wagons with the yellow gears and wheels were a familiar Toronto and suburban sight. It was rather sad to find that such nice horses were driven by such underpaid men, a few of whom made up dishonestly by theft for the difference between what they received and a living wage.

In 1912, Simpson's delivery was loaded up on Richmond Street with the daily line-up of grey horses. On July first (Dominion Day) there was an exhibition parade of delivery equipment around Queen's Park. Simpson's always carried a few prize winners, and for several years they ran off with the ribbons. This gave the store some unusually good publicity. The big competitor used to be rather disdainful of Simpson's, but finally he couldn't see us carry off these "firsts" and soon began to pay fancy prices for outfits used principally to show off on the downtown streets. But the game was soon up anyway, as motorized fleets replaced those drawn by dear old dobbin. Simpson's delivery was motorized about ten years before that of a competitor of anything like our size.

Before attacking the delivery department, I spent some weeks in the complaint office, now known by the more euphemistic title of adjusting department.

It was the general practice in the store to blame the delivery department if goods were not delivered, or were not delivered on time. Undoubtedly the drivers were responsible for some share of errors and delay. But my sojourn in the complaint office opened my eyes to the many causes of delay in delivery, which included careless and indifferent handling of the parcels before the delivery got them, illegible addresses, as well as some actual dishonesty at various stages of the parcels' progress.

The complaint office was located on the main floor, at the James Street end of the store. Complaints were made at a long counter which also served as an exchange desk and as transfer pay-in desk for out-of-town transactions.

The scenes that occurred under these circumstances can hardly be imagined. My first week in the complaint office saw a line-up two deep for about thirty feet. The poor fellow in charge, known as the manager, was simply overwhelmed with the demands for his attention. Complaints with regard to non-delivery were intermixed with customers trying to exchange their goods as well as out-of-town customers attempting to offer their transfer cards. The exchange policy, in those days, was a much more delicate and contentious one than it is today, not only in Simpson's but in department and other stores all over the country. "Goods satisfactory or money refunded" was the declared policy. But it took a good many years, in the retail business generally, to educate a corps of clerks as well as the shopping public to a rational and reasonable understanding of an exchange policy. Both these factors of the prickly problem of exchange have long since been assuaged, but it is difficult to convey a realistic picture of the situation that confronted me in the complaint department.

The lack of system or of order, a stupid filing system, and an indifference to tracing complaints in the order of their receipt, led to understandable but unbelievable chaos. If the complaint was from Mrs. Smith, one had to wade through all the complaints of all the Smiths and as these were sometimes registered without initials it was a piece of work to find out who was who and what was what.

The first move I ordered to be made was the arrangement of complaints by town or street address, which permitted ready reference. Lack of prompt attention to original complaints naturally brought a great volume of second complaints. I ordered that these second complaints should be handled without delay, and separate from all other work. Gradually order was evolved out of the existing mess. Unfortunately, it involved the replacement of the so-called manager by one who could manage.

Order in the adjusting however did not eliminate causes for complaint, which in most cases went right back to the department where the goods were sold. But, to a waiting customer, none of this was to be condoned or understood. As usual I found the great majority of the staff able and of good purpose.

In the delivery room where the parcels are "route marked" and sorted by drivers' routes into their respective bins, I found facilities so outdated and so expensive of man's labour as to belie the term "facilities". Here again was a faithful but underpaid staff, working under handicaps not to be found in any similar service of stores of comparative volume.

The saddest part, however, was the matter of theft by some of the drivers. These men were paid from \$6.00 to \$10.00 per week. It was quickly evident that some were guilty of adding to their income by theft of parcels, and a score or more were fired after evidence of their misfeasance was established. At the same time I looked over the records, advanced all married men over five years service to \$13.50 per week, all others married to \$12.00 and single men to a \$9.00 minimum. This big increase in delivery expenses almost lost me my job. All I had to do, however, was to show that within six months the improvements that I had claimed could be made were an accomplished fact.

The delivery, on my first contact with it, had little reputation. Parcels from all parts of the store, including groceries, were carried in trucks and down elevators to the basement where the only equipment for distribution was a wooden slide up which the trucks were pushed to bring the parcels to the route markers. A route marker is a being apart. He knows every street, every suburb. Under my admiring gaze he could seemingly automatically mark parcel after parcel, except in cases of wrong addresses, alas too frequent and too often due to lack of ability or the indifference of the sales clerk who wrote the original bill.

There was practically no mechanical equipment, such as floor to floor parcel chutes, nor had Simpson's what all larger distributors had, moving delivery belts from which the parcels could be deftly sorted into their proper delivery bins. And finally, there was stealing. Rates of pay were too low, and married men at \$8.00 to \$10.00 per week couldn't make ends meet. Of what use was it to be able to turn out a hundred fine grey horses and gaily painted Simpson wagons, when the drivers were receiving insufficient to keep body and soul in good working order? Working day by day alongside the sorters and those who entered the parcels on drivers' sheets, and even helping drivers load their loads, I soon found what was wrong and often how to improve the operation.

What we like today to call "morale" was an unknown quantity, although I must pay tribute to many heads of departments and their assistants as well as many other fine honest fellows who did their jobs well. Although denied personal recognition, and as well denied adequate furnishings and equipment, they were quick and conscientious in their work, and of surprising loyalty.

I suppose it is only a commonplace to say that in any large staff handling goods in a routine way, outbreaks of pilfering occur. Many guilty of casual or minor offences are more stupid than cunning; but in many instances of

more extensive theft and misfeasance, real brains have been at work. The regrettable thing is that in cases of collusion, young and really inoffensive persons are drawn in, and when found guilty carry a smear for many years.

While no punishment is too severe and no penalty too great for the ringleaders, my experience is that those who fall because of the guile of the more guilty parties can be entirely restored by transferring them to duties where they are away from their former environment. Their sense of frustration, their determination to do right, and their desire to show by their work their true position, enables them to do well, and not only be forgiven but have their offence forgotten.

As I worked in Simpson's delivery under the management of the late W. J. McMaster, a man of fine qualities of heart and mind, we were in the midst of a good deal of thieving, mostly by a small number of drivers. One of these was reputed to be the owner of three houses, which, for a driver who had no personal resources except his income of \$11.50 per week, was considered rather unusual. This driver was up to all the tricks. One of his favourite practices was, surreptitiously, to grab parcels from the bins of other drivers. He would probably have done well in conjuring or sleight of hand. I entered parcels on drivers' sheets, and I happened on one occasion to be working on this man's lists. As the time for loading arrived, each driver would come into the drivers' aisle and take his load out to Richmond Street where the line of Simpson's greys was arrayed.

As I entered the last of the items, I happened to observe, from the corner of my eye, the prosperous driver's hand in the neighbouring bin. He grabbed a twenty pound bag of sugar, dropped it in his truck and pulled away. I reported the occurrence to McMaster. Sure enough, the next day in came a complaint from the customer whose sugar hadn't been delivered. A little special audit of this driver's records revealed his daily stealing.

Our C.O.D. accounts showed an unaccounted-for loss of about \$1,000 a month. The favourite device was for one driver to steal a C.O.D. parcel charged on a fellow driver's sheet; and then either he himself or an accomplice would deliver the parcel to the customer, collect the money and pocket it. The usual audit, a couple of weeks later, would reveal from the records who was apparently responsible for the shortage. Drivers are not fools; anyone able to deliver parcels promptly and accurately on the average city route must be a man possessed of much above the average ability, both in his work and in the accounting for what he does. Even after two or three weeks, the average driver can remember whether or not he had such and such a parcel for a particular address.

Stolen C.O.D. parcels delivered to customers by someone other than the regular driver are not difficult to trace. One after another those guilty of this sort of theft and fraud were found out and fired. Some guilty parties left the employ of the company as soon as investigations leading to questioning were begun.

It fell to my lot to get to the bottom of this delivery trouble. One of the things necessary was to make a study of the current routine and note the various points which were weak and dangerous. My studies took several weeks, but finally I took my report on C.O.D. to the then General Manager, Mr. Wood, who listened to my report, and after about an hour and a half of explanation by me, approved of the changes and agreed that they should take place at the earliest date possible. The changes meant that a routine was set up which required that a driver completing his day's work must after each delivery either have the cash or returned parcels for items entered on his delivery sheet.

I still am not able to say whether the former General Manager of Simpson's knew what the old C.O.D. system had been or what was involved in the new proposals, but I suspect he thought it unnecessary to reveal his ignorance of the whole routine. While it is not possible to devise a system which people in collusion with one another cannot beat, it is only fair that those who work honestly should be protected from the temptations offered by shrewd and unscrupulous fellow workers. And it seems to me it is one of the duties of management to set up those safeguards, not entirely in its own interests, but in the general interest of healthy and happy relationships within the organization.

Today Simpson's have over two hundred and fifty drivers, seventy-five have been on the job for over twenty-five years, and most have been members of our savings and profit sharing fund since their first year of employment.

William Delaney, long since gone to his rest, was the drivers' boss. From the time that the first Simpson wagon was placed on the streets by Robert Simpson himself, Delaney was a great apologist for his men. Provided they delivered their goods and took care of their horses, they were good "bhoys" even if in some instances he had to cover up their dissolute habits by hiding them in a box stall until they were again ready for work.

One couldn't expect much change from dear old William Delaney. He was followed in the management of the drivers by Robert McKeag than whom there probably never was a better driver, and than whom I believe

there was never a better manager. His discipline was strict, his judgments unerring, his sympathy and fairness beyond compare. In his memory Simpson's have placed a plaque on their private street running from Mutual Street to Jarvis Street.

There, then, in considerable detail, are the stories of my first activities as Service Manager of a department store. I give them in such detail in order to illustrate the nature of my education in the business. Being a newcomer, I was obliged to start at the bottom of each operation to be surveyed. After forty years in the business, it is my opinion that there is no other way to conduct a department store than in the constant familiarity of management with every operation in the store. The easiest thing in the world for management to do, especially in large business organizations, is to retire into an ivory tower. Management cannot perform its function to the directors of business unless it performs its function to the employees of business. And that means a tirelessly enquiring state of mind on the part of management with regard to what goes on at the humblest levels.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### PROBLEMS

From the foregoing chapter, it might appear that there were a good many problems in Simpson's about the time of my joining the company. Fortunately for me, there were.

To suggest, however, that there were not able men and keen brains in the organization at this time would be remote from my intention. A more intelligent man than Mr. Fudger, and one of greater integrity, never engaged in business in Toronto.

J. W. Flavelle, later Sir Joseph, until 1920, when he moved his office to Simpson's as owner of 66 $\frac{2}{3}$ % of Simpson's stock, was chiefly concerned with his own business, the packing house industry and the chain butcher shops known as the Wm. Davies Company. In the years now under review, from 1912 to the middle of the first war, Mr. Flavelle was one of the original one-third owners of the Simpson enterprise, and lent his brilliant mind, as a member of the board, to the company's larger affairs, connected with the expansion that had been and continued to be under way before and after my joining it.

For fifteen years after 1912, I was to be under the constant and increasing tutelage and direction of these two men. Curiously enough, it was those features and aspects of Simpson's business in which they had not a sufficient interest, which afforded me the opportunity to become of particular use to them. Those were the service and expense departments, particularly those that affected the goodwill of the customers. To young men looking for the best employment of their energies, I might say that it is better to seek a career in a business that has problems to solve, rather than in one that works like a charm.

There is a well-known maxim in business: "If it works, leave it alone." I know of no rule in business that does not require frequent examination, and constant enquiry as to its applicability to particular cases. In Simpson's there were some obvious situations crying out for attention. But in a department store, in which every operation is integrated with all other operations, it can hardly ever be said that if it works, leave it alone. As fast as I faced up to one situation, new ones appeared, in front, on the flanks, and in rear. At this point, I should say that throughout these months of disturbing activity on my

part, in all departments of the business, both large and small, I encountered no jealousy or obstruction on the part of any of the senior members of the organization. This was due to the fact that Mr. Fudger was, at this stage, very much the sole boss of the company. What he said, went; and I was recognized from the outset as his man. This does not mean that I did not approach the great man with some fear and trepidation with my solutions of the problems he set me. As in my earliest contacts with him, when I was his office boy and clerk, I never presumed to enter his unfailingly alert presence without being fully prepared with my facts and figures, and every available detail to back up what I had in hand.

Many of these undertakings, even within a short time after my joining Simpson's, involved very large expenditures, and often expenditures of a nature not entirely calculated to meet with Mr. Fudger's agreement. Having visited various big American stores, one thing that impressed me as most important from the customer's angle was the lighting of the store. In the field of lighting, the United States was considerably ahead of us; but it so happened that at this very period, Hydro was revolutionizing the power situation in Toronto and the province generally.

The transformation of Toronto in the early days of Hydro was something to behold. As I remember it, a group of young American engineers came across the line and one of their bright ideas was to adopt the twenty-five cycle current which is now in process of change to the steadier sixty cycle. Of the long years we laboured under this curious incubus I have nothing to say. But in 1913, everyone in Toronto was heartily Hydro conscious.

By that year, Hydro had a sample five thousand watt lamp hanging over the corner of King and Yonge streets. Noticing this flood light amid the old arc lamps and Edison carbon incandescent lamps I was curious about the new unit. I found it was the nitrogen gas-filled lamp now, of course, in universal use. Up to that time the unit was used only for demonstration purposes and I was assured that the lamp was too hot for indoor illumination.

Not being an engineer but liking the new light, I ordered around one hundred units of various wattages and for months I had them tested for internal use, burning them in high and low temperatures.

The lamps stood the test so well that I ordered studies to be made for the entire relighting of Simpson's Toronto store. I had tests made by scientists from the Physics Departments of Toronto and McMaster Universities. The tests confirmed my lay opinion that the new lamps not only could be used

for interior lighting but would increase the light delivered on the working plane, namely our counters and selling surfaces, and would also cut our electric current costs in two.

As these studies proceeded it was plain that the whole big store premises must be rewired in order to change a moribund two hundred and fifty volt two-wire electric system to a 120/240 three-wire system now in general use.

The studies were reported in a fifty-three foolscap page brief. They were largely made by our own Simpson engine room staff. Were they to be adopted? Before presenting these plans, involving large expenditure, to the President, I took them down to Boston, New York and Philadelphia in order to discuss them with the chief engineers of the Edison Company of these three great cities. One after the other the engineers of these companies approved the report. I was naturally curious to know why they had not adopted similar changes in the three great cities of the U.S.A. The answer I got in each case was that the loss of revenue that would follow the cutting down of power consumption was too great to be faced. What a funny notion! This is an example of one of the old ideas that persisted in industry that improvement and efficiency and lower costs of operation were somehow detrimental.

Is it any wonder that labour, displaced by machinery, has instilled in it the notion that labour-saving devices are to be resisted? Fortunately most enlightened labour men are aware that improvements spell more and easier work at higher pay and so improved methods have won out in almost every field on this continent where the standard of living has continued to improve.

Simpson's was the first big store anywhere to use nitrogen gas-filled lamps. By the same token Simpson's was a generation ahead of other commercial users in adopting the most efficient unit then known for store lighting. Another by no means unimportant point, the total lighting load was cut in twain and around \$1,000 a month saved by an expenditure totalling less than \$25,000. Fortunately, by the time I had to obtain approval of this expenditure, improvements in various other fields of our service had demonstrated that good methods and proper wages were cheaper than the older blind adherence to outdated services and below-the-cost-of-living rates of pay.

However, it was understood that any capital expenditure I wished to have approved, or increased rates of pay, had to be matched within six months by an operation of greater efficiency and one capable of reducing

running expenses in total, to offset such outlays. This could not be demonstrated in every expenditure and each individual wage increase; but the average I struck was good and the main thing was that the customers were manifestly pleased and were not slow in indicating their approval, both by the spoken and written word, and also by smartly increasing sales.

My new chief engineer, promoted from our own staff, and our chief electrician both got a great kick out of the radical lighting changes. To their credit it must be recorded that their studies made on the spot, without specialized engineering assistance, but based upon their accurate and intimate knowledge of our plant, worked out accurately to a fraction. When one considers that the change-over from one electrical system to another had to be completed over one weekend, their accomplishment was all the more creditable. I well remember going down to the store that Sunday afternoon of the change-over, to find not one single electrical connection in operation. However, so accurate were the calculations, and so perfect the arrangement of our own labour and supplies, that the whole system was in full operation on the new voltage at eight o'clock Monday morning.

The staff involved worked through Saturday night, Sunday, Sunday night, from store closing on Saturday to store opening Monday. They received full overtime wages but didn't even look for more than the usual hourly rate. Furthermore, their elation on their great accomplishment seemed to be reward enough. They did something no one up to that time had done; and virtue in these accomplishments was its own reward. Another thing, had costs been excessive, it is doubtful if the work would have gone on. Those were days when any extra expense could not have been undertaken.

The Holophane unit used with the old Edison carbon lamps and also with the newer gas-filled lamps was, until the arrival on the scene of the fluorescent lamp, considered the most efficient of lighting units. Other shapes and kinds of fixtures have had more general favour, but for volume of light on the working plane Holophane has been hard to beat, if not actually unbeatable.

Simpson's has usually been in the forefront of lighting progress, but I haven't been of the opinion recently that great progress has been made in lighting units. Two things, however, I believe have been demonstrated, that a combination of nitrogen gas-filled lamps and fluorescent is the best modern lighting. Secondly that every scientific advance, along with great efficiency, creates a demand for additional light and power. The time has long since

gone by when a power company or commission would hold back new units and new ideas simply because of the fear of the loss of customers for power.

After I had been on such jobs for a couple of years, Mr. Fudger suggested that, since the service or expense departments were in so much better shape, he would like me to be responsible for the basement merchandise departments as well. These consisted of groceries and provisions, hardware and kitchen goods, china and glass.

The groceries and provisions were in charge of Alonzo Bogart as manager. He was born in Colborne, Ontario. His experience was “small town”, and while there are notable examples of great fruitage in business from small town and country seed, Bogart managed to confine his operation within the limits he brought with him from a small business in the country. The usual device, I suppose as old as Adam, of offering staples as loss leaders, was used by him. Sugar! How sweet twenty-one pounds for \$1.00 sounds against a competitor’s twenty pounds. Bogart had the natural shrewdness of a New Englander, and pulled many a coup; but the individual dimensions of each of these was not important.

Every time we offered something for nothing—more sugar for the dollar, a few cents off potatoes by the bag—we had a flood of business from boarding houses, cheap hotels and from such as would buy only when bargains were offered. The chief result of such sales efforts was extra work and loads for our delivery, and many a broken wagon spring.

My own ministrations were directed towards ensuring that Simpson’s really important list of regular customers got the service they deserved, and that “big figures” produced by special selling did not blind us to facts as to what customers really wanted us to supply.

I had been with Simpson’s two and a half years when war broke out. Food was the first of the necessities to be affected; and from August on, it was a daily scramble to get supplies, and a hectic job to keep up with the demand, with the hoarding instinct soon in full bloom. Prices advanced as scarcity developed, and a department which never did break even in peace time began to show something to the good and finally a good net return.

Simpson’s food customers could previously buy butter, eggs, lard, bacon and other provisions; but not until August first, 1914, a fateful hour, indeed, did they have the opportunity of patronizing our new meat market.

We had a good butcher in John Ross, who for years had been our Palm Room Restaurant manager, and John became Simpson’s new meat market

manager. The department was one of the first of its kind. It featured sanitary, ample refrigerators and working space behind, refrigerated counters, air conditioning, features that are today so universal that to mention those of this first Simpson market seems rather unnecessary. However, we had a separate counter and refrigerator for fresh fish; and while one could stand near the counter and not smell fish, the odour of that delectable food is so insistent that a year or so later, while there was little or no smell in the market, there was a very sensible odour of fish in our ready-to-wear fitting rooms on the third floor, where dainty fashions were shown.

J. W. Flavelle, whose principal business was meat-packing and whose Davies firm had retail stores in various parts of the city, was rather critical of so much marble, refrigeration and housekeeping. Anyway, we had a clean sanitary market, and sold only first quality properly conditioned meats and soon made a little money; although initial costs of most new projects were too high to permit of an immediate profit.

As our expenses were higher than the early cash and carry stores, I was invited to look over the Davies retail store across the road. What I saw there did not recommend itself to me, and if our expenses and prices were higher, we were at least clean and sanitary; and as for merchandise standards we had something the customer was ready to pay for, even if it was a little more.

The first Christmas our market was open the war was on, but “business as usual” was a slogan the authorities wanted us to adopt. We did our utmost, therefore, to make a good holiday showing. One of our meat market features was a young live black bear. Like all young animals he was as cute as a kitten. The show window at the corner of Queen and Yonge seemed a good place to show Baby Bruin. With much sawdust and other precautions, into the window he went. However, he didn’t last long as a window display; the police interfered because of the traffic jam on the corner of Queen and Yonge, which even stopped the trolleys.

Bruin was with us just over the one weekend, and that was enough. Saturday night we cleared the working space behind our refrigerators in the Yonge and Richmond basement corner. We gave him water and some food and locked him in. Sunday I had an emergency call. Bruin had caused trouble. I rushed down to the store and the mess behind those refrigerators was indescribable. I think it was the Humane Society that came to our rescue. It took half a dozen cleaners to get the place ready for Monday morning’s business. My advice for what it is worth to those who contemplate using a baby bear as a store attraction is—don’t do it.

My other basement merchandising experiences were in the hardware and housewares, and in the china and glass departments. They were both losing money and both were of little reputation. In tackling situations like these, I made it a practice to assume the managers were worthy fellows and men of experience in their lines. In the grocery end, Bogart and I understood one another. I had grown up in a general store, and later in a grocery store. We could talk the same language. In the housewares and china, I had had enough kindred experience during twenty years in the wholesale fancy goods trade to enable me soon to find myself at home in discussing the problems of these departments. The hardware man bought the toys; for these lines we had already arranged special facilities, for the Christmas trade, on an upper floor.

Walker, the housewares manager, had worked for S. H. Knox & Company, the five and ten cent store, at the corner of Queen and Yonge, later bought out by Woolworth's. When I announced to Mr. Walker that the President had asked me to look after his department, he wanted to know where I would begin. As we were standing out on the floor next to counters of kitchen goods, I suggested we might start where we were standing. On the top of the fixture were large tin containers, cream coloured, with the word "Flour" across their fronts. I was fairly familiar with the different sized flour packages and bags up to half a barrel, but the three tins on display seemed to be related in capacity to none of the sizes of package in which flour was being sold. The manager, however, affirmed that the three sizes he displayed were the ones his customers required. He admitted there were other sizes. I asked to see the factory list. All the wanted sizes were listed. We went to the counter, and the head girl quickly admitted that we had been out of the wanted sizes for some time. It transpired that she had asked the manager time after time to bring in the proper sizes, but to no avail.

This man's advertisements were naturally a jumble, and had little relation to the customer's needs in her kitchen and household. After a few weeks of this sort of thing, I suggested to him that he had better go back to the five and ten cent business, which he claimed to know; he did.

His successor, James Jackson, now retired, was one of the best hardware men in the country; and for years, in season and out, did a fine business. He demonstrated beautifully in his career with Simpson's the proof of the principle that business well done will bring profit as its by-product. What some of today's theorists, with regard to price fixing, fail to understand, and what many theorists of the past twenty years and more have failed to comprehend, is that very point: that a profit in business is normally and

usually the by-product of business intelligently and well done, rather than of high-level machinations and scheming to mulct the public without rendering the service which the people demand and are willing to pay for. It should be self-evident in the history of business that those establishments which rendered the greatest service at the least cost to the public have realized the best and steadiest profit over the years. In the effort to control those establishments which do not recognize and act upon that fundamental rule, it seems to me that government should interfere with that principle as little as possible and with a full realization of the hazards it imposes upon the industry and commerce of the country. I have noted in recent years a tendency on the part of government to pontificate, to issue bulls and edicts as from a divine level. The laws of good business are homely and earthy, having to do with hard work and a simple desire to serve customers to the best advantage of both buyer and seller. It is as homely as that, in the great department store as well as in the smallest country emporium. By far the greatest number of people engaged in business of any and every kind are actuated, before anything else, by the intention of remaining in business by pleasing and holding customers. There are exceptions. A law to control those exceptions is as necessary as any other law. It seems to me that the highest art of government is the control of the exceptions without either distressing or embarrassing the great majority.

It is in the act of recollecting these early days of mine in Simpson's, when so much emphasis was being placed upon the consideration of the customers above all, in the complete conviction that such consideration would be repaid in short order, that these reflections enter my mind. I shall have occasion to refer to them again.

In the china and glass department, Simpson's had engaged a man, trained in the States in retail housewares and china. Clouse, our man, was familiar with domestic and American sources of supply, but unfamiliar with Canadian products, and totally ignorant of British and foreign sources of supply. Staffordshire was the natural source from which we imported semi-porcelain dinnerware and other wares, and the famous English bone china which has never successfully been produced anywhere else in the world. Clouse had never been in England; and anything he knew of these lines was gleaned from secondary and certainly inferior sources in New York agents. Following my usual elementary methods of asking to see things customers might want, I asked to see jugs—cream jugs, water jugs, kitchen jugs. He had none except those forming open stock in dinner sets.



As there were many other staple lines which appeared to be among the missing, I asked that each salesperson record daily things asked for which we didn't have. These lists naturally repeated the same information on some lines day after day; but the number of things customers sought which we didn't have was quite substantial.

This manager had a small office and an office girl to assist him. I suggested that she and one of our older and most faithful girls, Miss McGillivray, should go shopping for things we didn't have which they believed we could sell. So we requisitioned \$50.00 and sent the young ladies to Eaton's and Junor's. They soon spent the first fifty on articles mostly under \$1.00 each, whereupon another and another \$50.00 were similarly spent. As these goods accumulated, the manager wanted to know what to do with them. I asked him to keep them in his office. Soon, however, the bulk of these purchases became so large that there was no room in his office for his routine work. By this time, however, it was manifest that he was the square peg in the round hole; and one day I suggested he should take the earliest opportunity of going back to the States where he could practise what he knew. In due course he did so.

In this case a young man trained by W. J. Reid, London, Ontario, who was assistant manager at \$20.00 a week, was promoted to the post of buyer and manager. He was one of the best buyers in this line; and until he retired a few years later, managed one of the most profitable departments in the store and was one of the highest paid chinaware men on the continent.

When war broke out in 1914 it found us with huge broken stocks of unobtainable dinnerware, principally from Bohemia. We also had frozen stocks of Limoges china. As we had not developed our biggest and best source of supply, namely well-known Staffordshire wares, the department had a sorry result for the first three years during which I was responsible for it.

As soon as inventories were taken, all goods, the sources of supply for which were interrupted or frozen by war, were put on sale at half price.

Our "fine" dinnerware consisted mainly of a Limoges line in several designs, which was never intended to be marketed as dinnerware, or in dinner sets. Nevertheless we had them in one hundred piece dinner sets around \$850.00 per set. Clouse, the manager, found this stock on hand when he took over the responsibility on his arrival. These purchases were not his fault, but they had the effect of eating up his buying margin for more wanted goods. How did we come to have these totally unsuitable and unsaleable

wares? After Clouse left, and his successor and I visited New York, we called on the agent of the Limoges firm, for whose wares we had the exclusive showing in Toronto. The war was already stopping this trade. Not only were key people at the French factory being drafted for the army, but shipping was being diverted to war needs, both within France and across the seas. Goods on order we could not expect to receive. New orders were out of the question. We could, however, review the circumstances under which we were loaded with totally unsaleable and unacceptable goods.

It appeared that a former buyer had been shown a line of service plates, but instead of confining his selection to plates, had insisted on the firm making up full dinner sets. The plates themselves were worth around \$3.00 each, so that when this ware was produced in other pieces, including quite large covered vegetable dishes, entree dishes, etc., the prices of some of the individual pieces were nothing short of fantastic. It is quite a sensation to call on a firm against whom you have been nursing a grievance to find that the situation was entirely your own fault, or at least your own responsibility. Not only had the Limoges firm advised against the purchase but they had taken the trouble, after confirming the order, to suggest that if for any reason the buyer found he had made a mistake, he could still cancel the order. He not only did not do so, but on arrival of the first shipment several months later he had actually sold a set to a customer for \$850.00; whereupon he sat down and repeated the original order for several more sets. The one set was sold to a *nouveau riche* and of course, no other was found with so much money and so little sense.

As I had to report these situations from time to time to the President, he was not at all surprised when my first year in charge of merchandise departments showed such dismal results. However, even although wartime made it difficult to secure needed lines, and although my contribution was much like a surgical operation, after the first shock and as new goods came in, these basement departments of housewares became convalescent and finally healthy.

Such concerns as these might be reasonably considered a full-time job. Yet at the outbreak of the first war, I was, in addition to being Service Manager of Simpson's, functioning as Acting General Manager of Murphy's of Montreal.

My first responsibility in Montreal was in 1912, a trip of inspection and to report. John Murphy was a fine old-time dry goods man, and the store had a firm place in the retail trade. When Murphy died, the situation was not

greatly different, so far as money for investment in such assets was concerned, than in Simpson's estate when Robert Simpson passed away.

If wages were low in Toronto they were insignificant in Montreal. Retail clerks were getting from \$4.50 to \$6.00 per week; parcelling and cashiering employees, mostly young girls, from \$1.75 to \$3.00 per week. The staff was required generally to be bilingual. Management from Toronto, on Simpson's purchase of the company in 1909, had been conducted on the assumption that things should go on as they were. The capital invested was around \$300,000. All Simpson's borrowed money and any earnings by Murphy's were drawn into Simpson's at the end of each year and, along with modest dividends from other subsidiaries, formed part of Simpson's earnings for the year.

From 1909 to 1913, when I first visited it as a Simpson officer, no money had been spent on the premises or fittings, nor had any attention been directed to the condition or welfare of the staff.

If one employee couldn't come to work, another could quickly be had in his place. The first reaction to my questions as to the why of this and that, especially the shockingly low wages, was a sort of incredulity. But as we got on with the introduction of new standards of work and of pay, a real burst of loyal enthusiasm was evident; and as the work was being done better and the staff better paid the business itself quickly registered the improvement.

I had quite an argument in Toronto when I proposed that, for a few years, money made in the business should be spent on the business. But as the amount involved was rather small, I won. Some years later, we bought the balance of the property in the Murphy block, and in 1931 completed the present beautiful Montreal Simpson store.

## CHAPTER XIX

### MORE PROBLEMS

For some time after assuming these various duties, as I have said I had no office and no telephone of my own. My place was down where the work was being done, working alongside those who did the work. Approaching my job in this fashion, there was no impediment of a big staff on me, their direction and care; and no sense of weighty responsibility. A parcel was a parcel, right or wrong, good or bad, likely to reach the customer, or unlikely to arrive in satisfactory condition, or on time. Quite truthfully I can say, no detail of the business was too small to interest me. It had about it for me the fascination of a jig-saw puzzle and a three ring circus.

For instance, the first time I “examined” the cash office, where money for customers’ counter purchases came through pneumatic tubes, I sat down beside Florence Parsons; and I asked questions she had already many times answered to others. I thanked her and indicated I would be in again after lunch. She very brightly remarked, “Oh, it’s all right, Mr. Burton, I’ve seen ’em all come and go.” Florence Parsons, still in active life, has been retired on pension for many years. She was one of the best women managers I ever knew. She knew her girls and all about them. She knew her work and possessed all the good qualities that Christians are promised great rewards for exhibiting. Years after, on her retirement, when I reminded her of her remark on first seeing me, she admitted that I was the exception, and as we had worked for some years together, we both agreed we had had a good time while we were at it.

My activities as Service Manager afforded me the chance to acquaint myself with the personnel as well as the operations of the company, and some of the personalities of that time deserve recollection.

Two old timers on the buyers’ staff were Donald McKinnon, the manager of the men’s and boys’ clothing, and W. J. Keens, manager of the women’s lingerie department on the third floor. Both had been years with Simpson’s before my arrival. McKinnon, popularly called “Dan”, a well-informed and experienced clothing man, was a money maker and needed no checking from the office to see that he marked a profit on his goods. The department was located on the Richmond Street side of the main floor. He wrote his own advertising copy and even while some of his sales claims were a bit prejudiced, he nevertheless sold only good wearing, dependable

coats and suits, and prided himself on keeping his customers, once they did business with him.

Boys' clothing was made by comparatively few manufacturers. By giving most of his business to one small manufacturer, a close friend of his, Mac controlled most of his output; and so as to increase his own earnings from Simpson's, he became a silent partner in the boys' clothing firm.

While this situation was no secret, and while it was recognized that a Simpson buyer should not buy from himself and incidentally earn a profit for himself in addition to his Simpson remuneration, Donald got away with it for years as his departments were among the most profitable in the store.

The situation in the "whitewear" or lingerie was somewhat the same, but a little more manifest. W. J. Keens and his brother owned the Keens Manufacturing Company, now for several years owned outright by Simpson's. In the early days of the century the volume of business in women's underwear—slips, drawers, underskirts and chemises—was prodigious, and this women's whitewear department was one of the largest in volume of sales and of earnings. As in those early days the store buyers bought also for the catalogue business, the Keens factory thrived, and both Walter J. and his brother Jim (J. H.) Keens made a good profit for themselves; and W. J., after buying from himself, made another profit at retail for Simpson's. Although one of the jobs which fell to my lot was to break up such combinations, and although any one found taking any commission or favour from suppliers was punished by dismissal, in the case of McKinnon and Keens, both men of exceptional character and ability, the anomaly of their buying from themselves was winked at even by the office.

Charlie Linstrum, who for years was buyer and manager of men's and women's gloves and hosiery, was formerly also manager of the men's furnishings department. Manufacturers, then as now, had to watch their step and not increase their operations beyond the limited ability of the wholesale and retail trade to absorb and distribute the goods they made. Even then there were seasons of the year when over-production was evident. Shoe sales, shirt sales and, in fact, sales of floor stock and cancelled orders in all sorts of goods were common. Just after the first war, Linstrum cleared the whole men's shirt surplus of Cluett's; a full page flaring ad was used, and the crowd of buyers was so great that the show cases were smashed, women fainted, men were injured, and altogether a good sale was had.

Changes in style have always been rather devastating to retail business. For instance, in the early 1900's, the women's blouse department sold

fabulous quantities of cotton and silk blouses as low as sixty-nine cents each, and up to \$3.95, and as the sales per square foot were large the blouse buyer was one of the “big” men of the store. However, after 1912, for many years the changes in styles made a blouse department a pain in the neck, and what had been a big earner became a source of sustained loss. When I arrived on the Simpson scene, Alfred Anderson, an Englishman, with a thorough London apprenticeship, was blouse department manager. Poor Alfred was transformed from one of the best earners into a frustrated man. In those days it was difficult to see that one must change with the changes in style. Doubtless Alfred could have done other things as well as he had blouses, but he never got the chance. It’s different today.

Simpson’s had, on my first acquaintance, some notable and outstanding men who had given the store a reputation among the city’s shoppers as the place to buy. One of these was the late John B. Hayes, as Irish as Timothy Eaton himself, and brought out from Ireland by that great merchant. J. B. had learned his business by apprenticeship in a draper’s shop near Belfast. He was a great buyer; not only was he as straight as a string, in other words incorruptible, but Nature had endowed him with unerring and incomparable taste and a colour sense vouchsafed only to one in a hundred thousand. His departmental displays were a kaleidoscope of beauty and nothing was in a display which did not have some intended complementary or, as required, contrasting shade.

Hayes was a dynamo. He probably had a lesser sense of accounting than others, but in his own work and buying, his mind was photographic in its accuracy. He was one of those good buyers who on the arrival of his purchases not only knew what he had bought but why. What a small amount of publicity he needed! His great following of customers was always ready and waiting to see what delectable wares would be on display next.

Robert Simpson himself was a great “piece goods” man. J. B. Hayes was a greater. Hayes leaving Eaton’s and coming to Simpson’s was a result of two Irishmen coming into collision. The hot heads are not all in the south of old Ireland. Ulster has its share.

It was generally thought that anyone “across the street” who began to perform as if he believed he were indispensable would soon be dropped, or so reduced in responsibility that his self respect would assert itself and he would leave. However that may be, there were occasions when the opinion seemed to be justified, such as when Jack Poole, MacMahon and other high officers were all chucked out together, after holding key positions in the competitor’s general management.

Simpson's President also had some Irish in him: his was proud, precise and, some thought, a terror to evil doers.

In the old days "figures" were kept very secret and it was the disadvantage of one bearing such a responsibility as buyer or department manager that they should know only what the office wanted them to know, "the office" being Mr. Fudger himself. There were notable examples of those who couldn't be browbeaten but some others who had the unhappy faculty not to be able readily to acknowledge a fault would have a bad time with the office.

For instance, Bill Allan, who for years headed the department of laces, embroideries, handkerchiefs and women's accessory foibles, always dreaded an interview with the President. Allan was the whitest of men, with impeccable taste, a good profit earner and of great moral purpose. One whose duties took him annually to Britain and Europe, he once exclaimed he'd rather cross the English channel in a storm than have an interview with the boss. This was the situation I inherited, and as a call to come to the office was such a bug-bear I found it more effective and a lot more comfortable for all concerned to make my contacts with the managers in their own departments, where they were on "home ground", and where conversations could take place without inhibitions on the part of either of us. This method, together with a frank showing of the departmental figures, enabled me quickly to gain the men's and women's confidence, and from there forward there were few misunderstandings, and generally a loyal and ready response to plans and suggestions which were brought forward.

A good buyer, who at the same time was a good manager, and one who won the support of his staff, was a great asset to the business.

Will Mallagh, who on one occasion made a buying trip around the world, was one of the best beloved, loyal and influential men in our early days.

It is too bad that in a job like this the writer cannot pay tribute to those of this present day who are "carrying the ball" and are, and in many activities have been for years responsible for Simpson's success.

These are the people whose combined effort makes the slogan, "You'll enjoy shopping at Simpson's", more than a mere slogan—that have made that slogan come true for thousands of Canadians.

Hughie Jolly, who is reaching the upper brackets in years of service, has been a great asset. Hughie knows, as only a Belfast man can, the smell of

flax and the bleach of linen. He not only had an incomparable training and experience in his chosen lines of linens, cottons and bedding, but almost any time during the past thirty years he might have been Lord Mayor of Belfast had he ever offered himself for the honour. There may have been better buyers than Hugh Jolly, but they must have been on this old planet in a former age.

Wallace Waller, now deceased, was, in his prime, considered one of the best shoe men in Canada. He saw the shoe business change from the old days of Queen Quality shoes, high boots, mostly of patent leather and the wide variety of high button boots, to the toeless, heelless creations of later days. It has been a business that has broken many a good man. Imagine the problem of carrying all needed sizes, widths, heels and colours in dozens of lines. In order to have shoes for any size, shape and colour, there were required around eighty pairs of each kind selected; and then if several customers came along, one after the other, requiring the same size, same width, same colour and same heels, some of them had to be disappointed.

These were among the men I found myself working with at Simpson's in the first two or three years of my apprenticeship to the trade of retail merchant. As I worked among them, I little dreamed that with an unexpectedness not equalled in any of the leaps and jumps of my earlier experience, I would be placed in authority over them. It was the first war that brought it about.

When I arrived at Simpson's in 1912, Frank Rogers, a man younger than I by four or five years, had fairly recently been appointed Merchandise and Sales Manager of the store by Mr. Wood, then the General Manager.

Rogers had been manager of the shoe department, and while there had made a name for himself in the purchase of clearances and factory floor stocks of footwear which were offered to the public in widely advertised clearance sales. Just before the 1914-18 war, Canada had been threatened with a set-back in trade, and there were many manufacturers who were obliged to get money out of their stocks, even if considerable quantities of goods were offered at less than cost. Simpson's, being now among those who could pay cash, had many opportunities to buy, take quick delivery of, and immediately sell many of these lots. Such sales, of course, were evidence of a distress that seemed to threaten the world on the eve of the war.

It was hoped that Rogers could do, in a larger field of merchandise, what he had performed in the shoe department; and with that in mind, his



appointment as Merchandise and Sales Manager placed him in charge over all departments. My responsibility in the basement departments was the first of the merchandise operations to be taken off Rogers' shoulders and allotted to me.

In the spring of 1915, amid the confusions and fears of the onset of the first world war, young Rogers, who was around thirty-two, took unto himself a bride, a perfectly beautiful young woman, and one who was blessed not only with beauty but possessed an unusual share of feminine graces and charm. As Frank Rogers had the reputation of keeping too much to himself, not easily sharing his responsibilities with those of his associates best capable of helping him, it was a matter of rejoicing that he had made so fine a choice.

They were married in May and embarked on their honeymoon on the R.M.S. *Lusitania*, which, to the horror of the whole civilized world, was torpedoed off Fastnet as she neared the other side of the Atlantic. A fellow passenger on the same ship was Mr. H. G. Colebrook, now one of Simpson's senior directors and officers, then head of our carpet department.

As the stately ship took its final plunge, it carried hundreds to death. Among the lost were Frank Rogers and his bride. Bert Colebrook, after a most terrible ordeal, was finally saved, and after a too short convalescence and rest, worked heroically in the heart-rending job of identification of victims whose bodies had been laid out by the hundreds at Cork, Ireland. The body of poor Rogers never was found, but Mr. Colebrook was able to identify the remains of the bride.

The shock of this tragic news was felt by the whole Simpson organization, but by nobody more so than by me. Rogers' untimely death brought into sudden correlation all the varied activities upon which I had been engaged for the past two or three years. Rogers' work was added to mine, and I became in fact the general manager of the store.

This happened, as you see, virtually at the outbreak of the first great war. A more critical moment at which to assume serious responsibilities in the mercantile world could hardly be imagined. Tremendous prosperity was about to shower upon Simpson's, as upon all other business during the war years. Simpson's was to be made by the war. But at the same time, strange new institutions were to be born of the war, chief among them the principles of income and business taxation which were destined to play a revolutionary role in all enterprise from that time forward.

Though seldom referred to, but surely one of the greatest changes of our time, was the birth, during the war, of a new sense of public responsibility for the community and the national welfare. In earlier chapters, I have mentioned the traditional handling of all charitable and welfare responsibilities by the wealthy families of the community and of the nation. While, before the war, a few organizations like the Y.M.C.A. had begun to formulate a new and broader presentation of the general public's right to share in the general welfare, it had not occurred to the great majority of us that welfare was everybody's concern. I think it reasonable to assert that up until the war, the traditional attitude towards charity and welfare still prevailed. It was the Patriotic Fund which launched the new conception, and with it, a new era.

This national organization was devoted to the care and security of the next of kin of the men serving in the armed forces. It directed its appeal for funds to the whole public. Under the emotional stress of war, it roused a widespread public support. It gave birth, actually, to that sense of responsibility in which all could share according to their means. It was the beginning of a new idea in community, provincial and national co-operation of all classes. It spelled the death of the old traditional attitude towards our social problems, and moved these problems into the public domain, rather than the domain of wealthy families, churches and societies. Social welfare, as we know it today, while doubtless in the blueprint for many a year before, was launched by world war one.

What all this has to do with me is simply told. Being disqualified from enlisting for active service by my defective vision, I undertook, as one of my chores as Service Manager, the set-up of an organization within the company for the benefit and care of the more than seven hundred employees of the firm who joined the forces. This brought me into contact with the Patriotic Fund as well as with the numerous other domestic organizations similar to Simpson's own. Up until this time, I had found no opportunity to interest myself in public activities, welfare or otherwise. As salesman and buyer for the Fancy Goods Company, I had been absent from the city the best part of each year. As Service Manager of Simpson's, I had been equally on the go.

To the first war years I owe my entry into the management of a great business in a period of unparalleled expansion and prosperity. But to those years I owe more; my introduction to the field of social service and public welfare at the very outset of the new era.

Mr. Fudger was not a gregarious man. All his life he avoided public bodies and public occasions. Despite the heavy responsibilities that devolved upon me after Frank Rogers' death, he did not discourage the modest public activities in which I began to be engaged as the war years progressed. On the contrary, he encouraged them, and formed the idea then, which he pursued after the war, that I should undertake all the responsibilities I had a mind to, in the direction of representing Simpson's in those public service and welfare enterprises which it now became the fashion for large businesses to participate in.

Thus within three or four years of joining Simpson's, and finding there the most propitious outlets for my energies, I discovered myself being gently propelled into contact with the city's men of action and of affairs, among whom, some few years later, I was to meet the men who were to make financially possible my assumption of control of Simpson's and become its President.

But in 1918, I was much too busy with the machinery to see where the machine was taking me.

## CHAPTER XX

### WAR

For a few weeks after the outbreak of war in August, 1914, there were periods of numbing anxiety and near panic until the Battle of the Marne was over, and the German armies were pinned down for what proved to be the long four year struggle. Stock exchanges closed, and a financial collapse on a world wide scale appeared imminent. In the Canadian business and industrial world, I am sure we had not the faintest premonition of what was in store for us. For by the time the first war ended, Canada had undergone what amounted to a revolutionary experience. She entered the war, in a sense, still a colony in the process of exploration and expansion. She emerged from it a young industrial nation, firmly established on the course which she was to follow in the ensuing years.

What added to the anxiety of businessmen at the outbreak of war was the fact that Canada had been in a definite slump during 1913 and the months of 1914 prior to the declaration of war. The year 1913 marked virtually the end of the great railroad building era which, for more than a generation, had been the basic construction enterprise. This era had not only opened the new provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta, but had provided for them and other areas of the West free land and the opportunities for earning. Innumerable enterprises, such as the creation of new towns and villages, and the opening up of fresh fields of agricultural, lumbering and mining activities, had been founded. The completion of the principal lines by 1913, left Canada as a whole at a loss to know what to do next.

The war provided the answer, terrible though it was in the loss of 60,000 Canadian lives and the maiming of over three times that number of our young Canadians. It was not many weeks after the war's outbreak that the answer to Canada's economic problem was manifest. The adventurous manhood of the Dominion, fresh from the rugged fields of enterprise in all the realm of construction and engineering that had just come to a pause, flocked to the colours. The business, engineering and technical elders of the generation, too old to enlist, were equally apt and fit for the occasion. Because of the nature of Canadian enterprise for the generation preceding the war, no nation, it seems to me, entered that war better equipped from the point of view of individual experience.

While our young men proceeded apace to form division after division of unexcelled fighting quality, not forgetting the large and unique infusion of Canadians into the Royal Flying Corps, the industrial and business component of the nation faced up to the huge job of improvisation of war industry. Within a year, those vigorous individuals in finance, industry and construction who had been involved for years in the development of the country were already meeting, in an astonishing measure, and with the help of the British industrialists introduced to Canada by the Imperial Munitions Board, the demand for munitions in every category. Before the war ended, the industrial plant and equipment they set up for war, and the personnel trained in it, had become the means of Canada's post-war conversion from an agricultural to an industrial economy.

Quite early in the war, once the economic and financial situation had caught its balance, the slogan offered by the government itself was "Business as usual!" In Britain, Canada and, shortly after, in the United States, "Business as usual" appeared on the billboards, on window signs, and mottoes on office and plant walls. Nowadays, after the experience of the second great war, and in view of what is to be expected in the event of another war, it is hard to convey an adequate impression of the situation in 1914-18. In the conduct of the war, government did not infringe upon business at all. Business was left to carry on in its own sphere; government did the same. One way and another, a war was fought.

By the time that first war was over, business was never to be "as usual" again. The seeds of revolution were sown in far wider areas than Russia. Before the war's end, there had sprouted those elementary ideas of taxation of income and of business, which have since blossomed, in tropical luxuriance, into the enormous and all-pervasive institutions of government control of enterprise which we know today. The principle involved in them had a profound effect on far wider fields than those of business. This seems to be a logical place to interrupt the story of my personal experiences in Simpson's in order to attempt a review of the Canadian scene as it was affected by those great changes.

In Russia, of course, real bloody revolution resulted in a communist dictatorship. The rest of the world took little heed of that event; and I suppose few of us perceived at the time that the whole world situation was in for revolutionary change. The Russian experiment was thought of as a disease, one we should isolate ourselves from. We went about our own affairs, with a view to bringing them back to normal.

Dickens had spent a lifetime trying to shock the English-speaking world, and especially England, into a realization that human beings had a greater duty than simply to consign to Providence those who had insufficient to eat or to enable them to subsist.

As good Christians, we read in the scriptures of the poor, whom we would always have with us; but the Sermon on the Mount was a bit far-fetched—the average person would look rather foolish running around with a cup of cold water. The visiting of prisons could be left to the Salvation Army. If we looked after our own sick, other people should do the same; all would be right with the world. As for heaven, we could declare with Peter, “Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God”; and with such faith, we would surely not be asked any embarrassing questions as to whether we gave the thirsty to drink or visited the sick or imprisoned.

The twilight years of the Victorian era and the decade of the Edwardian period saw little change in our social outlook. The ten prosperous years in Canada before 1890 had done wonders for the aggressive. Most wholesalers amassed fortunes. One hundred thousand dollars was perhaps as much then as a million is today, and there were plenty with a hundred thousand or more. They could drive a carriage and pair, have a coachman, sometimes a footman. They wore frock coats and silk hats, and had their ladies appear in apparel of equivalent or corresponding character. Young families doing well could elevate themselves into a new social stratum by being financially able to do so, and by avoiding any evidences of former lower station. Those like the Cawthras, who bought downtown properties, were often able to collect as much in rent in a year as their original capital investment; and there was no income tax. Several of those old families drew down such revenues during their lifetime, while others like the Baldwins left their outlying properties for a later generation to cash in upon. What was money for if not to be spent upon or settled upon one’s family? Whose fault was it that a person outside the family didn’t do well? It was his own. Had he been prudent? Mr. Pecksniff named his two daughters Charity and Mercy. Mr. Pecksniff’s short and pious grace before meals at Mrs. Todgers’ invoked a blessing on the appetites of those present, and committed all persons who had nothing to eat to the care of Providence, whose business it clearly was to look after them.

In Toronto and elsewhere in Canada, charity took two forms. One process was to join with a select group of kindred minds, in the same social condition, to administer and support a public, semi-public or private charity. The other was to choose for the family a single activity for exclusive

support; and woe betide those who thought to better their social prospects by butting in to the selected preserves of such family groups.

No one could say that the objects were ulterior or the munificence to be underestimated. There was just no such thing as the general public subscribing to a list of worthy projects.

The depression of the early 1890's was one of the worst in our short history. In the country places, neighbour helped neighbour; and even if the assistance involved the protracted and total help of a penniless family, it was no great burden, everything being so cheap and so readily available.

In the city the problem was more serious. Many a poor fellow or an entire family went hungry and ill clad, unless members of a church and known to be in need. Families in good circumstances, who were known to be supporters of one or other of the so-called charities, held themselves exempt from outside demands, and indeed prided themselves on giving with intelligence, and on not pauperizing people by answering all and sundry appeals.

Well-meaning well-to-do people had Christmas charity lists and each year at that season would send coal or food, evidently without too much concern about the needs of the other days and seasons of the year. In fact, if one kept his own house in order, it was the general practice to keep one's eyes on one's work and one's nose out of other people's business.

Employers paid "prevailing" wages and the wage earner bought what the wages he received would buy and did without the rest. Before the days of factory acts and minimum wage laws, Toronto children were often taken from school under age; and if the child brought anything at all home, over and above transportation and food, it was considered helpful and so much to the good.

This was the Toronto, this was the Canada, barely disturbed by uneasy notions of social reform that might have already been voiced elsewhere in the world, which I recollect at the outbreak of the first war. H. G. Wells's novel, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* is, to my mind, the faithful report of what happened to us as well as to Britain.

The recruiting, training and despatching of our boys, amid grand parades and countless brass bands, inspired unprecedented public emotion which soon warmed all classes towards each other. In due time, citizens' committees and public meetings for Victory Loans were bringing people together. Presently dawned the days of the casualty lists, growing grimmer

week by week and month by month. No one was exempt from the pull upon the heart strings; and those finer instincts and qualities of human nature, which we seemed determined in times of peace to suppress or keep within “practical” bounds, broke from their moorings. It was a long-drawn war; longer-drawn, in some sense, than the second great war. As the wounded began to trickle home, in an ever-increasing stream, the sense of public responsibility grew deeper and wider. Individuals, companies, government, all found themselves aware of, and faced with, the problem of the return of the veterans long before that event actually occurred. The Patriotic Fund was launched, on a national scale, and, great and small, all Canadians felt bound to interest themselves in it.

For here was the inescapable fact: we at home, individuals, companies, governments, had never been better off!

What a bountiful jade war is! During the four war years, she put a firm economic foundation under all legitimate businesses and brought a new standard of living to all who worked. While others gave their lives, and some gave their future prospects of ever making an adequate living; while all who served at least temporarily gave up their living, the rest of us at home fared rather shamefully well.

Canadian industry in the war, untrammelled by taxation or other controls, had a remarkable record of accomplishment and an unprecedented opportunity to put its finances in solid shape. As prices advanced, due to the insistently larger demand, as new wealth poured out of factory, warehouse and store, and as this sense of well-being increased each day to the accompaniment of the far-off and tragic sound of war, it was natural that both the individual and the public conscience should experience a profound change.

In chapters to come, I shall attempt to measure the effects of this enlarged public conscience as it referred to Toronto and to Canada as a whole. It seems to me that the changes that occurred during and immediately after the first world war were by long odds the greatest I have witnessed in my life, and far exceed in importance any that have taken place since, most of which were consequent upon what happened in the first war.

I can speak of what happened, in that regard, in Simpson’s. My own concerns, throughout the war period, were what might be called intensive. I was thirty-six years old when I joined Simpson’s, and close to forty by the time of the *Lusitania* sinking and Frank Rogers’ death, on which event I was given general management of the store, together with the Montreal store. An



impression might have been gained, from the immediately preceding chapters, that I was at this time a young man finding my way about in the various departments of the business.

On the contrary, I was a man of forty, with nearly four years' experience of the company by the time the full duties devolved upon me. It is true these fell upon me at the very onset of the great activity and expansion occasioned by the war. But perhaps a better circumstance for me and for the business could not have transpired. I could face the situation of a suddenly booming trade with a thoroughly intimate understanding of the capacities, shortcomings and potentialities of the numerous departments it had been my privilege to work in and survey so recently.

Long before assuming these larger responsibilities, I had demonstrated to the President my views with respect to wages and their bearing upon efficient service and improved business. Both in Toronto and Montreal, as early as 1913, I had succeeded in having wages increased in many departments, and, within six months or so, had been able to prove the consequent increase of business. I do not suggest that Mr. Fudger was opposed to such increases. He was the product of an earlier age in which the old-fashioned attitude towards business prevailed, a feature of which was to keep costs down. That was conceived to be economy.

By the time the war was well under way, and I was in a post of senior responsibility, a change in this respect was coming over Mr. Fudger. And I had an important ally in my attitude to wages and working conditions in the person of the President's son, Dick Fudger.

This name brings into my story one of the greatest tragedies I have witnessed. Dick Fudger was more than the apple of his father's eye. He was the only son of this gifted and successful man: and it was not only the father's hope, but the dream which spurred him on and inspired him, that his son should inherit not merely the wealth but the position Mr. Fudger had carved out for himself in Canadian life.

It was not to be. In the next chapter, the tragic and early death of this brilliant young man will be dealt with. Due to ill health, Dick could not serve in the war, though a major in the G.G.B.G. But he took a keen interest in all war activity in which he could share, his regiment, and especially the welfare of the Simpson's men overseas and their families at home: and thereby, in the welfare of the employees generally. He was away a good deal, spent winters generally in California; but as his strength would permit, he visited some of the growing businesses in Los Angeles. In 1916 he wrote

his father a report on conditions of employment in The Broadway Store, owned by a former Canadian who had worked for R. Walker and Sons, whose store on King Street East, in the old days, was known as the Golden Lion.

In this report, Dick wrote to his father:

No girl under sixteen is employed at all—for any work. The manager told me there were only half a dozen employees in the store so young, and they were paid a minimum of \$6.00 per week. \$7.00 per week is the minimum for girls of seventeen years of age, \$8.00 per week is the minimum for girls of eighteen years of age, and this automatically becomes \$9.00 per week when she has been there one year. After that, increases are according to her selling percentage. No matter what the girl's age, \$10.00 is the minimum wage paid to girls living away from home, and no matter what her age, \$12.00 per week is the minimum for girls who have children to support.

There is a time clock on every floor with separate locker rooms and lavatories for men and women. This separate locker room on every floor is considered a mistake, as it is too easy for the employees to slip merchandise into their lockers. On the eighth floor there is an employees' rest room for girls, with a branch of the public library in it; a private sewing room for girls to use, an hospital and very fine lavatories. In the men's room on the same floor is an employees' smoking room. There is also an auditorium seating four hundred; seats can be removed and it is used for employees' dances in the evening, as well as amateur theatricals.

Benefit societies in the store:

First: the Mutual Benefit Society, non-compulsory, monthly subscription, twenty-five cents. Through this, employees get free medical attendance when they are away sick, as well as \$5.00 per week sick benefit. At present, this society has a surplus of \$3,000.

Second: The Arthur Letts Employees' Association—a free organization formed by the employees for social intercourse, and for investigation of any of the store's activities. This association recently put on a sale of its own; it was advertised as the Employees' Sale, and they had the enthusiasm of a Roosevelt banquet. It was the most profitable sale the store ever had. This

association elects what is known as a Grievance Committee, and any complaints from the employees are dealt with by it. The humblest clerk can state her case against a manager here, and be sure of a fair deal. The Grievance Committee makes a recommendation, and if it is not followed out, the case is referred to Mr. Letts.

To modern ears, these remarkable things which Dick Fudger describes sound rather pitiful. But at the time they were written home to the President of Simpson's, there was no conception of the pension schemes and employee savings plans which, within a very few years, were to distinguish Simpson's from most other large businesses in Canada.

Dick Fudger's activities and attitude, as revealed in this letter, had almost immediate results. In 1917, within a year of that letter being written, Mr. Fudger set up a foundation and purchased the beautiful big mansion at 439 Sherbourne Street, long known as Sherbourne House Club and now known as Fudger House Club Foundation.

With additions of modern apartment wings, this lovely old house has since been a home to hundreds of girls who worked at Simpson's over the past thirty-five years.

The creation of the Sherbourne House Club Foundation together with the manifest good will of the President towards the men abroad in the services and their families at home were part and parcel of a spirit of increasing confidence and security throughout the Simpson business. It expressed itself in a vigour and a feeling of "going places" that permeated the organization.

J. W. Flavelle, Simpson's Vice-President, had been appointed chairman of the Imperial Munitions Board and was to receive a baronetcy for his war effort. Our President, though refraining as always from any public office or activity, was known to be mellowing towards even those who feared the call to his office. Due to his increasing years and to his burden of anxiety over his son Dick's failing health, he left more and more of the functions of management to me.

Of my induction to the general management of the company in the war years from 1915 to 1918 I can say no more than that it would have been a wonder if I had not made a go of it.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SOCIAL SERVICES

Dick Fudger's death occurred in 1918 a couple of months before the war's end. It is a pity he did not live a little longer to see more of the things that came into being so soon after his death.

Richard Barry Fudger, Dick as he was called by everyone, was one of a group of gifted young men, Irving and Colly Robertson, Feather Aylesworth and Jack Meredith, sons of prominent Torontonians, who were all destined to disappear from this earthly scene in early manhood.

Dick Fudger was an artist, a really creative painter, and a literary authority who, among other things was an expert on the works of Robert Louis Stevenson. R. B. Fudger's name appeared among the directors of The Robert Simpson Company in the first published balance sheet, when financial issues were made in London in 1912. Two years later Mr. Ellsworth Flavelle was added to the Board. The two Fudgers and the two Flavells were associated with the two Coxes, both sons of the Senator, as the younger directors of the company.

Ed Cox was President of the Canada Life Assurance Company, succeeding his father, while H. C. Cox was President of the Imperial Life Assurance Company, a company supposed to have been set up by the Senator for his son Bert. Edward W. Cox having passed away suddenly, and his father not being available for active duty, the Cox interests were represented in Simpson's by W. G. Morrow of Peterborough.

By the date of Dick Fudger's death Mr. H. H. Fudger was in his late sixties. His silk hat and frock coat had given way to more informal garb. Worldly ambition and the pride of life gave way to deeper and more abstract study. Philanthropic considerations began to take a big place in his thinking. His affectionate memory for the son, upon whom great business hopes had been built, now was to be demonstrated and established for succeeding generations by the erection of the Fudger Wing of the Art Gallery of Toronto. The central painting in this great wing of the gallery is Sir Wm. Orpen's oil painting of his pupil, R. B. Fudger, dressed in open necked shirt and blazer, the dress of the young artist of that day.

Another manifestation of the memorial and philanthropic bent of Mr. Fudger's mind, in the months immediately following the war, was the

institution of employee benefit organizations such as those Dick had written home about from Los Angeles in 1916.

We had a good many large and even anxious concerns on our minds at this time, despite the prosperity that had built so solid a foundation under the company. Before describing the employee benefits, I should like to sketch in the background.

It has been my fate always to work for a smaller organization against a larger one. It was true in my years with the Fancy Goods Company. Here in Simpson's we had for a neighbour across the road the great colossus of the T. Eaton Co. It was necessary at all times to keep an eye and an ear cocked in a northerly direction. At the war's end, rumours of a more than disquieting nature were current throughout Toronto.

Eaton's, flushed with the success of their great business, and enjoying the warmest public goodwill due to their presentation of an entire machine gun battery to the army, among other benefactions, were reported to be moving their Toronto store to the corner of College and Yonge. This was very big news in those days, big to the public, and bigger to us in Simpson's. Colour was lent to the rumour by an undeniable activity in real estate in the College-Yonge area. The first "mystery" block reputed to have been bought by Eaton's was the northeast corner of Yonge and Carlton, the whole block from Carlton to Wood Street, and from Yonge to Church.

Before the war ended a second "mystery" block entered the picture, the entire southwest corner of Yonge and College. The purchase of this block was made possible by the removal to its present location of the Bishop Strachan School, from a large part of the south side of College Street between Yonge and Bay. There were a few private houses on the south side of College, west of Yonge, and then began the spacious grounds of Bishop Strachan's, with a high board fence, extending almost to Bay Street.

Although these purchases of the two kit-a-corner blocks of Yonge and College were mysteries, anyone who was a good guesser—and nearly every guesser was good—knew that the purchaser of these two massive chunks of real estate was Eaton's.

As without doubt Simpson's benefitted from the proximity of its big neighbour, there was very considerable anxiety as to what would happen to Simpson's if and when Eaton's moved away. Although Simpson's had greatly improved its position by the first war's end, there were to ensue a few years of first class anxiety as to the plans across the road. Simpson's total assets, at the end of 1914, were just over nine millions. By the end of

1920, they had increased by nearly five millions; but due to new buildings for the extension of the catalogue business in the West, in Toronto and in Halifax, the working capital position was not improved.

Our large competitor, having already provided himself, years before, with ample facilities, was enabled to realize profits in great contrast to the modest progress Simpson's registered; and while the business necessarily had to plough back a substantial part of net earnings each year and be content with a minor role, so far as public benefactions were concerned, it was somewhat hard to bear because Simpson's was really a big store and considered to be well off. Yet neither the company nor chief officers were in a position to throw money around.

At this particular moment J. W. Flavelle, being Chairman of the Imperial Munitions Board, was only occasionally available for counsel in his relation as director. While his son was already a director of Simpson's, he was not interested actively in the management; and even later when he took a turn of duty, it was not to continue after our 1929 reorganization.

The end of the first world war was to bring with it an avalanche of new problems, which were to test in the light of war-wakened public conscience, the principles and practices which were in effect in the business world.

In the closing days of the first war, when war prosperity had induced a new spirit of sharing, Simpson's, who had been among the rather slow to move in matters of employee benefits, took a radical step forward in 1919 by introducing an Employees' Savings and Profit Sharing Plan. The idea was in the air; books were being written about it; and the selling of shares to employees was tried out under various schemes in many parts of America.

As Simpson's common shares were closely held, The Robert Simpson Company Limited was not in a position to offer its shares to employees. Upon investigation of available plans it was decided to examine a pension and profit sharing plan in effect in Chicago in the Harris Trust Company and Sears Roebuck & Company. Burnett and I were asked to go to Chicago and report on this plan.

The principal virtue of this plan was that no officer or employee could share in it until employed at least one year. No participant could deposit more than a small annual amount, not exceeding 5% of his annual pay, so that all employees eligible were on practically an equal basis.

The company on its side undertook to deposit 5% of its net profits, and the combined amount was then used to buy on the market common shares of

the company at the market price prevailing from time to time.

After reporting to Simpson's directors we consulted the late Z. A. Lash, K.C., who entered into the spirit of the business in his characteristically enthusiastic, speedy, but careful and wise manner, and as a result Simpson's introduced a plan which has continued for more than thirty years to be not only a landmark in the business but an example to all in simple, safe and enduring profit-sharing plans for employees.

We followed the Chicago plan so far as eligibility of employees was concerned. We limited savings participation to 5% of wages, with a maximum of \$100.00 per annum. The company's contribution has been 5% on net profits after depreciation, bond and other interest was provided for, and during the years when the Robert Simpson Company preference stock was in existence, after such preferred dividend was paid. The various revisions since have extended the benefits to employees of all Simpson subsidiaries.

One of the unique provisions of Simpson's plan has been the investment of 60% of the fund in trustee securities, namely, government bonds. The other 40% is invested in Simpson's bonds and preferred shares.

In order to qualify for full credit, an employee must have been employed ten years or more, except in the case of a woman leaving to be married, in which case the employee must have been continuously employed five years. The amount on deposit may be withdrawn at any time, but if the employee withdraws before the full period, he or she may withdraw only their own savings with interest at 5% as provided.

The fund has grown until it totals nearly \$6,000,000. Those who have been participants from the inauguration of the plan have thousands of dollars at their credit more than the amount they themselves deposited.

For example, an employee who has been in the fund since its inception and has deposited \$3,300 which is the maximum of \$100 each year, has at his credit \$18,757.

The Simpson Employees' Savings and Profit Sharing Fund now forms part of Simpson's Retirement Security Plan, introduced in 1946, which will be referred to later.

## CHAPTER XXII

### BIG BUSINESS

Much to the amazement of practically everyone in Canada, there was no immediate post-war collapse in business.

Before World War I Canada's industrial effort had been rather weak. Under the astute guidance of Sir Joseph Flavelle, Chairman of the Imperial Munitions Board, and the undeniable demands of Britain for supplies, and with the great financial help of Britain, our industrial machine speeded up in an amazing way.

Before the United States took the plunge in 1917, our interest and activity in the war was largely in support of the Empire effort. We had visits from Britain of some powerful personalities who had first-hand knowledge of the war's requirements, and of special political situations. Some of the exhortations by these visitors were of the hectic evangelistic variety, and in one such gathering, when Sir Joseph was also on the programme, he gave out with the memorable "to hell with profits". It was quite true that some, at home, were waxing rich in production of war needs and on account of the huge increase in consumer spending power. Almost every one benefitted financially. The farmers got \$2.00 a bushel for wheat, three or four times the pre-war price for hogs, and taxes hadn't yet taken a toll of the higher earnings as they did later and as they did in no uncertain terms in the second world war.

Sir Joseph Flavelle was the victim of his own exhortation. He had given himself whole-heartedly and without thought of reward to the production of munitions; but while he was doing so, his pork packing business was making a great deal of money. Sir Joseph had a sort of natural sanctimoniousness, and when later he sold his packing company and cashed in some millions in the process, there were those who recalled his admonition, "to hell with profits".

Probably no civilian served in the first war with greater distinction than did Sir Joseph, and his elevation to a hereditary title seemed small recognition for his work.

About the time that Sir Joseph cashed in on his packing house investment, he turned his eyes on Simpson's. He had, since 1898, been a



third owner, or thereabouts, of The Robert Simpson Company common shares, and Mr. Fudger and the Cox estate owned about the same.

Sir Joseph and Mr. Fudger were very close friends; and while they had few characteristics in common, they never faltered in their friendship and in their admiration for, and faith in, one another.

About this same time, Mr. H. C. Cox began extended visits to Britain where he became M.F.H. of one of England's most famous and fashionable hunts. This horse business costs money.

Mr. Fudger's advancing age, and Mr. Cox's fox hunting both offered Sir Joseph a suitable opportunity for investment for his recently realized capital from the packing house business. A substantial portion of their holdings in the company were sold to Sir Joseph, bringing his holdings to 66 $\frac{2}{3}$ % of Simpson's shares. In 1920, he moved in and made his headquarters on Simpson's executive office floor.

His deal with Mr. Fudger was on condition that the latter would continue on as long as he desired to do so, as President of the company. Although Sir Joseph was Vice-President of Simpson's, he became what is now known as the V.I.P. He was in consultation with Mr. Fudger almost daily, and those of us in the management soon recognized the fact that although Mr. Fudger still fired the balls, they were balls made mostly by Sir Joseph.

In these days when the inflationary influences of the last war are causing all kinds of questions as to the future, one is reminded that a very similar situation faced the country, in fact all peoples, after the first war.

Simpson's business continued practically as two operations; the stores in Toronto and Montreal; and the Mail Order division which, since 1916, had a big operation in Toronto, and a Western branch at Regina. In 1919, the Halifax branch was established. This latter business was located near the upper end of the northwest arm. What has over the years turned out to be a first class operation, both by mail and at retail, was at the time considered by many to be a wild-eyed venture. As a matter of fact, for the first three years, that branch lost plenty; but war conditions favoured the other operations of the business.

Burnett, the General Manager of the Mail Order, brought a young New Yorker up as merchandise manager. This officer was reputed to be an expert, and he certainly had a sharp pencil and plentiful statistics. His theory was that as all items in the catalogue were "under control", there was no

necessity to set aside reserves out of wartime profits to meet any anticipated losses. This scientific scheme was supposed to be proof against emergencies.

In the Stores, we had another theory, and a different practice. As we made profits, amounts were set aside as reserves. The general theory was that we would reduce our inventories at stock-taking time back to their pre-war values.

In the Stores we stopped buying ahead in 1918, unless suppliers would give firm prices and firm dates of delivery. That meant that in many lines we stopped buying in 1918 and how lucky we were!

One need only to look over the wrecks of the wholesale dry goods houses to see how unfortunate it was that orders were given beyond reasonable prices, and at prices prevailing at time of shipment, and for quantities double or treble the needed quantities, on the theory that only one-half or one-third of the goods would be delivered.

In 1920, the Mail Order with no reserves made substantial losses. Our Simpson Stores, with no high cost commitments ahead, and with substantial reserves, could go ahead, take their losses and buy distress goods as they came on the market. Our American mail order merchandise man went back to New York, whence he had come.

About the only dry goods house in Toronto to weather the storm was Gordon Mackay, piloted by that famed merchant, Sir James Woods, knighted for his services during the first war in the field of supplies.

It would be painful, and perhaps profitless, to list the great houses which went down and out in 1920-21 after several of the most prosperous years of their history.

One episode I must relate. My New York friend of our Mail Order found in the fall of 1918 that we had \$50,000 more cotton staples, such as sheets, pillow cases, etc., than his "sharp pencil" plan could allow. So he ordered the goods disposed of to the first buyer. The goods were sold to a jobber on Wellington Street at 10% above our cost. However, within three months the goods were needed and were bought back from the same jobber at 40% increase in price. Even then the goods cost less than the prevailing factory price. Such is science in merchandising when done with a sharp pencil and a good supply of statistics.

Our reserves, built up year by year, had to go to make up the losses in the other division; and thereby hangs a tale.

Sir Joseph now being in control, talked the matter over with Mr. Fudger; and in 1921, came to the conclusion that he would engage a General Manager to whom Burnett in the Mail Order and I in the Stores would report.

This was a situation that might naturally have been expected. In the years that Sir Joseph had been a director of the company, every one in management had of course known his importance to the firm, but few of us had had occasion to come into personal contact with him. When in 1920 he moved in, body and britches, to the head office of the store, as majority owner of the company, it was a matter of concern to everybody in the management, but to none more so than to me. I had been with Mr. Fudger all my life, since my boyhood, in fact. I had the deepest respect and affection for him. I was a Fudger man. My career had been in a sense governed by him. He was now in his seventies; and a younger man, Sir Joseph, had entered the business, physically.

There never was the slightest reason to believe that there was any conflict between Sir Joseph and Mr. Fudger. None the less, it would be idle of me to deny that I watched for it, and was ready to take sides. Mr. Fudger was a merchant. Sir Joseph, having been in the packing house business, owner of a chain of butcher shops, and a bank director to boot, was a strategist of business rather than a tactician. Operating a department store, in my idea, was in the realm of tactics rather than of business strategy.

There was reason for concern, therefore, in all directions and at all levels on the day that Sir Joseph came into my office and enquired in his blandest manner what was likely to happen to us.

What, I enquired carefully, had he in his mind?

Well, had I not noticed in the papers the failure in the U.S.A. of the Central Leather Corporation, whose liabilities were in excess of a billion dollars?

And had I knowledge that the one-hundred-and-fifty-year-old Amoskeag Steam Cotton Company of Fall River, had failed, after all its long years of operation?

Here I was being invited up into the realm of strategy. What had I to say as to the situation in Simpson's?

It was, of course, impossible to say, I admitted, what would happen to us. But not having any commitments ahead that we could not handle, and

having to date met all changes in the market by means of intelligent buying, I promised Sir Joseph that we would be better off than most.

What an over-simplification of the situation, declared Sir Joseph. How did I account for my optimistic view?

Simply, I stated, because we had better men than most.

Sir Joseph retired, after expressing his gratification on learning this. However, he shortly gave evidence of his confirmed mistrust of the situation by his decision to bring in a General Manager over Burnett in the Mail and over Burton in the Stores. The situation was simple and quite clear. Mr. Fudger called me in to the Board Room and broke the news.

As I had been offered all sorts of jobs in New York at anywhere from double to treble my remuneration at Simpson's, I told Mr. Fudger that if he would advise me what day the new General Manager was to come in, I would not be down that or succeeding days.

Mr. Fudger, who was in little sympathy with this idea of Sir Joseph's, was scarcely surprised. He simply said, "Well, just don't take this as final, and let it ride a few days." I went on with my job. I heard no more for a fortnight or so, when one day Mr. Fudger called me in and said, "Oh, by the way, that matter I was talking with you about."

"Oh," I said, "what matter had you in mind?" We had had many conversations.

Mr. Fudger said, "Well, about the matter of choosing a General Manager; just forget it. No General Manager will be appointed over you." "Thank you, Mr. Fudger," was my reply and the matter was closed.

In this life, when a challenge is given, and met, things can never be the same again. The relation between Sir Joseph and myself was now established. Although he was 66⅔% owner of the company, I determined in all things not to allow myself to be turned aside from an obviously wise programme. And I stuck to it. After all, as he very well knew too, service to customers, as they like it, has precedence over everything else.

Out of a clear sky, at this juncture in all our affairs, our friends "across the road" one day offered Simpson's the east mystery block—the Yonge-Carlton-Church block—if we, when they moved to College Street, would bring our business up to the opposite corner.

This, I believe, has never been made public before.

The devil they knew was evidently to be preferred to the devil they didn't know.

The effect of this offer was, of course, tremendous on the Simpson management. It was a tacit admission of our having reached major proportions in the big league of which Eaton's were the champs. To say that we did not consider the offer at all would be wide of the mark. What the offer did, however, was spur us to a larger-visioned stock-taking of our position than had ever been attempted before.

Simpson's situation was complex, though not complicated. We had, it is true, large freehold areas in our Queen, Yonge and Richmond block; but we also had important areas under lease, a goodly portion under perpetual lease from Knox Church. Even had we considered it advisable to follow Eaton's to College Street, and to take advantage of a favourable real estate deal on the Yonge-Carlton area, we did not have the capital to permit so radical a move; and the liability, in perpetuity, for leasehold properties meant the die was cast for Simpson's. We must continue in our present location.

The collapse of 1920-21 was to be simply an economic adjustment, and the roaring twenties were in the offing.

As soon as it was manifest that Simpson's business was safe, and off to a new start, especially in our Stores, and having demonstrated that we could absorb all losses due to lowering prices by an active buying and sales programme at the new price levels, the question was: how did we "stack up" with our competitors?

Traffic counts at Christmas 1921 in our toy and gift departments and Easter 1922 in such departments as millinery, indicated that we were sadly lacking in space and arrangement and the fitting of departments to enable us to keep up our end.

Although few were as yet of a mind to expand, I convinced Mr. Fudger and Sir Joseph that we needed an addition and refitting. We owned the area opposite James Street and through from Queen Street to Richmond Street. I obtained authority to build an addition to cover that area. For the first time Simpson's would have premises out from under the shadow of Eaton's. I also had authority to refit and refurnish all departments. The expenditure was in the neighbourhood of \$1,750,000.

Contracts were let. James Street was broken up on the 23rd of May, 1923, and by October 15th, we were selling goods on the second floor. By

Christmas, we were in operation on most of the new area. Such was building enterprise in the early twenties.

We laid a Tennessee marble floor on the main floor of the new addition. This has proved the best flooring for a department store there is, safe underfoot, easy to clean, durable. Sir Joseph, who had laid back his ears, if not actually balking at the expenditures I submitted, was soon enthusiastic over the new addition to the store, which took us well on our way to the occupation of the whole of the block facing the City Hall and Eaton's. Carried away, he suggested we lay Tennessee marble over the whole main floor. This we did in 1924, the specifications being already in hand.

Rather than consider moving to Carlton and Yonge, Simpson's had demonstrated their determination to remain at Yonge, Bay and Queen in a bigger way. In the practical demonstration of this determination and in the carrying out of the expansion, I had been obliged as General Manager of the Stores to take a large part. Those "better men" whom I assured Sir Joseph were in our company, had throughout this period confirmed my assertion, and the business was in such excellent shape that I felt emboldened to take what might be expected to be the next step before me.

Sir Joseph had several times, and in different circumstances, suggested that Burnett, head of the Mail Order, and I should cultivate sources of capital in case we should get a chance of acquiring a more substantial interest in the business. As I had already discussed this prospect with my friend, J. H. Gundy, he 'phoned me one day in 1924 to come and lunch with him.

He volunteered that if Simpson's stock could be bought outright, he could arrange suitable financing which would give those under the roof responsible for the management, substantial control of the business.

This was premature, but was in keeping with Sir Joseph's suggestions. I therefore arranged an appointment with him. I told him the situation that I was about to reveal had developed because of his own conversations with me; and while I thought he might consider the offer premature, and while I did not feel I should discuss it with my colleagues in the management, I felt bound to bring it to his attention.

He was dumbfounded. Sir Joseph always preferred a transaction to be of his own initiation. He pretended to be shocked that I should attempt to forestall my associates in the management, which he well knew was not the case; and the matter dropped. However, here was another situation in which things could never be the same again. So it was that in 1925, a reorganization of Simpson's took place.

First of all, the proposal was made to me that the Stores should be separated from the Mail Order. Flavelle and family, Fudger and Mail Order management, would take over the Mail Order; and I, with a management group and Mr. Gundy, would buy the Toronto and Montreal stores.

For the purpose of the transaction, the store properties and fittings were appraised. This appraisal, less depreciation, should be the sale price to us. Agreements were drawn up and everything was ready to sign, when suddenly Sir Joseph's legal adviser 'phoned to ask delay.

He had discovered that the Mail Order division, not having had its assets appraised, was being taken over at the book value; whereas the Stores were being sold at appraised values. The deal did not go through, although so far as my associates and I were concerned, we were quite satisfied with it. However, as The Robert Simpson Company had both bonds and preferred shares outstanding, a sale, to some of the directors, of properties which had not been appraised would not have stood the test of law. The transaction was therefore halted.

The business was continued intact, except that all the common shares of The Robert Simpson Company were sold to a new company, Simpsons, Limited, 1925, who issued collateral bonds against these shares for \$5,600,000. The issue was made at 6½% interest, and was readily sold. In the new set up, all the old common shareholders subscribed for shares in the new company at a price which enabled a bonus of shares to be given to one or two who had been principally instrumental in managing the business successfully.

Mr. Burnett, the General Manager of the Mail Order, decided at that juncture to retire; and his shares, including the bonus allotted to him, were taken by other officers. I emerged owner of 15% of Simpsons, Limited 1925 shares, on which I owed the Bank for about one-third. This amount was paid off during the following four years. In 1929, all the interest of the Flavells, Fudgers and Coxes, was taken over by the present Simpsons, Limited, incorporated in 1929, whose published statements show the position of the business.

But that is another chapter.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### CONTROL

It may be felt by the reader that I have skimmed rather quickly or lightly over the events recorded in the last chapter. In writing an autobiography, it is difficult not to telescope certain chains of events, in order to preserve a narrative. At the same time, it is necessary to forget the narrative, on occasions, in order to place on record a good deal of material that has a bearing upon the story as a whole.

I have brought the story up to 1925, by which time I had been thirteen years with Simpson's, and was in my fifty-second year. For most of the thirteen years with Simpson's, following not only the trend of the time but also the explicit advice of Mr. Fudger, I had been taking a steadily increasing part in the semi-public and public service represented by the Big Brother Movement, the Y.M.C.A., the Board of Trade, the Ontario Motor League and similar organizations. Of these I shall write at greater length in a later chapter. My effect on these activities was certainly less important than their effect on me and my business career.

It is fair to say that, in the eight year period between 1921, when Sir Joseph attempted to place a General Manager over Burnett and me, and 1929, when J. H. Gundy, my associates and I took over the entire business, many a good man both within the Simpson organization and outside, in the various public and social service organizations with which I was connected, gave me invaluable aid and support. It is going to be difficult to appraise my debt to these men, individually. When I first encountered them, I was a man who had held his nose to the grindstone until the age of forty. Through association with them, in the business itself and in the business world of Toronto and Canada at large, I was encouraged and at length financed in my course. Such good fortune does not always come to those who keep their noses to the grindstone. My eggs had always been in one basket, and I watched that basket!

I have already described the negotiations and transactions of 1925, which resulted in the capital reorganization of Simpson's as Simpsons, Limited 1925. The Flavelle-Fudger-Cox interests still retained the majority control, but the substantial bonus of shares allotted to me left no doubt in my mind as to the complete confidence and high regard I enjoyed in their opinion.



Mr. Burnett, the General Manager of the Mail Order division, was allotted a small number of shares, but still a substantial asset. Burnett having decided to retire, these Burnett bonus shares were allotted to Goldring, who while a valuable officer had not worked through the slim years preceding the first world war, nor borne the heat of the struggle during the war itself.

I have not as yet referred in any great detail either to Herbert Burnett or to John Goldring, David H. Gibson or certain other of the men who were outstanding in the organization during these developments.

Herbert Burnett came to Simpson's from Brantford shortly after the turn of the century and began as a salesman in the men's clothing department. He was soon noticed for advancement and further responsibility, his intelligence, trustworthiness and a certain precise quality in his character fitting him for larger duties. I first encountered him in England, where he was manager of Simpson's buying office in London, through which I had to conduct a good deal of my business when I was functioning as a buyer for the Fancy Goods Company in the early 1900's. My next contact with him was in 1912, when, on joining Simpson's, I was instructed to spend three months examining with an independent eye the operations of the Mail Order department. Burnett had been brought home around 1908 to become manager of the Mail Order department, and he functioned as such during one of the periods of great expansion of the Mail Order end of the business, including the move of the Mail Order from the Simpson store premises to the Front Street building, in 1914, the 1916 move to the Mutual Street building, the opening of the Regina Mail Order establishment, and the venture into Halifax, in 1919.

His place was taken, in 1925, by David H. Gibson, who came to Simpson's after thirty-four years' experience in the wholesale dry goods business. One of the most amiable of men, and an old friend to me even on joining the company, he was a most loyal and dependable colleague in the troubled and often strenuous years that were to follow.

John Goldring joined Simpson's in 1921, coming from the Canada Foundry Company, where he enjoyed a fine reputation as accountant. I had as much to do with bringing him to Simpson's as anybody. His responsibility was to reform and modernize the company's accounting system. He had not been long in the organization before he had determined that Sir Joseph Flavelle was the man to "cotton to". When, after a little while, he succeeded in having put through a regulation that all orders for expenditures had to be submitted for his signature, even those of the General Manager, I realized that there were certain impediments in the appointment

of Mr. Goldring to the management level. The new regulation requiring his signature had short shrift; but I mention this in order to throw light upon subsequent developments. One of the high marks for Goldring is that he hired Norman Agar for the accounting staff, and a greater accountant than Agar I never encountered.

I could not refrain from thinking at the time, and still think, that there were some other older officers who might as well as myself, have been recognized; but, having been so generously treated, it was hardly fitting that I should intervene. As a matter of fact, in such matters Sir Joseph liked to play the part of Le Grand Seigneur, as I had discovered in our former transaction.

After 1925, gossip continued to the effect that Eaton's were to move their business from Queen and Yonge to one of the "mystery" blocks at Yonge and College or Carlton. The story went the rounds that the downtown store property would be torn down and the area presented to the city as a park. Any way one looks at it, there is no question that the business moving in a continuous stream across Queen Street from one store to the other cannot fail to benefit both, as it certainly did Simpson's. The prospect, therefore, of Eaton's building a mammoth structure at College Street and leaving Simpson's alone downtown was not one for us to contemplate with complete equanimity.

Sir Joseph always did ascribe much more importance to Eaton's volume than the audited accounts placed before the Price Spreads Committee or Royal Commission revealed some years later in 1934. Those of us on the daily job of fighting our way against a powerful competitor were nevertheless surprised and of course considerably gratified to find, a few years later, that with acres more space than Simpson's, the Toronto stores of our big competitor did only 40% more dollar volume than Simpson's. Whatever degree of blue funk possessed our big shareholder, Sir Joseph, those of us who were younger and more confident of our place in the sun continued to urge extension of Simpson's premises to Bay Street.

By securing the properties on Richmond Street from the Bay Street front to the old James Street line, we were enabled to be in the clear. We had made remarkable progress in those roaring twenties. Now in 1926, with the threat of Eaton's moving to College Street, we spent another six millions to thrust our activities out to Bay Street, and again to revamp our merchandise and service facilities, and to incorporate in our plans Simpson's Arcadian Court, which, as a restaurant, so far as I am aware, has no equal in any commercial establishment.

This Bay Street venture was Simpson's answer to Eaton's threat to move their business. And while they built, after several years' dissembling, the noble structure at College Street, they have evidently thought it the better part of valour to remain at Queen and Yonge for the larger share of their effort.

One of the interesting surprises we got, after a series of traffic counts, was the fact that the volume of motor traffic, street car passengers and pedestrian activity on Bay and Richmond was larger than either Queen or Richmond corners on Yonge Street.

Our courage in spending the six million was supported by the action of the Canadian Pacific Railway in building their great Royal York Hotel. We had substantial use of our new Bay Street premises, as planned, for the Christmas trade 1927; but it was well into 1928 before we had all details including the Arcadian Court completed.

When, later, Eaton's opened their College Street building, Sir Joseph and I were among the guests who saw the great parade, and Lady Eaton herself officially opening the Yonge Street door with a key of gold. Sir Joseph and I stood beside the late Charles Boothe, formerly an Eaton vice-president, but who was already inactive due to failing health. Charlie Boothe was one of nature's noblemen, and a great merchandise man. Sir Joseph turned to him and asked, "Charlie, why didn't you finish this building and move the business up to College Street?"

His answer was interesting. "Sir Joseph, we didn't have the resources."

There were many sensational stories doing the gossip rounds in those years. Across the line there were stories of mergers, stories of sales of great businesses; and as capital accumulated and looked about for investment, which by reason of excessive taxation it cannot do today, feelers came along for the purchase of Simpson's. These feelers were, previous to 1929, never seriously considered.

Age, however, which makes cravens of us all, laid its ignoble hand on Sir Joseph. By 1928, although we had successfully financed all undertakings, and maintained our business volume above the estimated level, Sir Joseph, now in or about his seventies, decided to sell, if he could.

He had many informal conversations with those of us in management responsibility, and some no doubt in the privacy of his family circle. At the end of 1928, and as soon as our figures for the year were ready, Johnny

Goldring urged that we officers should get together and formulate a plan. I for one was somewhat cold to the scheme.

Goldring thought it well to get Sir Joseph's son, and his son-in-law, to entertain the idea of a deal together. In due course Mr. Gibson, who was at the time General Manager of the Mail Order division, and I, were invited to lunch with the others named to the Granite Club. Mr. Goldring was our host. After a very pleasant lunch, he informed us that in his opinion the time had arrived for the five of us to agree together on future relationships in the business. For purposes of discussion, he proposed a share and share alike arrangement. It was stated that one of his family had had some conversation with Sir Joseph on the subject, and the indications seemed to be that the time for agreement together, and action, had arrived.

I immediately demurred, and my position was sustained by Mr. Gibson. Before discussing the matter further, I asked if Sir Joseph knew of our meeting, and of what we had in mind. I was told he didn't. I therefore refused to discuss the matter until I knew that Sir Joseph was a consenting party. I have already outlined in this record one unwelcome advance which I had made to Sir Joseph in 1924, and I was determined that I should not be placed in such a position again. I added for good measure that if and when we did meet again, and with Sir Joseph's consent, any division of the share interest and responsibilities should, so far as I was concerned, have a definite relation to the contribution which each of the five had made, and would likely be able to make in future to the business. The luncheon came to an abrupt conclusion.

On returning to my office on the seventh floor in the store, I had a telephone call from Mr. Goldring to say that Ellsworth Flavelle was disturbed by my attitude, considering he had been slighted. He thought I would be wise to see him personally and discuss the matter. I said I'd certainly see him; and that while I felt that I had at once to declare my position, I would certainly apologize if I had hurt his feelings in any way.

In a few minutes Ellsworth came in. He was evidently much perturbed, not claiming any personal slight, except that he thought Goldring's scheme, which he declared had his concurrence, should be further considered. I agreed, if he would inform Sir Joseph of what had occurred.

This he refused to do. The situation was painful enough, but I said, "Well, Ellsworth, if you don't tell your father, I will." As he still refused, I made an appointment to see Sir Joseph the same afternoon in his office across the hall from mine. Apparently Sir Joseph had had some

conversations with his son, which he thought should have been considered confidential.

I told him I had a painful duty to do, but one I felt bound to discharge. Thereupon I told him of the lunch and generally of what had been proposed, and that I had refused to discuss the matter until I should know his wishes.

Sir Joseph seemed somewhat stunned. It was quite manifest he wasn't at all pleased with the medium through which he received the report. However, he soon recovered, stood up, washed his hands in reverential air, and said, "Well, Burton, one would think one might have some confidence between one's self and others."

The Goldring scheme didn't please Sir Joseph. In fact from then forward, nothing pleased him around Simpson's.

One fine day in April, 1929, I was summoned to a conversation in the Board Room between Sir Joseph, Mr. Fudger and myself. Sir Joseph began in his most dulcet tones to make known the fact that he and Mr. Fudger had been approached by two important American groups, both of which had the idea of forming a colossal corporation to own a number of large American stores, and some Canadian. Sir Joseph pointed out that I was no doubt aware a number of earlier proposals had been made, but were unsatisfactory, in that they would pass a great Canadian business over to American interests; whereas these two groups would continue to run their Canadian stores under Canadian management.

Sir Joseph thought I might be interested, because, in the event of Simpson's joining either group, our store would for the first time have a buying power in the combination superior to that of our neighbours. He further informed me that he had promised both groups that if we gave one an opportunity to bid on Simpson's shares, the other would have a similar chance.

My reply was that I could not find fault if Sir Joseph decided to sell his shares and he no doubt owed it to his estate to get as much as he could for them. As I understood it, the deal would be on condition that the purchaser could buy all the shares. I felt bound to tell both Sir Joseph and Mr. Fudger that I should be glad to facilitate his plans, of course, on the distinct understanding that I, too, should sell my shares at the same price, and that I should not be asked to continue with the business after the change in ownership took place. This was agreed to.

Sir Joseph stated he would inform both groups that we were ready to see them.

The first group was the Lew Hahn Department Stores. They already had bought Jordan Marsh & Co., Boston, owned a number of other smaller American stores, and were anxious to buy Simpson's and develop an important Canadian chain.

The interview was with a clever New York lawyer, who came alone to get for his clients the answers to questions which only an intimate examination of our books might reveal. This man clearly and concisely stated that his principals had made all the external examinations and enquiries they needed in order to satisfy them as to the physical condition of the premises and stock and staff. They had tested the services and interviewed many Toronto people, some of whom were, of course, customers. The reports were quite favourable.

All necessary account books were made available; and our questioner, around one o'clock, was satisfied. Mr. Fudger invited him to lunch, but he declined. He said he was to return to the Royal York and speak on the long distance telephone with his principals in New York. He would come back again at two-thirty, and make an offer for all the shares of the business. He had many highly complimentary remarks to make about the business when he returned. Sir Joseph and Mr. Fudger received him by themselves. He didn't stay long; and after some time I was sent for and informed that his offer was not acceptable. He offered \$135.00 a share for Simpsons Limited 1925 no par, common. He had stipulated that it was on condition that Mr. Burton should continue, with his staff, to manage and head their Canadian company. The offer was rejected on the grounds that the price per share was too low.

The first group having been disposed of, Sir Joseph then felt in duty bound to see the representatives of the other group. This group included Filene's, Boston; Lazarus, Columbus, Ohio; and others. I believe it was later organized as the Federated Department Stores, which is still a very large business in the States.

Our meeting with the second group was by arrangement in the Board Room of an insurance company. The delegation consisted of five representatives of this second group. Both these groups were undoubtedly well financed. This second delegation covered, as was natural, much the same ground as did the first. One would almost think they had been briefed by the same authority.

Mr. Frost, Controller of Filene's, after consultation with the others in the group, arose. He said they liked the business, and would make an offer for the shares, but first they wondered if Mr. Burton would care to come to Boston, New York and Columbus, to see their set-up. After such a visit, if they could make a satisfactory arrangement with him, they would then make their offer.

Sir Joseph supposed there was no reason why I shouldn't make the trip. The meeting was rather long drawn out. We had, finally, around two-thirty p.m., some lunch brought in from a hotel. As we milled about the room, talking in small groups, Mr. Fudger came over to where I was standing alone, gazing out to the street. As he approached, I remarked, "Mr. Fudger, I have no thought of going to Boston, New York or anywhere else."

"Burton," he said, "so far as I am concerned, you'll not be asked to."

The meeting with this second group took place early in the week after the first representative had been received.

The following Friday, J. H. Gundy and I, after coming to a good understanding, offered \$150.00 per share for the stock. The offer was accepted.

My old friend, Mr. D. H. Gibson, was with us from the start. It was understood that the interests and personnel as shareholders and officers of all connected with the Flavelle, Fudger and Cox estates, would disappear.

Mr. Goldring also withdrew, the position of controller being assumed by Mr. Agar.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### PRIZE

Now let us view, without alarm, what the venturesome shopkeepers had on their hands.

In 1896, the issued capital of Robert Simpson was \$137,500. These shares were acquired by the three new owners in 1898 for around \$135,000, but when the shares were bought they represented only stock-in-trade, accounts receivable, fixtures, etc., and did not include the fireproof store building of six storeys and basement, 70 × 120 feet, at the corner of Queen and Yonge, which the new owners leased for a fifteen year period. This property continued to be leased from the Simpson estate until June 1944, when the present Simpsons, Limited bought it for \$1,250,000 cash.

The development of Simpson's is a matter of public record which shows that the first new owners simply left their money in the business until the modest original purchase had by 1917 grown to a share interest of \$6,700,000 represented by 5,000 shares of 6% preference stock and 26,033 common shares.

That record of development included and even went a few years beyond the period of settlement and railway building in Canada earlier referred to, and of course includes two years or more of first world war activity.

In those pre-taxation days, many valuable improvements, which at the time of the expenditure were not thought to add much to the value of properties, were simply charged into expenses; and if the business was in a reasonably good financial position, it could absorb these amounts.

Another feature over the course of years is the increasing costs of building which justifies or makes advisable a periodic revaluation of assets.

Capital assets of Simpson's at the end of 1911 were in excess of \$3,250,000. These assets included new building additions west to the James Street line, south to Richmond Street (except the old Wanless store acquired in 1912) and through to Richmond Street, covering some freehold and some Knox Church leasehold properties, and including the old Mechanics Institute Building on Richmond Street West. This huge addition, if built and furnished today, would probably cost an additional \$3,500,000.



Likewise in the six years ended 1918, important properties were acquired, and buildings built, principally for the Mail Order business in Regina and Toronto, and for delivery and other facilities for Toronto and Montreal store services. Capital assets at the end of 1918 had more than doubled since 1911, and were over \$7,000,000. These building additions, if valued at today's costs, would be greatly increased. A further important addition to the store was made in 1923, and many of the departments were re-arranged, enlarged and newly furnished.

By 1925 the generation of the Fudgers, Flavelles and Coxes, was become an older generation.

In order that the struggle and work of over a quarter century should be properly accounted for, it seemed by 1925 to be the part of wisdom to have an appraisal of the store properties.

The accounts upon the sale of The Robert Simpson common shares to Simpsons, Limited<sup>[1]</sup> 1925, show the capital assets \$13,160,000. The total assets of the company were, at the end of 1925, twenty-four millions; by 1929, thirty-four millions; by 1940, forty-five millions; and by 1950, one hundred millions. These total assets seem to the uninformed almost fantastic; but while they include substantial equities they also involve considerable liabilities.

As no doubt the reader of these records may find reference to details of company financing rather tiresome reading, I should say here and now that had either the founder, Robert Simpson, or the succeeding owners been able to foresee the needs of a business which was to grow from a parochial store to a country-wide medium of service, the capital structure might have easily been different and more suitable to the development which was to occur and to changes in ownership, which were inevitable as time brought to the sunset of life those who had directed it during their active span.

As man's view of the future is scarcely blessed by omniscience the former owners may be excused for handing on to us who followed and took up the task, problems not only of a difficult and adequate capital structure, but the problems of some necessary developments in the face of the world depression, and the new and almost impossible to imagine problems of the depression itself.

Having already referred to the principal transactions affecting my own relationship to the Company, I can only say that no changes made, by which former shareholders gained some natural benefits from their principal period of ownership and management, were without obligation to those of us who

were in the line of succession. The efforts of those of us who continued undoubtedly were to some extent responsible for the large increase in the assets of the company and the common shareholders' equity therein.

By 1929, shares which in 1925 were shown on the books as of the value of \$53.73 per share were sold for \$150.00 per share.

In order to finance this large transaction ten millions of 6% bonds were issued and ten millions of 6½% preferred shares. As there were still outstanding Robert Simpson Company First Mortgage 5% bonds \$1,675,000 and \$3,350,000 6% preference shares, the equity of the new holders of Simpsons, Limited common was \$5,061,314 or \$21.09 per share for 120,000 "A" shares and a similar amount of "B" no par common.

The "A" shares were practically all subscribed for by those who were employed in the business.

Of the Class "B" shares, 20,000 were offered by the underwriters as a bonus of one share for each five preferred shares subscribed for. The balance of the "B" shares were awarded to the underwriters for their work; but several thousand of these shares were bought by some of the holders of "A" shares.

The sale of Simpson's business in 1929 to a group of Canadians, mostly officers, managers and employees of the company, was really a momentous occurrence. Except for my determination not to become associated with either of the two great American groups, Simpson's would have been absorbed by them.

Had I consented to join an American syndicate, I should probably have been immediately better off financially. Many of the personal obligations I had to assume would have been avoided. However, I should have felt that I had handed over one of Canada's leading retail businesses, always owned in Canada as far as equity shares were concerned, to American ownership and direction. Pride in Simpson's as a Canadian institution was not all. Any success I had in the business was in great part due to my associates, managers, assistants and in fact all fellow members of the staff. I knew what policies would apply if the ownership remained with us in Canada. I did not know what policies might be introduced under alien ownership. In my early fifties at the time, and with more than thirty-five years merchandising experience, blessed with good health, supported amply in home circumstances, I had no fear of the outcome. So Sir Joseph and members of his family and the Cox interests all disappeared. Mr. Fudger's interest, grown again since 1925 into a neat fortune, was taken up, although, at my

request, Mr. Fudger until his death in 1930, continued as Chairman of the Board.

If anyone doubted the bona fides of the new company or the ability of the new management to carry on creditably and finally win, and skeptics there were, the action of my dear old boss, Mr. Fudger, in continuing as Chairman should have removed such fears. As a matter of fact I believe it did.

Our Canadian bankers were prompt to express their confidence and lend their support. Naturally they were gratified to know the ownership of the business was to remain with those of us, all Canadians, who had been the minority shareholders. We had, moreover, a good record, those on the staff of the company, for being able, faithful and of good reputation, and thus entitled to credit.

The officers of our banks had apparently no difficulty in getting whatever approval by their directors they needed for the extension of credit to such members of our staff as desired to acquire an interest in the new Simpsons, Limited. A reasonable personal stake in the new shares was the first requirement. The only other was my recommendation of those seeking credit. As for our principal shareholders outside the Simpson staff, they were in a good credit position on their own account.

Mr. J. H. Gundy played an important and willing role in our new plans. One of the very commendable features of my relation to him was that his constant attitude was, what would I like to see done? His own brilliant, constructive and enterprising genius quickly cleared away difficulties, and in no time flat, seemingly, the necessary new securities were sold and the new company on its way.

What had happened was that the old majority common shareholders retired, receiving a little over ten million dollars, three and a half of which was profit, or the price the new owners paid for all the Simpson businesses, goodwill and intangible assets, which, in a large business like this, were worth quite as much as some of the tangible.

Sir Joseph was the largest beneficiary. He put none of his money back into the business, and little, if any, into the company's bonds and preferred shares.

Mr. Fudger showed his confidence by remaining on our Board as Chairman; but he was at too advanced an age to be expected to re-invest in any business, or to do other than keep his estate as liquid as possible.

Sir Joseph confessed to me on a number of occasions that after he moved out of Simpson's much of his pleasure in the day's work had departed.

He was Chairman of the Board of the bank to which I was deeply indebted. I did not begrudge him his money or his profit, and often asked him up to lunch in my room in the Arcadian Court, which he seemed to appreciate. However, as in those days many of the Bay Street boys used regularly to lunch in our premises, there began to float, especially as 1929 neared its end, a wraith-like wisp of gossip to the effect that Sir Joseph evidently was taking Simpson's back. Evidence: lunching quite often with Simpson's new President. So Simpson's new and still young President decided not to invite his old friend Sir Joseph again for lunch; and my personal contacts with him grew less frequent, and were finally reduced to courtesy calls at Holmwood, his mansion, at Christmas or New Year's, and an occasional call at his hide-out, high in the Bank of Commerce tower.

The dread days of the 1930 depression were to show his true attitude. I never knew Sir Joseph ever to cast any doubt upon my own credit at his bank. The officers and directors of that great bank certainly always backed me up, even when the stock market, from time to time, showed that their security in my case was of little value.

Later on, Sir Joseph showed me his investment portfolio, in which he took no great pride; and it was quite evident that the American railroad securities, in which a substantial amount was invested, had long since ceased to be the prize white horses of the elder J. P. Morgan days. Of course Simpson's shares didn't fare well on the market during the thirties, and even as late as the early forties, but had Sir Joseph re-invested his money in the company responsible for much of his wealth, his estate would have, in my opinion, been worth many times as much as it was at the time of his passing.

For better or for worse, the new Simpson's was on its way. One of my really troublesome tasks was to get the members of our staff to confine their obligations in the new shares within their means and prospects. Those who knew the record of the business between 1925 and 1929, a period during which the common shares more than doubled in value, wanted as many of the new "A" and "B" shares as they could get. Even when I pointed out the essential difference in what they were subscribing for, they still pressed for all they could get. The difference to which I refer was that in 1925 the few additional shareholders who were offered the opportunity to subscribe and did subscribe were paying at that time a figure around the book value. Whereas the Simpson 1929 shares were sold at a price which was above

their market or book value to the extent that those of us who subscribed for these new equity shares were paying for such part of the goodwill as the old majority shareholders received when they got \$150.00 a share for their 1925 shares; that is to say, about \$3,500,000. As a large number of the new subscribers, including myself, went much beyond their cash resources in subscribing for the new shares, we had a good ten years of anxiety before earnings were sufficient to restore their position.

In 1930, Simpson's "A" sold at a market high of 55 and low of 45, while "B" sold high 37½ and low 30. When during the 1930's common dividends were discontinued, these "A" and "B" shares practically went off the market.

As I write these words, Simpson's "A" and "B" shares are quoted around 45 for the "A" and 43 for the "B", equivalent to 134 for the original 1929 "A" and 127 for "B". The change in the position of these shares and the earnings on them has enabled all who borrowed upon them originally to discharge their debts and greatly increase their equity.

As for other capital obligations, the old Robert Simpson 5% bonds and 6% preferred shares have long since been called and redeemed.

The present 3½% bonds are first mortgage bonds, the 4½% preferred shares and other securities find a ready market. Even during the years 1932 to 1945, when the company was behind in its preferred share dividend, the movement on the market of Simpson shares was quite small, and even in the worst depression days shareholders and customers generally have shown constant evidence of confidence and goodwill. The management of Simpson's have been able to continue to give their attention to customer needs and at no time either in the dark days of depression or in the more lush recent years of record sales and earnings have those responsible for service to customers ever had to turn aside from the duty and privilege of serving.

The new ship Simpson's sailed off on June 26, 1929.

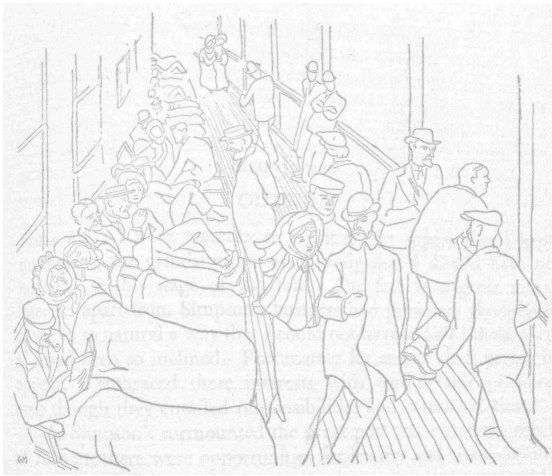
That was the date she got under way and in a fair wind. As the old company's year began at the end of January, the profits for the five months, amounting to a few hundred thousand dollars, were set aside in a pension fund which by agreement was for the benefit of those employed before June 1929; and it has been so administered. Until the new Simpson's Annuity Plan was adopted, this old pension plan, operated by trustees, was dispensed upon recommendation of officers of the Company, and according to the need of the employee retiring from the company's service. This fund still assists those in Simpson's employment before June 26, 1929.

One very pleasant experience which came my way upon my becoming President of Simpson's was that the staff gathered a fund and ordered me to have my portrait done in oils. Obedient to this request, I sat through many pleasant hours while Kenneth Forbes struggled away to try to make something worth while out of his new and rather restless subject.

This portrait hangs in Simpson's Board Room. Just what should be done with such a portrait, not greatly like me at this present hour, is a problem nobody seems much to bother about. However, I had a great inner glow of appreciation that my fellow workers had such a kind thought of me.

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[1] To be accurate, after 1929 the business should be referred to as Simpsons, Limited. But since the form, Simpson's, has been used throughout this book, and since it is by this name that its customers normally think of it, I shall continue, as I began, to use Simpson's as a general term covering all aspects of the organization.



## PART FOUR

## CHAPTER XXV

### OUTSIDE

From what I have written so far, it might appear that I kept my nose to the grindstone so assiduously that I should have no nose left at this stage of my tale. The fact is, a great many interests apart from Simpson's business had presented themselves to me in so natural a way that I could not have avoided them even if I had been so inclined. Fortunately for me, as shall presently appear, I embraced these interests with considerable pleasure, even though they entailed responsibilities and consumed time.

As Simpson's surmounted the great post-war economic shock of 1920-21, there were opportunities for leaders and those coming into responsibilities in business to serve in various semi-public and community activities. Aside from church and the Y.M.C.A., and certain civilian wartime tasks, I had met but few business leaders apart from those with whom I came in contact in Simpson's.

During my later forties and for the next twenty-five years I was to meet those whose friendship through the years is probably this life's most precious asset. I do not discount, let alone disparage, the friendships formed in earlier years. While college men, undoubtedly, through high school and university days form friendships of a most satisfying and enduring character, many of these are broken by removal to other scenes. After school, one's church provides the most natural contacts. In my judgment church membership and activities are above everything in their human friendship values. Others than I can better attest the primary consideration in church life which should be the development of one's spiritual life, but one does not need to lay claim to excellence above his fellows to acquire the best of all friends by membership in the church of his choice and participation in its various activities. My enjoyment of music is to a large measure due to my early experience in a church choir.

Any feeling of responsibility for others and for things other than one's own, a consideration which lies close to the foundation of all human happiness, I can personally attribute to my early membership and association in the activities of my church. Mine has always been a small church. I have recently been reading some of the reports of church annual meetings, and in most Protestant denominations some of the greatest work is done by congregations of five hundred or less. I hope it is no disparagement



of larger churches to say that in my experience the small congregation lends itself to closer, warmer personal friendships, the heart is more easily touched and the sensibilities aroused to support needed work.

Young married people, I believe, are wise to join the church of their choice, regularly to attend its services and participate in its activities. Many of these newlyweds imagine they have all the friends they need in themselves, and too many separate themselves from church life. This is not only much to their personal disadvantage, but it separates them from contacts with others which would bring them friendships for which many people nearing middle age are very hungry, a hunger which is never easily satisfied later.

In my particular case, the expansion of my contacts with men interested in their fellow beings was due not so much to my own concern in this direction as to Mr. Fudger's disinclination to become involved in public activities and to Sir Joseph Flavelle's frequently stated wish that I assume as fully as my time permitted the role of Simpson's representative on those civic bodies in which large businesses were expected to participate.

Having a few years earlier, as a member, been asked by The Board of Trade to act on various committees of the Board, I was nominated for its council in 1922, and in that and succeeding years was elected to its council membership, and a year or so later to the Board of the Ontario Motor League. Thus I was thrown into association with a great group of business and professional leaders, among whom I was to gain some of my most enduring friendships.

The Board of Trade of the City of Toronto has had a long record of good service to the community. The lawyer's office, in which I worked first on leaving school, was on the fourth floor of the old Board of Trade Building at the corner of Yonge and Front Streets, now occupied by the Toronto Transportation Commission. The old building was disposed of by the Board in 1906 although it continued to use part of the building on a rental basis until 1914 when the Board moved to commodious offices in the Royal Bank Building at the corner of Yonge and King streets.

I suppose in its day the Board of Trade Building was regarded as one of the most up-to-date of office buildings. Probably when it was built there were great hopes for it as Board of Trade headquarters for many years. However, the membership of the Board in those early days was small compared to the large organization of today. Possession of the building was given up in 1906 perhaps because the system of rotation on the council

resulted in a constantly shifting personal relationship to the question of responsibility for the property and pride of ownership in it. Or it may have been that the depression of the 1890's rendered it impossible for those who might have been expected to put up the money to do so. Even though the council of 1906 included many of Toronto's outstanding businessmen, none of them took the initiative in attempting to raise the money necessary to save the building for its original use. The building was sold, but the work of the Board proceeded to expand.

The members of the 1922 council, in whose midst I sat for the first time, with one or two exceptions, were older men than I, and it is interesting to record that only four of those then on the council are still living—R. A. Stapells, Carey Fox, Holt Gurney and Basil Tippet. Those who have passed on accorded me their friendship in a variety of ways especially as I was often in their path. We were mutually attracted to one another during the number of years of service together.

The President in 1922 was D. A. Cameron, Manager of the head office branch of The Bank of Commerce. He was a widely known and greatly respected banker. His assistant at the bank, Allan Arscott, has since deservedly occupied every position of honour and responsibility in his great bank. Without his confidence and friendship I should have found my progress in business difficult if not impossible.

My friend, R. A. Stapells, was second vice-president of the Board of Trade, and throughout all the years has been one of my dearest and closest friends. We served together on the Ontario Motor League. If my memory serves me right Dick was responsible for a large addition to the membership of the Board of Trade. He was always ready to help a friend in any good cause. When in the early twenties the church on Cecil Street which I attended was sold to a Jewish congregation for use as a synagogue, and we had to raise additional funds to complete plans for the new Hillcrest Church of Christ, I consulted my friend Dick Stapells, who had just finished a successful campaign for building restoration of old St. Barnabas. Here was a labour of love, for Dick wasn't even a member of the parish in which St. Barnabas was situated. In the case of the church I was interested in, he wasn't even a member of the denomination. Nevertheless he came along, addressed a meeting of men, told us how to organize a quick canvass and the results were exactly as he predicted. The rousing characters were not all Methodists in those inflammably emotional Methodist days.

The Board's 1922 Treasurer was Thomas Bradshaw. His name even then was synonymous with economic soundness, but as other duties drew him

away he did not continue on the executive and finally, as he could easily have done, become President of the Board. Although he dropped off the Board, except for one year on council, he dropped none of the friends he made, and I was luckily one of them. It was a friendship much to be prized. The only name which I ever heard mentioned as a possible candidate for the new job of General Manager of Simpson's, which Sir Joseph had his heart set on, was that of Thomas Bradshaw. I had first met Bradshaw in Y.M.C.A. activities. He was one of the finest characters of my acquaintance. He was, I believe, originally employed by the North American Life Assurance Company, and after a distinguished career as actuary with another company he was later on to acquire the controlling shares in the North American Life, which he unselfishly surrendered at a most modest figure in order that that company might be mutualized. He continued as President of the company until his death. I had the good fortune to be associated with him as director of that company after 1930.

Mr. F. D. Tolchard was in his second year as Secretary, so that his services to the Board in the official capacity of Secretary and later General Manager, extended over to the second generation. Fathers like myself who, during their later years, have had the honour of seeing a son elected to the position of President can easily understand the admiration of a new generation for such an able, efficient and tireless officer who for forty-two years served the Board of Trade of the City of Toronto.

In my mid-forties I found myself among some really oldtimers, each of whom could claim some public service merit of his own. Hugh Blain, who was President of the Board in 1894, served continuously from earlier years until 1929 when he departed this earthly scene. Policies he espoused he was ready to contend for. He was in all the early discussions of waterfront improvements, including not only the harbour facilities but the viaduct, which elevated the trains above other traffic, and also including the building of the present Union Station. During the first great world war this building stood like the ghost of a huge new Grecian temple awaiting the completion of other terminal facilities for the railroads. Hugh had an egg-like bald dome, but he always wore a well groomed moustache. He brought a dignity to all Board of Trade meetings and while some newcomers like myself may have had the idea that Hugh was a stickler for things as they were, they soon learned he had a most unselfish interest in the work and there was never any doubt of his sincerity or his friendliness.

Col. W. F. Cockshutt came from that famous Cockshutt city, Brantford. He was an out-of-town member, but until he died, was annually elected to

the council of the Board. He wore a vandyke beard, and was always addressed as Colonel. In the early thirties, when a delegation from the Toronto Board of Trade attended a meeting in London, England, of the British Empire Chambers of Commerce, Col. Cockshutt was one of our number. We were soon made aware that only those with titles, knights or colonels, were likely to be recognized. Therefore, Col. Cockshutt, as the only member of our delegation with such a distinction was the one member who would be listened to with much evidence of respect or interest.

Just prior to my experience on the council a young men's section was formed and it was soon the practice to elect one or two of these younger men to seats on the council. In 1922 for the first time Mr. Basil Tippet was elected to council. Although only a year or so on the council Basil Tippet was soon actively working on various campaigns and social service enterprises. For years he was a member of the Big Brother Movement and did fine personal work with boys who needed friendship and advice. Finally, to my great satisfaction, he succeeded me as President of that organization. Basil has a great record as a useful Rotarian. His boundless energy and enthusiasm have made his services in various fields of the value of several worthy people. His modesty and ability to throw the credit to others give him a claim to recognition for his services as a citizen that few are entitled to claim. What a fine example of one who, with his charming wife, has gone about His Master's business.

It seems to be taken for granted that the council of the Board should include one of Eaton's men and, from 1922 onwards, one from Simpson's. These representatives, of course, had to secure enough votes to get elected. From 1917 until his untimely death R. W. Eaton sat on the Board council. His was a bland disposition, but there never was any wavering in his friendships. Another outstanding personality on the council was the former mayor, R. J. Fleming. Bob, as he was popularly known in his early years of public service, wore a full beard. It was always in pretty good shape, but, like its owner, seemed to be ready at a moment's notice to run riot. While Bob's moustache was retained, his beard eventually went the way of all flesh. I suppose being head of the Mackenzie-Mann Toronto Railway Company he may have thought that there was a danger of getting the whiskers mixed with the wires. However, Bob Fleming although managing the aging transportation system, and being thereby a representative of the alleged scheming and ruthless interests, was nevertheless always personally popular.

After the death of R. W. Eaton, his place was taken by a colourful figure and a man of great prominence, the late Harry McGee. The first time Harry, as he was universally and affectionately known, met with the council was at the President's dinner given by Frank Rolph. Harry McGee had a considerable farm not far from Toronto and when after dinner a number of objects were put up for auction, the proceeds to go to charity, Harry offered a dozen fresh eggs from his farm, Kilcooley. The bidding for the dozen eggs started at \$10.00, and as the fun and merriment of the occasion waxed, the bidding continued. Finally I bid \$100 for the dozen on the understanding that Harry would personally deliver them to my house. Next morning along came his Packard and Harry personally brought in the dozen eggs, but he blankly refused to take them to the side door, as all good Eaton drivers are trained to do. Harry was always a dependable friend. A bit careful, and perhaps a bit jealous if he thought Simpson's through me was getting too much free publicity, but we were a lot together and I hope he thought of me as I thought of him as one of the best supporters I ever had.

The Banks were nearly always represented on the Board. On taking my seat for the first time, I sat beside a gentleman with full beard, pince nez glasses, long black ribbon, and well pressed clothing, a man of great courtesy and perfect manners. He was George Wilson, President of the Board in 1926, and later Toronto Finance Commissioner and City Treasurer.

I dwell on these Board of Trade figures to illustrate the type of men amongst whom I was introduced in my early forties, when I had begun to assume my increasing responsibilities and opportunities at Simpson's. In later years, these were my friends, who gave me freely of their good fellowship and welcome counsel. But in my first association with them, it was of endless interest to me to observe how they got things done, to acquaint myself with the minds and methods of leading businessmen, and it was a matter of pride to me to be apportioned by them some of the responsibilities and duties they themselves shared.

I was continuously on the Board's council or executive until the end of 1930. New faces came and went, new projects were undertaken, old principles and policies re-affirmed and more and more friends added to an already satisfying and honoured list.

Two very unusual members came on the council in 1923 in the persons of John J. Gibbons and Sam Gundy. Two men of more different temperaments, of business activities and of disposition, could scarcely be imagined, but they, with Dick Stapells, President of the Board in 1924, were instrumental in arousing interest in the great mining and paper producing

areas of Northern Ontario. So it came to pass that the Northern Ontario Committee of the Board of Trade of the City of Toronto was formed.

There was a feeling that the mining and paper people of the North were Montreal minded, and the train service to and from Toronto and to and from Montreal did seem to favour Montreal. It was the business of our Board's Northern Ontario Committee to see that by every legitimate means the claims of Toronto might be furthered. We managed by continuous efforts to remove any notion that Toronto was in any sense indifferent to the North or lacking in appreciation of the wonderful contribution made to Canada as a whole by the mineral and forest development of the great pioneers in these fields. The procedure was for the Board of Trade to visit the North as a body, or as much of a body as could be inspired to join in these junkets.

The T. and N.O., the C.P.R. and the C.N.R. all contributed private cars for our special to the North. Our train schedule was arranged so that the party might see as much as possible by daylight. Occasionally our whole delegation would be entertained locally. For instance, a community dance was held at Iroquois Falls in the days before the principal officials of the Abitibi Company were moved to Toronto. The Abitibi mill at Iroquois Falls was the latest example of low cost speedy newsprint production. The company had its own Hydro Electric plant at Island Falls and in the twenties was credited with producing newsprint more cheaply than any other source of supply. Whatever ill befell the newsprint and paper mills in the 1930's was of man's manipulation. Consolidations and mergers with pyramiding financing loaded the industry with obligations which could not be easily met, and which in some cases took years to adjust and reorganize. There was, too, a rather unholy competition between our two big provincial governments in contracting out our spruce and other forest resources, in consideration of development to be undertaken. This development required millions upon millions of financing beyond the capacity of a world entering a depression of a magnitude which nothing but the waste of a world war could cause. Governments and peoples across the world today, especially those on this continent who hold all the aces in the game, seem to think that by controls and the application of financial sedatives, and especially by keeping up personal and corporation taxation, they can beat the devil of the waste of war about the proverbial bush. It still remains to be seen. In spite of these palliative measures and the development of new reams of statistics and studies by young economic genii known under the general designation of "experts", it would seem to me that we may as well husband what reserves the governments leave us, after taxation, in order that we may in a few years

be able to struggle against the odds set up by the last war, a much bigger show than the 1914-18 struggle.

The first trip North of our Board of Trade was in 1926. On our second, in 1927, we visited Noranda Mines. We were received by the General Manager, Col. Ernest Hibbert who, as the O.T. (old timer), was a mining authority of world wide fame. On this occasion, the first Noranda furnace was blown in, and if those of us in the delegation had had a bit of imagination, we might all have become independently wealthy from Noranda alone, as some of our good friends have since done.

As an old commercial traveller, I was very much at home on these annual northern tours. As a new executive of an expanding retail and mail order business, I was intensely interested in the manifestations of development in this rich new section of Canada, as were without doubt all of us who shared the expeditions. The value and mutual advantage of these Board of Trade visits to Northern Ontario were not long in demonstrating themselves.

Sam Gundy, the publisher, was a man of boundless enthusiasm and fruitful ideas. Toronto owes him a considerable debt of remembrance. In addition to his effective promotion of the Northern Ontario and other goodwill trips for the Board of Trade, Gundy had his heart set upon the creation of a Dominion-wide Board of Trade. He teamed up with A. O. Dawson, of the Montreal Board of Trade; and those two influential and persuasive men prosecuted the idea so vigorously and effectively that in the year 1928 the Canada-wide organization took place. It happened to coincide with my being in office as President of the Toronto Board.

The inaugural meeting was held in the City of Saint John, N.B., at the Admiral Beatty Hotel. As there was no one but myself in the delegation whose company had any considerable interest in the Maritimes, I suggested that we should proceed to Halifax in order to be certain of support from that city. The suggestion was agreed to and Simpson's, at some inconvenience to its local men, arranged a dinner for a large number so that all representative Haligonians could meet with the Board of Trade delegation and hear of its plans. The new organization had no visible means of support, so that it seemed up to me to start the ball rolling. Simpson's became the first subscriber with an annual donation of \$1,000. Although money was not easy to come by, our organizing committee, headed by A. O. Dawson of Montreal, soon had sufficient money to enable us to organize to a further extent than our loose preliminary arrangement allowed.

The second meeting was in Winnipeg. At that date the name of the organization was changed to The Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Montreal stole the head office and has always run the show, which has grown to its present large proportion and influence. Toronto has always been recognized by the appointment of an annual sub-executive committee, but what Montreal thinks, goes, and it has gone pretty well.

In the course of human affairs it is natural that those originally responsible for a work of this kind should pass from the scene and be forgotten. At least two names should always be remembered above others in connection with the founding of the Chamber of Commerce, and they are Sam B. Gundy of Toronto and A. O. Dawson of Montreal. But I cannot help but reflect how evanescent such remembrance is. At one of the most recent annual meetings of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, held in Montreal, I happened to be in the city on the day of the banquet at the Windsor Hotel, and Simpson's Montreal manager, Robert King, made it known that I was in town. I was, therefore, invited to sit at the head table. As I looked over the vast and influential gathering I could not help noticing and reflecting on the fact that after twenty-one years I was the only charter member of that body present, and apparently the only member conscious of the fact.

One of my associations in the busy twenties, paralleling to some extent my work on the Toronto Board of Trade, was with the Ontario Motor League. My business responsibilities were too onerous to justify such an activity, but Simpson's had been so consistently without representation on community projects, and Mr. Fudger so encouraged me to step out into any promising or influential group, that I responded to the call to take an interest in the Motor League. There were important public responsibilities in the matter of highway building and improvement, legislation affecting motor traffic, and considerations of safety regulations. Simpson's had already a motorized delivery service. We were indeed, as I have already noted, some years ahead of competitors in this field. Therefore, there was more justification than may now appear for me to take an active part in traffic and Motor League affairs. Not only was motoring a comparatively young activity, but there was every danger that motorists and motor clubs should fall into the hands of unscrupulous exploiters, that legal action should be taken and penalties should be inflicted that would endanger proper development of this growing traffic. There were also endless jobs to be undertaken in the matter of road marking, guides and information. Fortunately for Ontario we had two loyal, brilliant, and able officers in Mr.



W. G. Robertson, the General Manager, and Warren Hastings, now General Manager, then his able assistant and publicity head. Now when public highway departments take care of highway marking and law enforcement it may properly be recalled that the work of the Ontario Motor League in the twenties and since has been of inestimable value to all motorists, members or otherwise, and to all who have responsibility for our motor traffic. In this work there stand out in my mind three great citizen volunteers, John A. Tory, John J. Gibbons and R. A. Stapells.

The activities of the Motor League and the Board of Trade involve one in a good deal of publicity, and insofar as these activities were of public interest, and for the general good, such publicity could not help bring into prominence those who were active. Not only so but one's general reputation was established as among those who were willing to devote their time and effort voluntarily to matters in the public interest as well as to attend to their business.

As I look back upon this busy period I find a simple explanation for my poor golfing, my little interest in vacationing. Many of my friends and associates were competition golfers, great fishermen, top bowlers, bonspiel curlers and the like; and when I recall the close and happy relationships that many of my later friends had formed in these activities of recreation, I wonder that I ever was admitted so freely to the inner councils and friendships of those who have played together and competed with one another.

I was around fifty before I seriously took up riding, and later fishing. Most recreations of this sort are usually taken up early in a man's life. But I had never had the opportunity. During my forties, very considerable increases in my income had enabled us to move from the old familiar neighbourhood of Manning Avenue to much more roomy and agreeable premises in Rosedale. We were able to buy a summer home in Muskoka, the scene of our honeymoon in far less affluent though no less happy circumstances, and, in due time, we purchased a farm near Thornhill. Keeping up with the Joneses had never appealed to my wife or myself, partly because we never lost the habit of work and the pleasure of it, and partly no doubt because of our continued association with our small church and the friends and associates of our early years. But by the time I reached fifty, I could perceive what pleasure and what profit, as far as health and relaxation were concerned, my numerous business associates, no less busy than myself, were deriving from their various hobbies and recreations.

My country boy training stood me in good stead in handling a horse. I knew without instruction which end of the horse was which. From my experience of and attachment to that very sensible friend of man (if properly and kindly treated) I could never fully understand why some of the meaner or more asinine of humans should be called derogatorily by the rear anatomy of that noble animal.

I started my riding experience in a very elementary way, first of all being coached in how to sit in a saddle, how to hold the reins, then daily (not just once in a while) to walk the beast for upwards of an hour. When I had managed this I essayed to post and to my walking exercise was added the initially doubtful job of trotting. Months after when I was considered to have a good seat in the saddle I could ride across country with much enjoyment, even taking an occasional jump, a practice I have not indulged in for some years.

“There is nothing better for the inside of a man than the outside of a horse.” I need hardly repeat the old chestnut; but true statements, I believe, cannot too often be made and repeated as occasion offers. My inspiration in taking up riding was my former friend, Walter Northgrave, to whom I shall always have a feeling of appreciation for starting me on a health-giving course at a time of life when it was calculated to be of great future physical benefit to me. I was fortunate in securing from that grand old gentleman George Beardmore, M.F.H., when he had reached his late years and disposed of some of his horses and equipment, two of his famous horses, Kilkenny, an imported Irish hunter, and Countess, Canadian bred. The latter was considered to be one of the best, brainiest and most reliable hunters in Canada, and two of my sons rode her in the Hunt for a number of years.

Association with horses has a peculiar and progressive fascination about it. Maybe the very size of the beautiful and spirited creatures has something to do with it. There are some who imagine horse riding and horse breeding to be among the pastimes that attract only those of a circumscribed mentality and primitive instincts. One has only to recall the contributions to the sport made by such men as Col. R. S. McLaughlin, Col. R. Y. Eaton, Major Clifford Sifton, D.S.O., George Beardmore, M.F.H., and others to mend that opinion. Captain Dick Paton, M.C., whose services in the Hunt and in the show ring are and have been indispensable and largely unrewarded, and Sam Calhoun, my groom, who showed two generations how to care for horses, and whose encyclopaedic memory preserved every one young and old who shared the sport for thirty years, were precious unforgettable characters to those who knew them. I never went into horse breeding on an important

scale, but I have had the pleasure of producing in my time a few fine mounts for my children and grandchildren, and one or two that stood well in the ring. I found a good deal of healthful exercise and an engrossing hobby at the time of life I needed them.

About the same time as I became interested in riding, I was invited to fishing clubs in Quebec and Ontario, and discovered the delight that is concealed in the apparently trivial exercise of casting a fly. I joined the Caledon Mountain Trout Club near Toronto. Between riding at my farm and fishing at the club, I found the relaxation from work which nearly all my associates in the business life of the city appeared to demand. I have to confess they were right.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### MANOEUVRE

A retiring president of an institution such as the Board of Trade has a natural desire to mark his term of office by some signal act by which he may express his gratitude for the office he has held. On the conclusion of my presidential year, and growing out of my experience of the pressing need of such an institution, I decided to set about establishing what has become known since 1929 as the Toronto Industrial Commission.

My proposal met with an immediate and very wide measure of support. There can be no harm in recounting some features of the situation which I believed justified the creation of such a body.

The roaring twenties, in which so great an industrial and financial development took place, brought Canada into prominence as a promising field, especially for American industries. Canadian spending power was high. Our tariffs, our long hauls and need for capital and consumer goods, our great mining and forestry development all combined to attract branch establishments in Canada, first of American industries and later after much preliminary labour, British branches.

Enquiries regarding opportunities in Canada came from a wide variety of sources. The border industrial communities across from Detroit have largely been a result of the establishment of branches of Detroit motor manufacturers, and also those of other American industries. Enquiries directed to Toronto came through railway companies, banks, law firms, real estate agencies and, of course, the Manufacturers Association, the Board of Trade and other public service bodies, as well as direct communication with the city of Toronto itself.

Toronto had some experience in the publicity and industrial field. Well meaning and sometimes very able and patriotic citizens had stirred the city to appoint an official Industrial Commissioner; but such efforts had bogged down into one of two morasses, irresponsible junketting or aimless publicity. By 1928 when we first tackled the problem all these old devices were discredited and had been laid aside.

The desire to have Toronto and Canada's industrial advantages made known suggested that the title of the proposed new organization should be The Toronto Industrial and Publicity Commission. However, the name was

at a very early date changed to The Toronto Industrial Commission, and while one of the aims was to make known the advantages of Toronto and vicinity as the place to locate Canadian branch plants, the serious job was to seek out those whose business in Canada was sufficiently promising to get them interested in locating in Toronto, and to provide in brochure form for each individual prospect such complete and accurate information as would enable an industrialist to reach a decision as to whether Toronto offered what he needed.

This information gave some survey of the existing activities in the line of business in which the enquirer was engaged, also information in respect to labour, corporation law, Canadian incorporation requirements, taxes, availability and cost of premises, power, protection and municipal services. All this budget of information was offered without cost to the prospect and on the understanding that no information whatever would be given out to the public except such as the enquirer might approve. This last consideration was something new. In most cases industrial agents would, upon an inquiry being made, give out a grandiose announcement, often without the ingredient of truth.

No one was more helpful or more influential in getting the new project under way than the late John A. Tory. From its organization he was vice-president, and he succeeded me in the presidency in 1937, an office which he relinquished only because of increasing infirmity.

From the beginning of the development of the idea it had to be borne in mind that an official Industrial Commissioner for the city was a matter for civic action, and even the most selfless of politicians are still politicians and must be treated with due respect where their prerogatives are involved. It so happened that 1928 was the last year as mayor for the late Thomas Foster. For 1929 Sam McBride was the promising mayoralty prospect. Sam as Controller was a great scrapper. He was impatient with the small bore economies of Tom Foster, he loved a verbal scrap for its own sake and would take on anybody on the Board of Control or Council if the opportunity offered. Sam was a very able and well experienced city politician. He had powerful friends, for he had a great flair for making friends, as well as political enemies. As I felt sure Sam would be mayor for 1929, I went to see him and offered him the plan to form an Industrial Commission. Fortunately for the plan, Sam adopted it as part of his platform, and was elected.

The radical difference between this and other similar efforts was that the new plan presupposed substantial support from the city for five years and

equal support from other sources. Most city projects requiring private cooperative subscriptions had to spend so much of their energy getting financial support that after blowing their financing whistle they had scarcely steam enough left to turn the wheels. The city's share of the support of the new Commission was \$25,000 a year for five years, and as that substantial sum was to be matched from private sources there was little argument. Sam secured almost unanimous support from the Council when it came up later. I suppose the members of Council remembered Sam's campaign plank. The plan later was validated by legislation of the province.

My baby was now born. What was to be its new existence? As soon as I had an opportunity I called the newly elected Mayor to offer my compliments and to ask if I could come to see him. Sam asked me to come right over to the City Hall. I sat at his right knee, and after the pleasant job of presenting congratulations I said, "Sam, what are we going to do now about this new Commission?" "Charlie," he answered, "we'll call a public meeting." After all the campaign exposition why a public meeting? Wise old Sam He knew that the best thing he could do was to invite all and sundry to a meeting in the City Council Chamber, give them all a chance to say their say, after which he could go ahead. As it appeared nothing could be done in the matter of immediate action by the city, I agreed.

The mayor assured me that I could go ahead and get my outside support, so knowing that he and Harry McGee were bosom friends I said, "How about Eaton's?" Sam asked what would Simpson's do. I thought \$5,000 a year for five years. Without further ado he asked his aide to get Mr. McGee on the 'phone. When Harry came on Sam said, "Hello Harry, is that you? What are you going to do for this scheme of Charlie Burton's?" "What's that young divil up to now?" asked Harry, not aware that I was with Sam. "The Toronto Industrial Commission," said the mayor. The natural question was what were Simpson's going to do. Sam told him. "We'll give ten," said Harry. That meant \$10,000 a year for five years. Good old Harry. That wasn't the last of his support. He sat on the Board of the Commission and at my right hand as a member of our weekly executive committee for several years, and a better, more loyal and more spontaneous friend no man could desire.

My other solicitations were a pleasure. First I called up my old friend E. R. Wood, than whom the Lord never made a finer man. "E. R. may I come to see you?" I asked. He replied that he was tied up all day and asked what I wanted. As he himself was no mean collector he suggested that I probably was raising money and said that I had better put him down for what I wanted

and I could tell him what it was all about when later I could see him. I said, "Well, this will cost you \$2,000 a year for five years." E. R. answered, "Put me down and tell me about it later."

Another spontaneous response was when I called the Imperial Oil and asked for Victor Ross. He was one of the best friends in this sublunary abode. A former financial editor of *The Globe*, he was chosen to be Treasurer of the Imperial Oil. Poor Victor Ross was a hopeless cripple, from a devastating motor accident, but he had a precious mind and the greatest capacity for friendship of any in my acquaintance. Those were the days; no committee or board approval of Victor's acts was necessary. I 'phoned him. He properly suspected I was looking for a subscription; such at certain stages of one's career is the natural response to a request for an interview. Victor, like E. R. Wood, said, "Charlie, if you're coming for money put us down and tell me about it later." I said, "Victor, this will cost you \$10,000 over the next five years." He agreed. My difficulty was that I had all the money I needed too soon from too few. However, that was at least unique.

One of the substantial subscriptions I thought I would get was from the late J. E. Atkinson who gave me only \$1,000 a year. He did, however, always give great newspaper support to the Commission, and this certainly made itself manifest from the first, and helped insure the success of the project.

I had to visit all the newspapers and in the case of John Scott of *The Mail and Empire* he gave me his immediate blessing. The support of *The Globe* was also forthcoming.

When I came to Charlie Knowles of *The Telegram*, the situation was somewhat different and very difficult. Charlie Knowles was always kindness itself to me, but I found *The Telegram's* opposition to my friend Sam McBride, the mayor, affected his views. However, I went right ahead to explain the whole plan to Knowles. After hearing me through he picked out of a drawer in his desk a batch of five editorials. These he explained were against the Commission. He gathered them up, tore them asunder and threw them into the waste basket. I thanked my friend and said that my object was to secure his support editorially and financially. He promised favourable editorial support which he gave and *The Telegram* gave me \$700 a year for five years. I was walking metaphorically on air as I left the editor's room.

Anybody who remembers the labyrinthian path to and from the Managing Editor's office of *The Telegram* knows that one must pass through the news room. My friends, Harry Passmore and Bert Wemp, grabbed me

and asked, "Burton, is it true you are to pay Main Johnson \$1,000 a month as General Manager of the Commission?" I said it was true and reflected, "I suppose you news guys couldn't believe any newspaper man would be worth that figure." *The Telegram* announced the news of Main Johnson's appointment and later editions praised the whole idea.

The day of the public meeting arrived. The city proclamation had invited all interested in the formation of the Toronto Industrial Commission to attend and to indicate if they wished to present their views.

A number indicated their desire to speak. The mayor presided. Sam was at his best, punctual, ingratiating and accommodating. As there were several to be heard the mayor asked if it would be satisfactory to the meeting to confine the speeches during the first hour to ten minutes each. Carried unanimously. After the first hour many others had pressed to be heard, so that His Worship asked the meeting if for the second hour remarks might be confined to two minutes for each speaker. Carried.

The mayor had a difficult time to shut some speechifiers off at two minutes, but he was firm. The meeting at the end of the second hour was still going but it being close to five o'clock a number left. The two minute rule was continued, and around six p.m., no one offering, a small-voiced citizen, who was ready for the purpose, proposed that His Worship appoint a committee of prominent citizens, including labour representatives, to bring in a report to the Board of Control suggesting ways and means. By this time the idea and the proposed course was pretty well established in the minds of those likely to be interested. The Board of Control and the Council were practically unanimous, so that when after a week the special committee appointed by the mayor brought in its report it was adopted forthwith and later by Council.

The necessary validation clause was in the City's Bill, which was presented to the legislature and approved. On March 13, 1929 the Commission was organized. Representatives of the Toronto Transportation Commission, the Harbour Commission, the Canadian National Exhibition and the Toronto Hydro Commission were appointed to the Commission's membership, all having subscribed substantially to the Commission's support. In addition to financial help from these public bodies we secured the full \$25,000 per annum from taxpayers. The Transportation Commission very generously provided the new body with office space. We were away.

The Commission secured incorporation as a non-profit public organization. The by-laws enacted established a membership from which



directors and an executive committee and officers should be appointed.

The members were taxpayers who were subscribers, or in the case of private corporations, their nominees. Three members were appointed from each of the Board of Trade and the Manufacturers Association, and a representative from each of the city and the subscribing commissions. The directors, fifteen in number, included a representative of the city and each of the public body subscribers, and the rest from the appointees of the Board of Trade and Manufacturers Association. The large majority of members and directors were business men who represented the taxpayer subscribers.

I was honoured by being chosen President. The vice-presidents were the late John A. Tory and Thomas Jenkins, the latter then Chairman of the Toronto Harbour Commissioners. The Harbour Board had a big interest in our project, but as the city itself had to foot the bill for Harbour Board deficits, the latter had to discontinue their subscriptions. Their interest, however, was still very large.

The new Commission operated in the usual corporation way. The executive, consisting of the officers, His Worship the Mayor, and Harry McGee met weekly, and the Board monthly, unless especially called. Main Johnson, a brilliant newspaperman, was appointed General Manager of the Commission. The late Mr. Atkinson of *The Star* was approached by me several weeks before with the suggestion that if the Industrial Commission plan worked out as I hoped, I should like him to assure me Mr. Johnson would be available. Upon such assurance I approached Mr. Johnson and got in confidence his interim consent. Main Johnson was an imaginative manager. Although we started with bare desks and borrowed files and clerical staff we were soon in our own offices and organized with our own staff. H. B. Keenleyside was appointed chief engineer of the Commission, and as the work progressed other young engineers were added to the staff. As the city's and other support was only assured for five years all staff members were engaged on that understanding and with the general admonition to seek a permanent job if such an opportunity offered.

The record of the Commission speaks for itself. It was, from the first, successful. When it is remembered that before the first year was out we had plunged into a great world depression the record is all the more creditable.

Small advertisements of the Commission's free services to enquiring industrialists were inserted in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Journal of Commerce* and some few others. However, our prospects were those who had applied to the city and all the other agencies, and the

prospect list was soon long and promising. Main Johnson, with his flair for publicity and with his knowledge of the newspaper world, hit upon the plan of sending a telegraphic news despatch to all large American dailies every time we received a new industry. These telegrams were followed by photos and before we knew it the Toronto Industrial Commission was on the front pages all over the States. If any justification were needed for bribing Main Johnson to come to the work of the Commission this one act would have been justification. Mr. Keenleyside, a young Canadian graduate engineer, proved to be the right man to contact those contemplating opening in Canada. He had already started new branches of an American industry in various points in the U.S.A. and those enquiring justifiably felt immediate confidence in him.

Many will remember the difficult days of the 1930 depression. To give an example, the Dodge plant on Dufferin Street had been closed, throwing out of employment several hundred people. The new Commission, with the able co-operation of our realtors, filled this big building, and, as changes took place, refilled it.

By 1936 more than four thousand people were employed in the new industries established in Toronto and suburbs. New floor space occupied was nearly 2,000,000 square feet, in fact all modern manufacturing space was fully occupied, a situation during the depression days that was probably true of no other city in the world.

The city was paying \$25,000 a year and by 1936 was in receipt of more than that sum in taxation paid by the new industries.

Another unique situation was the financial record of the Commission. Operating on subscriptions that were made for five years the Commission, without any further funds, operated more than eight years, a record of a public service body probably never before or since matched.

One hears so often criticism of prominent men, reflections on their motives, and suggestions that they are really looking out for number one, that I feel the work of those on the Toronto Industrial Commission gives the lie to much of this unintelligent opinion.

My experience in working with men of large interests is almost directly the opposite of the popular conception, whether it be on corporation boards or in work of public advantage such as the Industrial Commission.

The men on the Industrial Commission were no stuffed shirts, lived in no ivory towers, thought more of the public good than of their private affairs,

and except that they did their duties in an exacting fashion were generally as good friends together trying to accomplish as much as might be.

The unwritten agreement with the staff was that they, within the five years, should if possible obtain other employment. This applied to the General Manager as well as to his deputies. Main Johnson, therefore, was one of the first to move. His strong and imaginative promotional ability, his record in the newspaper field, led him to accept a job in the field of public relations. He later returned to his first love, *The Star*.

The successor to the position of General Manager of the Commission attracted a number of interesting applicants. The Commission's reputation had rapidly grown. It was up to me as President to recommend a successor to Mr. Johnson. The natural and obvious successor was Mr. Keenleyside, the chief engineer, and he was unanimously chosen and did a great work. The first necessary work of promotion was well done by Main Johnson, and the citizens of Toronto have good reason to remember his distinguished service. The following years under Keenleyside were among the most vital and fruitful of the Commission's service. The foundation laid and the traditions established at that time have borne great fruitage in the years of Mr. Tory's presidency and Mr. Bartley's general management.

The rough spot in my otherwise smooth path in the work of the Commission was when I was visited by the former mayor who fathered the Commission, suggesting that he might be considered for the vacant position of General Manager. However, I gave him no encouragement, frankly pointing out that I was committed to the policy of making use of the services of younger men. As he was over age and without some essential business qualifications, and as there was a danger of tossing the Commission back into the local political pot, with more candour than perhaps was needed, I flatly refused to recommend him for the job. To his credit be it said that in his future activities politically, and in our many future personal contacts, he never gave any evidence that his course either publicly or in private was in any way affected by my refusal to consider him for the job.

Each year the City Council granted the Commission the privilege of reporting to it, and as soon as convenient after our annual accounts were audited we were received by Council for the purpose of presenting our report and to give opportunity for questions to be asked. As President I had the honour of heading the deputation, consisting of members of the Commission's Board. Each year we also formally requested that the City Council should nominate its representative on the Commission. The Council was apparently always very interested. The only critic we had was the late

Alderman Percy Quinn, who criticized the fact that some of our industries were located beyond the city limits. He was a consistent critic along this line even when it was shown that the city was the primary beneficiary, and a residuary one even where the industries were located outside the city limits.

In any case most of our support was from sources outside the city's contribution, and as the accounts showed that each year we had still on hand most of the city's contribution, the Alderman's criticism had little point.

Finally the five years were gone by. The Commission had operated so well within its budgets that at the end of the first period we had a sufficient sum on hand to operate for another three years without any further monetary support from the corporation of the City of Toronto. As the official Industrial Commission for the city, and as we had to request the Council annually to appoint its representative, we continued to present our report, never failing, however, to point out that we should, as necessary, come back for a renewal of the city's subscription.

At the end of eight years the request for a further five years' support was made. We pointed out that as the Commission had no permanent franchise, we had to recognize, in setting up our paid staff, that the necessary qualified personnel could only be secured if a five years' support were assured.

The Council received our reports and representations with sympathy, but one or two dissidents joined Alderman Quinn. While approving the work of the Commission, they imposed the condition that the grant was to be for only one year. As I personally felt this was a retrograde step and more than anything else calculated to throw the Commission sooner or later into city politics, I resigned as President and asked to be relieved of my function. When my associates on the Commission reported the resignation to the City Council, there was some excitement and evidently a good deal of concern. At a later meeting the Council renewed their subscription at the requested \$15,000 per annum and for five years, but I felt that it was time that I stepped down, and John A. Tory became President. Upon the personal solicitation of His Worship, Mayor Robbins, I consented to act as Honorary President and I have been so honoured each year ever since. One bump in the path of good relations was enough. Ever since, the city has approved the Commission's plans, and given many evidences of its appreciation of the considerable work for the benefit of the city and Canada as a whole, accomplished by the Toronto Industrial Commission.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### SERVICE

During the first war, at about the time I was assuming more than the duties of Service Manager, I was approached by a committee from the Big Brother Movement, consisting of the late Judge Boyd and John Macdonald, and asked to be President of that organization. Aside from my own family and some experience in the Y.M.C.A. I had had little opportunity to come in contact with the needs of the teenagers of that day. One thing that appealed to me was that the late Frank Sharpe was the managing secretary of the organization. He seemed to have a good grasp of the problems involved and a burning zeal to serve boys whose opportunity in the community was below the average.

Whoever named the organization Big Brother Movement, especially “movement”, did the work an injustice because those unfamiliar with its activities pictured the organization as being somewhat of the fanatical or “nut” type. However, the name didn’t do us any harm and the activities were soon to be recognized as of first importance in the community. On this Board we chose representatives of all organizations who were likely to assist in the rescue of boys under sixteen years from the paths of delinquency. We had representatives from the city, Y.M.C.A., School Principals’ Association, the various churches, service clubs and any organization which desired to provide volunteer Big Brothers.

The city was divided into five districts and several hundred individual men were enlisted as Big Brothers, each one committed to take care of a boy and act as counsellor, companion and friend.

Upon Judge Boyd’s death, Judge Mott, later head of the Family Court, became Juvenile Court Judge, followed by Judge R. S. Hosking, and these law officers arranged for constant attendance of the organizations’ officers in court. They themselves attended meetings of the Big Brothers Board of Directors. In the thirteen years that I was actively in Big Brother work, monthly meetings of the directors (except for school holiday months) were regularly held and well attended. Not only so, but members of the Board themselves acted as volunteer Big Brothers. Frank Sharpe had a way of expecting every man to do his duty; just because I was at the time President was no excuse from serving. I well remember the first boy put in my care. He was a big lad who weighed more than I did at the time. His offence was

carrying a loaded gun. My first step was to call to see him at home, in the neighbourhood of Dundas and Ossington. He was no problem, had no ulterior motives, quite readily gave up any associations which had led him to parade the gun. He had great respect for his parents, who were very good people, not too well off but well thought of. The boy took our suggestion to join the West End Y, and so far as I know was never in trouble again.

My second case was a tough assignment. A young lad whom I shall call Bob was taken up for car theft. Bob was one of the nicest kids you'd wish to meet. He had a smile from ear to ear, and would promise anything—except to stop stealing cars. He was placed on probation and assigned to me to see that he recovered his proper place in society. His mother, a widow, lived on lower Givens Street. Although I was no professional social case worker, I had no trouble getting the facts. Bob had a younger brother, and a sister Jessie a year or so older, who was a grand girl and about the only one for years who made it possible for the mother to keep the family together. The husband had been killed when the younger son was an infant. At the time Bob was in trouble the three were around thirteen, fifteen and sixteen years of age. In those days there were no widows' or mothers' allowances and, of course, no family allowances. Imagine the plight of this poor widow. The husband had been an expressman, who drove his own horse and wagon and did a parcel delivery business. He fell off his wagon one day and broke his neck. The children went to Sunday school, but the parents, being poor, seldom went to church. This woman told me that from the day of the funeral forward no one from the church ever called to enquire for her. She sought work as a charwoman, locking the children in the house, leaving at an early hour, placing their meagre breakfasts on the table to be available when they should wake and get about. Her hours were from around five a.m. to nine a.m., her job cleaning an old downtown office building. When the children reached school age she went earlier, so as to reach home around eight-thirty a.m. and get them off to school. She then took morning and afternoon cleaning jobs as they offered, but the margin between money earned and actual sustenance needs was so slight that there was no provision for illness, or for any of the hazards which interfere with regular earning. The family were given all the care the mother could render, but by the time Bob was fifteen and in trouble, she was ready to call it a day. Is it any wonder that on my first visit I was met with a bitter rebuff? She was consumed by frustration and utter weariness. Bob's delinquency was the last straw, and the mother was practically past caring.

During probation, Bob had to be home at eight p.m. Having taken him to my house to dinner one evening, I offered to drive him home in time for the

eight p.m. limit. I was driving a Hudson Super Six, which was considered a big car in those days. Bob offered to show me how to change gears without using the clutch. We talked about cars and stealing cars. Bob revealed that he never walked a dozen blocks if there was handy a car he could steal. Many a time he was forced to walk many times the distance he started out to go, and on the way had doctored and stolen as many as four cars in two or three hours.

We never cured Bob but sometimes I thought we had him going right. When he became sixteen, I got him a job in window displays which was the one activity he seemed interested in. Meanwhile I had it understood that if by nine a.m. Bob hadn't reported for work, I was immediately to be advised. Bob was a smart boy, good, and interested in his new work. Then one day there was a street car strike and Bob didn't report for work, nor could he be found at home. After the second day I got the facts. Bob got out at seven a.m. each day, drove a jitney on Queen Street and stayed with it until eleven-thirty each night. He was doing what he liked best, driving a car. After the strike Bob came back. Then there was another street car strike in Toronto. Bob was now over sixteen and above juvenile court age. He was a clever little fellow who I suppose was guilty of all the different kinds of theft of cars and parts, but was seldom if ever caught; and if caught, could not be proven guilty.

I do not know what became of Bob and I have never heard of him since that second street car strike. If I was unable to do much for him, he did a great deal for me, because working on his case acquainted me at first hand with the social problems of which I was aware but which never can be fully appreciated without such personal contact. That individual contact between men of goodwill and problem boys which the Big Brother Movement provided was a unique feature of immeasurable value. I remained thirteen years as President of the Big Brothers, learning all the time, and only too happy to be of service to Frank Sharpe, the director, a tireless field worker, who believed the function of the social worker was to be on the streets and in the homes, exploring the problems in person.

I have always regretted the trend, since that time, towards the professionalization of social services, and the excuse it offers for buying off one's obligation to one's under-privileged fellow mortals by merely contributing money to community chests and other organizations. I am even now by no means persuaded that the community chest principle is altogether good. Trained social service workers may do a better job, technically, financially and in all respects, than casual associations of people of

goodwill. That may be undeniable. But it is one thing to learn of social problems in annual reports by professional workers, and another thing entirely to learn of these problems by personal contact and individual service. Young men coming forward now in the business life of our community are allowed the privilege of serving on campaign committees to raise annually large sums of money for social services lumped together in a sort of incorporation. It is very businesslike. But apart from all else, I believe the system denies those young men a most important feature of their own development. As future leaders of our industrial and political life, they should know the problems by personal experience of them. And furthermore, they should be allowed to become acquainted with one another not as members of fundraising campaign teams but as interested members of social organizations attacking the same problems from different angles. I cannot too strongly stress my belief that the raising or making of money is of secondary importance to the doing of the work, whether in a business such as a great department store, or in social service.

My thirteen years' presidency of the Big Brother Movement was concurrent with my busiest years at Simpson's. Almost in the same breath as that with which I urge young men to become involved personally in some social agency I must utter a warning that in social service, one thing invariably leads to another. Shortly after I joined Simpson's, I became a member of the business men's group at the Y.M.C.A., in order to get some of the exercise I had formerly enjoyed out-of-doors as a traveller in Canada and a buyer in Europe. I had been with the Big Brothers since about 1917, when, in May, 1922, I was elected to the metropolitan board of the Y.M.C.A. then under the presidency of G. H. Wood. In 1926, I was elected vice-chairman of the metropolitan executive committee of the Y, which is the hardworking element of the organization, responsible for the practical operations of the branches. In this post, I served and made the close acquaintance of A. J. Mitchell. I was vice-president from 1926 to 1930, and President from 1930 to 1932. Relate these dates to 1929, when I became President of Simpson's and the onset of the great depression, and it will be realized I did not choose my outside activities with any particular acumen. But I was by no means alone. The great E. R. Wood, while not holding prominent office in the Y, was the shrewd and generous-hearted financial genius of the organization, directing and most liberally contributing to the campaigns for funds and advising in all matters of expenditure. I served under him in these activities, and no greater mentor could a man have. I resigned from active duty with the Y.M.C.A. in 1941, when I had to undertake the job of chairman of the National War Services Funds Advisory



Board, and my son, Edgar, was elected to the board in my stead. I had the honour of being general chairman of the capital funds campaign in 1947, when we raised \$1,350,000 and was honorary chairman in 1951 when we completed our capital campaign for \$2,500,000 by raising the other million and a bit.

I cannot leave this mention of the Y.M.C.A. without recalling to the reader's mind the fact that in the two wars, the Y enlarged its familiar function as a young men's Christian association to serve with considerable distinction in behalf of the troops, the young men at war. In these wartime activities, the Y suffered serious modification, not to say injury, to its physical property. More than that, its trained personnel were scattered to the four winds of war service, and many of them were lost to the Y when they entered other post-war work. It seems to me now that much more aggressive action might have been taken to attract public support for the fullest rehabilitation of the Y.M.C.A. properties after the wars, and that the diffusion of effort, as manifested in the various community centres since, might better have been left in the hands of an enlarged Y.M.C.A. with flourishing branches serving as the ideal community centre for each district. By such a policy the continuity of supply of trained Y.M.C.A. personnel would have been maintained, with great benefit to the country.

If there appears to be any contradiction in what I have said with regard to the professional aspect of social service and these remarks about the Y.M.C.A., I would point out that the Y is an institution to which the public comes; the traffic is inward. In most other social service organizations, the impulse is reversed; the service rendered is directed toward the homes or to the person in his or her environment.

Originating rather in the Big Brother Movement than in my Y.M.C.A. activities there developed another contemporaneous interest. Before speaking of this, though, I should say that whatever service I was able to render these various organizations I was well repaid in the enlightenment they afforded me with regard to the community of which I was a part, and in the association they provided with public spirited, vigorous men, many of whom in time became my friends and intimate associates.

Due to my connection with the Big Brother Movement, I was asked by the late Premier Howard Ferguson to become a member of an Advisory Board to the Ontario government in the establishment of the Bowmanville Training School for boys. The late J. H. H. Jury of Bowmanville had given a fine piece of land, and the government, with some outside assistance, built

the various buildings. The Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs of Toronto each contributed a hut and the work was begun.

Howard Ferguson, judging by his keen wit and love of fun was no doubt like some of the rest of us, a sort of problem boy himself, but his memory of his boyhood and its privileges on the farm whetted his appetite to do something for city and town youngsters who were often found in delinquency because their communities did not provide healthful activities for them.

Ontario had had for fifty years an Industrial School law. There had been in existence for many decades the Mimico Industrial School for boys, St. John's for Catholic boys, Alexandra School for girls and St. Mary's for Roman Catholic girls. Later another Catholic school for boys was instituted at Alfred, Ontario. These Industrial Schools had been functioning for half a century.

Why, then, the need for new boys' and girls' training schools? There were many inmates in the Industrial Schools with serious mental deficiencies. The product of these Industrial Schools was a great problem. There was a tendency to retain the children in the Industrial Schools until they reached their twenty-first year, when they had to be released. There were many objectionable and sometimes degrading situations, especially among the mentally deficient and diseased children, that were beyond the power or capacity of these older institutions to correct. There were, too, a great many instances in which by the time the juvenile had by law to be set free, he was so institutionalized as to be unable to care for himself when he went out into the world.

It was therefore argued that there should be separation of those above an arbitrary I.Q. of eighty percent from those of lesser mentality.

It was a great step forward to have new Training Schools at Bowmanville and Galt, schools to which children could be admitted rather than committed, as had been required by law for those sent to the old Industrial Schools.

After some experience, and under the government of the Honourable G. S. Henry, it was decided to form a new type of Advisory Board the duties of which would be to advise regarding the care, treatment and disposition of all children, whether in Training or Industrial Schools, whether boys or girls, and without distinction as to creed. The Honourable W. G. Martin requested me to act as Chairman of the new Board, to suggest names of committee members and to recommend procedure. The administration of the schools

was still a government department affair, but the care and progress and disposal of the boys and girls was the function of the new Advisory Board.

Our new Board met once a week. For two hours every Thursday morning this duty was a first charge on my time and the time of those constituting the Board. My recommendations for members of the Board with which I was to meet so frequently for the next eight years were: Mrs. Adelaide M. Plumptre, W. T. Kernaghan, George Hambly, W. R. Cockburn and Dr. E. P. Lewis.

After confirmation by the Minister, in addition to meetings to hear reports from the School Superintendents, we were to visit the schools and form our “on the spot” impressions.

Our first visit was to the Victoria Industrial School. On presenting ourselves to the office, we found that the superintendent was absent, due to indisposition. We were therefore taken in hand by Mr. Pettinger, the Assistant, a former school teacher, who after a number of years of discouraging labour at Mimico, seemed to have lost any enthusiasm for the work, if indeed he had ever possessed such a disposition. He asked what we should like to see first. Following an old habit of mine, when inspecting anything new, I suggested we might start where we were. We were shown the register of the boys. This historical book went back for the full fifty years of the school’s existence. To say that the register contained names of boys whose lives were generally filled with happiness would be far from fact. The boys were delinquent. They were committed as to a penal institution. They were thrown together, the good and the bad, the bright and the dull. Some had been kept in the school for years for trifling misdemeanours. The methods in the office were archaic. Our inspection proceeded. Mr. Pettinger asked if we would like to examine the *new* cottage. As we approached the building it was evidently not brand new so I asked how old it was. The new building had been built just twenty-seven years before.

We entered this cottage through a door almost large enough to admit a truck. Our visit was in cool early spring and I could not help remarking that the door didn’t fit very well. One corner was about two inches off the ground, whereas the opposite side had to scrape the floor upon the opening and closing of it. Enquiry elicited the information from an attendant that the sagging door had been like that for a long time. It seemed to be of little concern to those in charge, first, that the Ontario government was paying for sufficient extra coal to help heat such part of all outdoors as found its way in

through the bottom of the door, and secondly, that extra discomfort to the boy inmates resulted.

This particular building was used almost exclusively as a dormitory. Although there were no prison bars, the dormitory windows were high above the beds, I imagine provoking constantly a temptation to the boys to hoist one another whenever wanderlust should hit.

Their little single beds were iron, and had once been painted white, the only evidence of which was an occasional speck or patch that had escaped or resisted the wear and tear. Questioned as to whether there was a paint shop as part of the school training the assistant superintendent assured us that there was. Later we were shown the paint shop. Boys were busy painting; but it hadn't up to that time occurred to the instructors of painting that boys' beds in the school might have occasionally been given a coat of paint.

A man is not supposed to be an authority on bedding, but the uniform institutional grey of the pillow cases, sheets and counterpanes suggested to me that the authorities were buying a special grey cloth for the purpose. Mrs. Plumptre enquired if the bedding hadn't originally been white, which of course it had. It was the fault of the laundry, which we were soon to be shown as part of the operation of the school for the instruction of the boys. The washing machine was prehistoric. The operator or instructor was a devoted old female, who had evidently many years before abandoned the idea of appearing for the daily task as well groomed as possible. The old machine was too small and too much out of repair to do more than wash what was put into it, meanwhile adding to each new batch a bit of the grey soil from previous batches. Bleaching and rinsing were the two missing processes which might have rendered the clothes clean.

We were shown the various shops in which vocational guidance was given. The bakery, which should have been a model as a producer because the boys under supervision baked the bread used in the school, was not only an antique out-of-date affair but in such bad repair that when the loaves were taken from the oven one side would be burned or blackened and the other still dough.

Our inspection proceeded. As we approached another of the large group of buildings, we noted an exterior fire escape which, however, seemed to give access only to the top floor. The top floor we found was being used as an infirmary. One boy in bed in the corner, we were told, was sixteen and had heart trouble. He had consequently been lying on his back in this spot

for two years. Had a fire occurred in these premises, fire escape or no, this poor lad would certainly have been doomed.

Some garden preparation was in progress in the large grounds and on enquiry we learned that most of the gardeners were senior boys nearing their twenty-first birthday. The law called for the release of all boys on or before their twenty-first birthday. These older boys were kept on because they were useful in various capacities about the school and its gardens and grounds. Some of the boys had been there for years, and were so institutionalized that they shrank from being sent away to find their living in a world about which they knew little, and that little they had reason to regard with fear and apprehension.

We visited the Alexandra School for girls, and here Mrs. Plumpre's services on the board were to the fore. Miss Brooking, the Principal, operated with more heart than head and while that is much to be preferred to an operation characterized by lots of head and little heart, a good heart could not make old buildings new, provide needed repairs and replacements, nor could it even insure adequate handling of delicately constituted human material.

The first war left in its wake some dreadful results from venereal disease, and its victims included many of the girls who found refuge in the Industrial School. Miss Brooking applied the principle that the girls were better under her care until they were twenty-one years old, and certainly the sad history of neglect, imposition and suffering which many of these poor girls were subjected to, often in their early teens, was nothing short of pitiful.

Here at Alexandra School, as at Mimico, the buildings and equipment were outdated and dangerous, especially from the standpoint of fire hazard.

All on our Advisory Board, except W. T. Kernaghan, were Protestants and we asked him to arrange for us to visit St. John's Industrial School on Blantyre Avenue. We were also invited to visit St. Mary's School for Girls, but as that school is part of a cloistered Catholic institution we asked the Rev. Mother Superior to excuse us from a visit to the school. However, from that time forward the reports received on the individual girls in St. Mary's were most complete and any enquiries we made were given prompt and most considerate attention. Mental and physical examinations by doctors of the Government Health Department were made regularly, and special examinations if the quarterly progress reports indicated unexplained lack of general progress.

We visited St. John's School for boys. The atmosphere here was so different from that of the school at Mimico. The boys were the same material, in fact they were on the whole below the social condition of those in the Protestant school. This we found later, after study and experience, was due to the fact that many of the poorer foreign-born people coming from so-called Roman Catholic countries were all classed as Catholic. Many had not been connected with any church but admitted that if anything they were Catholics. As we entered St. John's we were received by Brother Cyril, the superintendent, one of those Christian Brothers who sink worldly ambitions and actually lose their family name to assume duties of teaching and a name of spiritual significance. The reception room was clean and nicely furnished. The dormitories were models of cleanliness and good order. Each boy's little locker had his garments hung or folded according to direction. The bedding was clean and properly laundered and repaired.

Sitting in a good sized room in the midst of the dormitory building was a saintly old retired Christian Brother, his life's work done. Although poor and without worldly possessions, he had all that we can carry away when we leave the scenes of our life's activity, a happy and contented heart. The print shop and other training sections were alive with boys interested in what was going on because of the constructive and animated programme. The average mentality of these Catholic boys was, I believe, below that of those in the Protestant school, but due to the more constructive and I believe, too, more consecrated character of their training, they averaged quite as well, or better, as they left either on parole or to some kindly home in the country, usually away from the environment which brought their original delinquency to public notice and punishment.

Brother Cyril, while our Board was functioning, was succeeded by Brother Stephen, but their ideals, their methods and their personal devotion were so alike that one could scarcely tell that a change in the school headship had occurred. Recently on asking about these devoted brothers I found Brother Stephen had moved to new scenes of work but Brother Cyril, former principal and superintendent, had returned to serve in St. John's School as an ordinary teacher. What grand material for an "ordinary teacher"!

As a committee we had the duty to report to the Minister. We had no trouble about the Catholic institutions—fire equipment, fire drills and good administration were apparent, but while we had good reason to comment on the faithfulness of the superintendents of Victoria School for boys at Mimico and the Alexandra School for girls, we had to report that both these schools

were fire traps in a state of chronic neglect and worse. When I took the one foolscap sheet report on Victoria and Alexandra Schools to the Minister I suggested that unless he was prepared immediately to act to correct the conditions, it might be as well for me not to sign the report until he was in a position to correct them. Mr. Martin seemed to appreciate the Committee's consideration. He promised early attention, and I gave him the report, unsigned. Around this time an election was in the offing. The Liberals under Mitch Hepburn, won the election. As Mr. Hepburn had promised the electorate the elimination of all Boards, Commissions and so forth, upon the change of government and appointment of Hon. David Croll as Minister of Welfare we sent in our resignations and asked, in view of declared government policy, to be relieved of our duties as early as it would suit the Minister's convenience. No acknowledgment was made of our efforts to resign, but as the secretary of our Board was discharged we naturally discontinued our meetings until we should know the wishes of the new government.

In the following few weeks I met the Hon. Dave Croll and suggested that he should acknowledge my letter of resignation. Mr. Croll replied, "We've looked into your Board's operation, and I put your letter in the waste basket. We want you and your Board to continue." I said, "You have discharged our secretary." "Oh, well, we can provide you with a new secretary." My reply was that unless our secretary was reinstated, we would not serve. The secretary was reinstated, though his already low salary was reduced by \$100 per annum.

So we were again away. I pulled out my critical report of the operations of Victoria School and Alexandra School. Again I said to the new Minister that I would sign the report whenever he wished to take corrective action. Ten days later we were notified that the government intended to close both schools within a week. It was indicated that it was up to the Board to find other accommodation for around two hundred and forty boys and two hundred and twenty girls.

The government told us to use Bowmanville and Galt as and when necessary to take care of the Victoria and Alexandra boys and girls. As these two training schools were under an Act separate from the Industrial Schools Act, we were unable legally to follow the Minister's suggestion. However, he assured us the government would assume full responsibility. We held the necessary emergency meeting, and went over all the lists of boys and girls both in Bowmanville and Victoria and Galt and Alexandra.

Boys of low mentality and those with unsatisfactory conduct records we assigned to Bowmanville, girls to Galt, using the several hundred homes throughout the province which had already taken our delinquent boys and girls as they were considered to be ready for placement or parole. However, this emergency by which we had to find homes for the more than four hundred boys and girls found our Board sending out for placement many who, on their record, did not seem ready for parole. Such is the quality even of delinquent human nature that when we took stock a few years later we found that only about 10% of those placed in the emergency ever returned to public care as repeaters.

My work on this Industrial Schools Board was carried on over eight years of my busiest period.

Our Board was appointed by the Henry government, and continued under the Hepburn Government by whom it was shifted from the Welfare Department to the Department of the Provincial Secretary. The deputy, Mr. Neelands, was a well qualified custodial officer. Our position was somewhat anomalous. The old Protestant Industrial Schools were closed; the Catholic schools for boys and girls still functioned. As the boys and girls sent to Galt and Bowmanville under the law had to be admitted and as the Catholic boys and girls under the Industrial Schools Act had to be committed, we were in a pickle, at least, if anyone had cared to challenge the position. The government would have been in an impossible position committing Catholics to a penal institution, admitting Jews and Protestants to Training Schools.

Another problem was that under the Training School Act applying to Galt and Bowmanville, only children above 80 I.Q. could be admitted. I cannot remember how many months I had to work to get the Minister to realize he was making fish of one and flesh of another. Only when I threatened finally to resign and write to the papers did I get consent to have the law changed. It was a simple matter. The Minister simply 'phoned the Attorney General who allotted a competent law officer to prepare legislation. All existing laws were repealed and a law enacted applicable to the kind of boys and girls with whom we had to deal.

How little attention and interest are taken in our custodial institutions. When this Training School Act change took place it passed first, second and third reading in a minimum of time. No member of the legislature or the government seemed to consider it anything but routine; yet the destiny of every one of these boys and girls under sixteen, taken in delinquency, was affected by the Act.



The Advisory Board was given many compliments during the eight years I served as Chairman, yet on the repeal of old Acts and the enactment of the new no one seemed to care. At the end of each year the Superintendents of the Schools made reports to our Board and in turn the Advisory Board of Industrial Schools made its report to the Minister, who reported to the Governor in Council. On account of the difficulty in getting the reports printed in time for the opening of the Legislature, the annual reports for at least four years were placed on the table of the House with their official blue book cover enclosing as many blank pages as were expected to be used in printing the book.

The record of the training of boys and girls, the progress from delinquency to normal living, was so far as I have any recollection no concern or interest to any members of the legislature of Ontario, of any party, and apparently of no concern to any member of the government.

After my term of service had expired I attended, on the invitation of the Minister, the Bowmanville Sports Day. I sat on the temporary bleachers beside the M.L.A. for Durham county. I made some effort to discuss with him the recent law changes, but had to change the subject as, although he apparently was interested politically in attending this public function in his constituency, he manifestly had no idea what changes in legislation had taken place. In fact, he scarcely seemed to know the function of the school whose games programme he was patronizing. Is it any wonder the Bowmanville School was handed over during the war for the housing of German prisoners?

Not the least evil result of the war was the cheerful jettisoning of the training of our delinquent boys in favour of housing German officers. The Girls' Training School at Galt was, by a wave of Mr. Hepburn's hand, turned over to the Wrens. The wonderful facilities of St. Thomas Hospital for the mentally ill were arbitrarily handed over to the Air Force. Navy, army and air force all demonstrated in short order their capacity for providing ample buildings for their own better use; but it has always struck me as curiously revealing that in the excitement of war's evil onset, the first to be dispossessed are those for whom we should have the greatest consideration.

What a miserable conscience we have towards our custodial institutions!

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### FAMILY

Of all the fortunate circumstances that favoured my start in life as a grown man, none was greater than my marriage to my boyhood sweetheart. The Leary household, of which my wife and I became virtually a part for the first ten years of our married life, was the centre of a family community. My wife's father, at the time of our marriage, was a busy and prosperous builder. Many of the homes in the, at that time, new and thriving region of Euclid and Manning avenues were built by him.

The Leary home was an eleven-roomed house at 400 Manning Avenue, and to this was added seven more rooms to accommodate the newly married Burtons. This made an eighteen-roomed house with a variety of doors and entrances that permitted familiar ingress and egress in the fullest sense of the term.

My wife's mother had been a school teacher and two of her children had become teachers, Joseph Lincoln Leary, for fifty-one years a Toronto public school teacher and principal, and Miss Ada G. Leary, for forty-one years a Toronto public school teacher. These two were my wife's older brother and sister. Another sister was the first nurse to graduate from Western hospital. All these as well as several cousins lived either in, next door to, or across the road from the eighteen-roomed Leary menage on Manning avenue. It was a regular community; there was endless visiting from one to another of the neighbouring homes; a spirit of lively discussion and enterprise dominated the whole scene.

This was the setting in which I was soon to be obliged to leave my young wife when the opportunity arose for me to become a traveller and to go abroad, and when I was compelled to devote my attention to my work to such an extent that I would be absent from my home eight months of the year. We lived in the seven room addition to the Leary home for the first ten years, and three of our children were born there.

It was providential that there was such an arrangement at hand when my opportunity to advance myself arrived. It was providential that my wife, the youngest of her family, was surrounded by devoted parents, brothers and sisters, when she was left with the problem of raising her family by a husband absent two thirds of each year. She and I and our small children had

the inestimable advantage of being surrounded by school teachers who were experienced in, and fond of, children. They were all avid readers and debaters and filled with a warm and clannish feeling for one another. In discussing my family in the ensuing pages, I shall indulge in occasional flights of opinion with regard to the raising of children. I must confess that having for ten years seen my children only after long intervals of absence in the West and overseas, I was able to formulate certain ideas on the subject of children with a freedom denied most young fathers who see their families every day of their lives and cannot detect the miraculous aspects of their growth and development. To that community of Learys on Manning Avenue I am indebted for some of the happiest features of a happy family life.

My wife had no other career, no ambition outside her family. Being the youngest of her family had not spoiled her. I never remember her making demands for anything beyond our slender means or for things that might be described as vain. Material things for which we had as thorough a capacity for enjoyment as anyone came along in later years. But those principles and ideas upon which our later happiness was founded were thoroughly ingrained during the ten years in which we were obliged to live on very different terms of personal association than those of the average young married couple. My wife's great ambition for her children was in music. Each was sent for piano lessons during kindergarten years. And while we all loved music, and while in one instance it looked as if we might have a concert violinist in the family, the truth is that not one of them ever could play the piano to the point of being interesting even to himself or herself.

But my wife and I shared one basic idea with regard to our children, which was that each of them be given the chance to show a preference for any special activity, and that he should be indulged in it. We made no effort to coerce them. This principle which was in full operation during the early years of our family life was strongly confirmed in my own mind as soon as I came into contact with social service. My work in the Big Brother Movement and on the Board of Ontario's Industrial and Training Schools convinces me that discovery by parents of special tendencies, special interests and special abilities, is of the first importance in the training of children and an important influence in their successful future vocations.

Having about this time found it necessary to study the German language sufficiently to give me a needed help in buying in Germany, I found that the mere study of a language other than one's own improved the student's use of his own language. For years on my trips to Montreal and points in Quebec I had noticed, too, that many French fellow citizens spoke English, in many

cases better than those of us whose mother tongue it was. It was perhaps natural that even when the children were small we determined that if possible before their eighteenth year each of our children should have the benefit of a year or so either in France or Switzerland, where they would live with those whose regular daily speech was French. We believed that it was part of our job as parents to discover and promote special interests or abilities, revealed by the children. Here, especially, was a field for co-operation between parents and teachers.

Sometimes, in fact frequently, the child's preference for a special activity was revealed by its rebellion against some other programme, but in most cases the home activities, school work or the pretence at play would give the clue. Many of these special interests could only be made note of, to be acted upon when the time seemed appropriate.

We all attended the small church of our youthful days and the children all got to know that of the sixty-six books of the Bible, thirty-nine were in the Old and twenty-seven in the New Testament. They attended Sunday school, and as soon as they could sit through it they attended church services. In those days the Bible was the Word of God, and true from cover to cover. Modern teachings which somewhat vary that formula came later on, but not before the whole family of young Burtons had received a pretty thorough schooling in the scriptures. They learned the Way of the Master. In due time each confessed his or her faith and was duly baptized by immersion, which we were always taught was the only form of baptism to which any reference had been made in Holy Writ. Neither was it prescribed therein or suggested that candidates for baptism should be other than had reached years of understanding or accountability.

One advantage we had was membership in a small church, where few if any families were in better economic position than we. There was no reason for us or others of the congregation to put on airs of superiority towards each other. On the contrary human needs as they developed within the congregation were well known to all. This I suppose accounts for the fact that our children have generally retained no foolish conceit of themselves. I rather think the Lord expects us to act towards one another each considering the other better than himself, or at least as good. Willingness to serve seems measurably well to have been instilled into our small brood. This makes work easy and many of life's burdens light.

In the case of the two girls, like almost every girl who grows up in a normal household, they were vocationally guided so far as household duties were concerned. At first in play they would go through motions of cleaning,

housekeeping, cooking. Gertie, our indefatigable house help, would often take a “busman’s holiday” on her days off, planning dolls’ clothes, washing, or some such activity with the two girls, and including sometimes their friends.

Boys until around thirteen are fortunately more amenable to mother’s plans and wishes than to father’s, and although they are thrilled with the daring escapades planned and talked of with father, these activities lose their attractiveness around meal time or bed time when the tender ministrations of mother are irresistible; so on the whole, day in and day out, a boy is his mother’s boy until his early teens. Fortunately for me I was at home most of the time after the boys reached their teens.

Our family affairs, under the busy direction of my wife, did not require much of father except to eat, sleep, and care for the children as opportunity offered. I was not expected to set up stove pipes, help hang the curtains or do anything about the house that usually falls to the lot of the man of the house. I was no mechanic, neither had I natural aptitude for such work nor good enough sight to do the necessary close up details. We consequently called in various trades to do what they were trained to do wherever the job was beyond female strength or ingenuity to accomplish.

The “year abroad” idea was often talked about before any move was taken in that direction. Edgar, our eldest son, attended the University Schools, as his two younger brothers did later. When he was about five years old, Edgar, having seen Broadus Farmer practise and perform on the violin, came timidly to his mother at Christmas time to enquire if she thought Santa Claus would bring him a “little really” violin. His father being in the toy business had brought him all kinds of toy violins; but here was a budding artist who wanted a “really” violin, and what more natural than that old St. Nick should produce. Christmas morning, beside the Christmas tree, was the smallest violin which Santa could secure through the agency of the father of the house, who had to buy it from the old R. S. Williams music firm. Broadus Farmer entered into the conspiracy to the extent of inspecting the new instrument, and late on Christmas Eve, when every little eye was well shut, Broadus tuned it up. When morning broke it was all ready for the eager young hands.

Eddie’s eyes went like a magnet to the “really” violin. Oblivious for hours to all other attractions, such as trains and toys, he grasped the new instrument, and in no time flat was marching up and down playing on the “E” string *Jesus Loves Me* and other old favourites. Although Edgar had to take lessons and practise on the piano until he was in his ninth year, he was

quite ready to do so, when after explanation, he was convinced that that course was necessary before he could study the violin. Even then at nine his young hands were so small that we had to send to Boston for a quarter size violin. He studied seriously until he was seventeen, when he met with a serious injury to the left hand which made it necessary to interrupt the studies of a promising concert violinist. When a child reaches the point where a certain course seems more important than any other, and it is a worthy one, parents and all concerned do well to give the young idea full play and every encouragement.

The Farmer household, which included the violin teacher, was an interesting one, and I have no doubt it was the means of inspiring many a young person who came within its influence. Professor Farmer was a faculty member of McMaster University, and at the time of which I write that academic institution was located in Toronto. Mrs. Farmer was, to children at least, an inspiring teacher of piano. In such an atmosphere Edgar took his first lessons in music, first heard and saw the son, Broadus Farmer, play the violin. When the latter became Edgar's instructor in the violin he suggested that the best time for him to practise was between seven and eight a.m. We were early risers, but only for the reason that the children had to go to school, and father to work. To get down to the living room every morning at seven was something else again. Living up then to his reputation for being on the job, which still governs many of his activities, the nine-year-old talked the matter over with his friend Gertie, who, he suspected, was up before anyone else. His first inquiry was what time she got up. The answer, a quarter to seven, suited Eddie very well. A deal was made that he should be awakened every morning at six forty-five, and for years as father and mother and others in the family were readying themselves for the new day, we would hear, at seven a.m. sharp, the "A" note of the piano followed by the tuning of the violin; and then without interruption and before breakfast or final school preparation until eight o'clock each morning we got the full effect of his violin practice.

Any one who has had the experience of the practising of scales knows the almost unbearable sounds produced, largely out of their context and endlessly repeated. The violin is one of the hardest to bear; but such was our pride in the forthcoming young artist, and such was the happiness of parents and Gertie because of the young student's industry and determination, that no word except of praise was ever spoken. These early musical studies took place while we lived on Manning Avenue. We had grown out of our first house, and upon the removal of the Western Hospital to Bathurst Street we bought the two houses on Manning Avenue immediately opposite our first

abode. These two houses were fine old stone-trimmed brick, with high ceilings, old-fashioned fireplaces, lots of room, lots of comfort, and lots of house work. I am often led to wonder if higher thoughts were not a natural result of high ceilings. These homes were well heated, but in intense cold weather we could always depend upon the comfort of the grate fires, around which the whole family gathered. These were times for children's stories, of home-made rhyming, but especially of Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verses*, which for the little ones had not much interest unless Dad could recite them as if they were his own.

Our move to Binscarth Road, Rosedale, was another evidence of growth in the numbers constituting the young Burton family, as well as the increase in size of each of the youngsters. Districts get old and decay, except the memory of them. But while most people are fussy about their surroundings, so far as I can recollect our young family did quite as well in old Manning Avenue as they did in other surroundings and other scenes.

A move by a family usually involves new school and church connections. So far as church was concerned it never occurred to us to leave Cecil Street. As we now had a car, it was part of the Sunday routine to keep up church and Sunday school associations. The old church just off Spadina has for about a quarter of a century been a Jewish synagogue, and at the time of the change our small congregation joined with Wychwood Church at the corner of Helena and Vaughan Road, which began as a mission from Cecil Street in the days before the street cars, sewers, or sidewalks served above Davenport Road. In the intervening years since the Wychwood Mission was begun, it had become an independent congregation. Local improvements for sewers, pavements and sidewalks had to be paid for by "local improvement" taxation, and the small Wychwood church found itself with a good sized lot, a small inferior building and too few people to carry the expenses, including a minister's support.

The two congregations of Disciples of Christ, Wychwood and Cecil Street, joined forces and established a new congregation, built the Hillcrest Church and proceeded to try to mix the two congregations into one working whole. Whether for worldly causes or lack of Christian charity substantial losses were experienced and the new congregation had a difficult time to get established and on its way. One or two disappointments resulted. First, the two congregations didn't meld together. Social inequalities, and differences in customary practices in the separate congregations were magnified in the new body with resulting disaffection. Secondly, the Hillcrest-Wychwood area was a growing area and great hopes were held that important additions

from the neighbourhood could be realized. As the district grew, so did the number and variety of churches increase, and those with former denominational connections adhered to their own churches, while those who were not of a mind to attend any church did not feel any special obligation to Hillcrest, although the pure little gothic structure added a distinct note of beauty on the corner.

Over the course of years everybody and nearly every congregation have had to adjust themselves to changes in their social and residential surroundings. It would be quite unfair, as it would be untrue, to say that Hillcrest did not draw adherents and members from the immediately surrounding community. It is quite doubtful if the work could have survived without the band of neighbourhood faithfuls. Church relationships in a family depend a great deal on the parents. After we moved to Rosedale and continued to attend Cecil Street, one of my children who had reached the age of asking awkward questions looked up into my face as we landed at Cecil Street for ten a.m. Sunday school and asked, "Dad, why do we come all the way down here to church?" My answer was somewhat vague. The district was doomed to change and there was little reason why against all influences we should continue in the old church. We are much in the same boat now at Hillcrest. A minority of the members live within easy walking distance of the church. The problem of carrying on to the second and third generations is a serious one, especially for a congregationally governed body like the Disciples.

So far as school life was concerned the situation was quite different. When the elder children were small they attended Clinton Street public school, and I remember one teacher in particular, Miss Watson, who in turn ministered to each of our young ones. Miss Watson has always held a special place in our hearts for her teaching and influence.

Now in North Rosedale there was no public school north of the bridge, so the two daughters were sent to a private school. Edgar was sent to the University Schools, which at that time had a junior school. The girls during the first war did not seem to progress in their work to suit their parents, and after much arranging they were enrolled in Oakwood Collegiate.

The headmaster of University Schools was Principal Crawford, succeeded by a very highly renowned educationist in the person of Dr. Althouse, the present Chief Superintendent of Education for the Province of Ontario. No one, I am sure, could wish for finer educational opportunity than U.T.S. afforded, and in due course each of my three sons, Edgar, Carl and Allan all benefitted by their experience there.



There was one Master, Tommy Porter, who in the junior school especially exerted a wide and beneficent influence. When one sees today the unfortunate actions of some teen age gangs, one could wish that all these boys could have had the experience of being “under Tommy Porter”.

It was usual for a student attaining junior matriculation to go on to the University and that is what Blanche did. In the case of Dorothy, she was more or less of a prodigy in mathematics and so went on to her honour matric. Meanwhile Edgar, working daily on his violin, had periodic recitals, culminating in a joint one in Massey Hall, where he performed on the violin while a girl performed on the piano. Later Edgar had a recital of his own at the old Margaret Eaton School on Terauley (now Bay) Street. He secured his junior matriculation standing before his sixteenth year.

The violin was constantly on his mind, and after his fourteenth year he formed and led a five piece school orchestra. This U.T.S. ensemble was much in demand for school dances. They also frequently played for girls' private school dances, on which occasions the boys usually had to have helpers to carry their instruments and their music, and even their music stands.

After Edgar secured his junior matriculation, as there was no hurry for him to go to the University in a general course, I went to see the headmaster at U.T.S. and suggested that Edgar take two years at his honour matric. course. Like so many boys of teen age, he had no idea of what he wished to do later on. I told him of my own early ambition to become a lawyer, and Edgar finally decided that he would as soon study law as anything else. We therefore tried to get him in line for a Political Science course and I had in mind too that he should specialize in languages.

The two years of his honour matric. were up early in June, when he was seventeen. He was about to try the exams. On the first of June, on a lovely Sunday evening, we were driving in from the country from the north west. As we were driving through the Junction, as West Toronto used to be called, we had a motor accident. Edgar was driving and doing a careful job when a drunken man in a borrowed car drove through a stop street and collided with us. Our car careened over, turning on its left side, pinning Edgar's left hand and breaking the bones leading to each finger. The episode ended Edgar's career as a violinist, though not his love for the violin. His ear for music, his sense of rhythm and ability to read musical scores, and his good bow arm were fortunately unimpaired.

Months were to elapse before his normal life could be resumed. He was in hospital from June to September, and his honour matric. exams were impossible. His musical career was finished. What were we to do? In midsummer I visited him in hospital and we had a long heart-to-heart talk. It would be a torture to the flesh to go back in the same work for a third year. The headmaster offered to apply for aegrotat standing, but as many young veterans, returning from active service in the first war, were being granted easements and even degrees, I felt that it would start Edgar off on the wrong foot to enter the University by means of favours. I therefore suggested to the lad that upon his release from hospital around the middle of September he should go to work as a junior in a law office, for one thing to find out whether he liked the atmosphere.

During this period it was unlikely that he would do work much above that of messenger or office boy, but the further plan was that after the first six months he should go over to the Old Country to study under tutors, both French and German. The plan appealed to him and now that he had a definite objective for the next year, his recovery was facilitated.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### MORE FAMILY

While still at U.T.S. Edgar had been pledged to a fraternity in expectation of going to the University the following year. There he met David Keyes, son of Professor Keyes, a brilliant scholar and now one of Canada's leading scientists.

David was to spend some months in Cambridge in the same College as that in which my brother had previously worked out his 1851 Exhibition scholarship. He was also about to be married to Miss Freese, who was a friend of Lady Eaton. Edgar was invited to the wedding. There he met a young fellow guest, a titled Englishman, librarian of one of the Colleges in Cambridge. When Sir Geoffrey learned that Edgar was going to England for work in languages, he invited my son to go up to Cambridge too, where in the atmosphere of university life Edgar was installed in "digs" in one of the Colleges and found himself in the hands of two tutors, one English and one German. He landed in England in January and was soon at work.

When they were away from home my wife and I always made a practice of writing to our children at least twice a week, Wednesdays and Sundays. It was understood and agreed that the absent child would do likewise. Around Easter, we received a letter from Edgar which informed us that by the time we received the letter he would be travelling through France with Mr. and Mrs. David Keyes. The Easter season finds English university students and faculty away for about three weeks or more.

Sir John Eaton had presented the newly wedded Keyes with a brand new Citroën car, which on their arrival at Cambridge was standing before their door awaiting them. So for the Easter holiday, Edgar acted as chauffeur to the young Keyes pair. They took the car over on the boat, drove from Calais to Paris, thence down the valley of the Loire and the Rhone to Nice, where they had to park the Citroën, as, before Mussolini, it wasn't possible to drive into Italy from France without putting up \$800 as a bond that they would drive the car out of Italy again. Not having the \$800, the young people proceeded by train to Milan, Florence, Rome and Naples, returning so as to visit alternative points. Back at Nice they again picked up their car and returned to Paris through the French Alps, visiting Grenoble and other scenes on their way. Soon after taking up his studies again in Cambridge

Edgar's French tutor suggested that he should go to France and live with a family who spoke only French.

Edgar was fortunate in being placed *en pension* in a cultured French family in Neuilly. This French family was from Nancy and had during the war been living for three years or more in a bomb proof cellar. Here in Paris he went for long walks almost daily with the small son of the family, with whom he practised what he knew of French, and from whom he learned most of the expressions in French necessary to daily activities. No further work was done on German. Soon after reaching Paris he began to drop into Simpson's Paris office, and as the months went by, he often acted as interpreter and writer for various Simpson buyers. From time to time one or another of our senior Simpson buyers suggested that he might do better in merchandising than in law, and occasionally a buyer on his return would suggest to me that he thought Ed would rather go to work than study law.

No word of this appeared in our exchange of letters. It was understood that on his return the following October he would enter the University in his first year, using his junior matric. as his qualification. It was ascertained that if he took a high enough standing in his exams, he might enter the honour course of Political Science for his second and final years. He registered at Varsity that fall. But with the young, "the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley." During his first year, most of his spare hours seemed to find him somewhere in Simpson's. Again, on occasion, a senior manager would suggest to me that Edgar would be happier at work. Around Christmas, Edgar screwed up his courage and suggested to me that he wanted to quit school and go to work. We had to make a deal. If he would finish his year, and take a good standing in his exams, he could go to work. I would write to my friend Gordon Pirie of Carson, Pirie, Scott & Company, Chicago, to see if they would give him a job. This was somewhat of a shock to Edgar. Why could he not work at Simpson's? For the very good reason that his father was General Manager. If he were to do well it would be said he was being advanced unduly or pushed along ahead of others of merit. If he did poorly, it would simply be the case of another boy above the average in economic circumstances who didn't think he needed to work to earn his way.

Though he remembered his homesickness when in the Old Country, nevertheless he agreed to go to Chicago. The day after Labour Day, we landed in that city. His first boarding house was kept by a Canadian, but from morning to night no one seemed around but coloured people. He had a small back room, so small that his trunk had to remain outside in the hall. He started at \$20.00 a week. It took \$13.00 for his board and lodging, \$7.00

for his I.C.R. railway fare from 72nd Street Station to Randolph Street and return. He had around \$300 in his savings account which he transferred to a bank in Chicago. I left him a few dollars to pay incidentals, but although he had nothing over from his pay after board, washing and transportation, he was busy at his work and kept his needs very close to his income.

Our eldest boy then, before his nineteenth year, was finally doing what he had found that he would like best to do. His inspiration was from Paris, where in his most impressionable years he had made contacts, however slight, with needlework trades, and had developed an interest in women's style merchandise. As soon as he was settled in Chicago he was happy. His responsibilities were elementary, handling and marking goods as received. He gave himself unreservedly to his work and in six months received further responsibility and more money. Within two years he was second assistant in a group of departments doing several millions a year.

When he left Carson's in Chicago, his departmental chief paid Edgar a nice tribute, saying that he was ready to assume authority, that he would use it, but never abuse it. His later development is too much a matter of current record for further reference, except perhaps to relate an incident which occurred in his twenty-fourth year. He had been given departmental responsibility in Simpson's women's ready-to-wear, and was doing well—I thought too well, too soon. As he wanted to marry, I suggested that he and his bride might like to spend a year in England and France in order to widen his general merchandise experience. A unique programme was prepared through Simpson's London office which enabled Edgar to visit each industrial zone of France and Great Britain. Had time permitted, his work might profitably have extended to other countries of Europe, but unexpected changes at home in the women's wearing apparel group made it necessary for him to return at the end of the first year abroad and take up further responsibilities, which, over the succeeding twenty years or more, have brought him to the Presidency of Simpson's. His work was interrupted during the last war by his service as Retail Administrator under the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, for which service he was awarded the C.B.E.

With regard to the other children, Blanche suffered a spell of ill health, necessitating her giving up her university course, to which, for various reasons, she was never very seriously committed. Like many a young woman of her years, she suffered from some complications of the affections; and hoping that she would recover her health and spirits, we sent her over to Paris where she lived for a year with the Lachaut family in Neuilly where Edgar had lived for several months previously. Blanche had a natural love

for French things, French people and French life, and made rapid progress in learning the language. She took a course in voice training, which was interrupted by a troublesome nose and throat affection.

Our third child, Dorothy, by this time had passed her honour matric. with first class honours, and in her twentieth year graduated with first class honours in Commerce and Finance. Both our daughters, after university work, took special courses in household affairs, Blanche in Guelph at the O.A.C., and Dorothy at the Technical School.

There was six years difference between Dorothy and our second son, Carl Rutherford, whose arrival on the scene was followed two years or so later by that of the youngest of our family, George Allan. The young boys were in their early childhood when the first world war ended. Born six years after the next oldest, and less than three years apart, Carl and Allan provided us with what was almost like a second family. They had much in common, especially in childhood's early activities. They played together, but it wasn't long before one could see that they were not cast in the same mould. Carl was like his father—in appearance so they say—in disposition, in many respects; Allan like his mother, calmer than Carl but just as mischievous. Carl was about six years old when the boys from the first world war began to return. St. Andrew's College, at that time situated close to the C.P.R. track in North Rosedale, was taken over as a military hospital. There were walking cases, men who needed massage and therapy, and others who could be wheeled out by their nurses around the neighbourhood. It was my wife's daily practice either to take or send the little boys out for exercise and fresh air. Carl was immediately attracted to these wounded soldiers. What was the matter with them? Why did this one have his head bandaged, only one eye showing, and this other his foot extended over the front end of the wheel chair, bound from toe to thigh? He talked of little else; his favourite games were of doctors and nurses; and from that time to this, although his fourteenth year was spent in school in Switzerland, there seems never to have entered his head any thought of another vocation than the practice of medicine.

His course at College was a long one—seven years—the honour course in arts and medicine. When he had secured his M.D., we encouraged him to marry the girl of his choice. Except for a distressing interruption to his hospital internship, due to ill health, he has steadily progressed in his chosen profession, interrupting his practice to study for L.R.C.P. (Can.) and later, M.R.C.P. (London), both of which degrees he secured.

Allan's most unsatisfactory experience was with the efforts made to have him study the piano. His teacher was well qualified, an English woman, an accomplished artist on the piano; but it was no use. When Allan was in his ninth year, his music teacher's father, an old gentleman, seventy-seven years of age, arrived on the scene. Mr. Freeman Smith was a man of short stature, around five feet two inches, who had retired and come to live in Canada with his daughter. He had spent thirty-five years as a teacher in Birmingham Municipal School of Art. The old gentleman had a snow white vandyke beard, a black silk skull cap, and a small collection of water colours, thumb nail etchings and architectural designs. Allan was introduced to him and was invited to see the old gentleman's art collection. After a few more futile efforts at the piano, Allan asked his music teacher if her father would give him lessons in drawing. That was the end of the piano. Coming home dancing with glee, he informed his mother that Mr. Smith was to give him lessons in drawing. His mother sobered him a bit by asking what these lessons would cost. Would cost? How could there be a charge for what was simply another form of fun? However, a deal was made and he brought home from his first drawing lesson a freehand drawing of a "Norman chevron" and a bill for five lessons, \$4.00.

The experience was too good to be hogged, so Allan sought out his bosom friend, young Clare Connor, who enthusiastically took up the idea. Thus in his ninth year we had discovered the all-possessing idea for which we had been on the watch. What matter if his academic work through school was characterized by a just above the average result? In his tenth year, he did many interesting studies showing that he had an unusual sense of perspective and unerring colour sense. His earliest water colour drawings are still in our proud possession.

When fourteen he, like his older brother Carl, went to Switzerland for a year's schooling at Lausanne. At his drawing teacher's suggestion, we arranged for him to continue at water colour drawing while abroad, and he came home with several interesting pieces of work. Another thing he had enjoyed was horseback riding. His riding master gave him a thorough course in equitation, and riding horses has been a source of enjoyment for him ever since.

On his return from Switzerland, Allan was not long in looking up his dear old friend Mr. Smith, who, now eighty-three years of age, was not able to continue regular drawing instruction. With an attachment to his old and physically declining teacher, which evidently was born of affection not only for the teacher but for his art, Allan still took an occasional lesson in

architectural decoration. The old gentleman had been an architect in his youth and had written a text book on Vertical Gothic.

Resuming his school course at the University Schools, he found the going difficult, having missed a year. He achieved his junior matriculation and went on to his honour matric. We had many a conversation together as to his future, and the programme he should follow. In Allan's case he had no serious change to face, as did his older brother Edgar when he finally decided he wished to go into the women's style business instead of becoming a lawyer.

Allan was quite firm in his purpose of pursuing the home furnishing and interior decoration business. Here was another and most important end of the retail business that included in its operations all the fickleness of that most inconstant jade, Fashion. However, difficulties to the young are of comparatively little account when once the mind is firmly made up. The challenge of the daily problems seems the more to whet the appetite. In his holidays, part time was spent in Simpson's in elementary work such as temporarily employed students can do. There was much speculation, very closely within the family, as to whether Allan would make the grade in his honour matric. I personally made light of the matter, holding the opinion that he would accomplish as much at work as he would at the University. At the same time I secretly hoped he'd make the grade, which he did.

As he still seemed to think I was not convinced he should enter a University course, Allan asked me point blank whether he should register. Carl had just graduated in Arts and still had three years to go in medicine. When I found Allan had a University calendar, I suggested he should consult Carl and if he could find a course he thought he would like, to go ahead and register. In those days I was extremely busy, both in business and in various community affairs, and was often away from home at meal time. A few days after my discussion with Allan, we were all seated at the dinner table when I thought to ask how about that University course. Allan answered, "I registered today in Architecture. I'm afraid the fees are rather high."

Architecture was the natural course for Allan to take, since his principal objective was a store responsibility in decoration and furnishings departments; and since he had so much to learn about merchandise in that division, it was considered problematical that he could afford the time for the whole course in architecture. At the end of the second year, having absorbed a surprising degree of training in design, it was considered advisable that he should leave and start to work. His professors, I fear, thought the considerations which resulted in his leaving were rather too



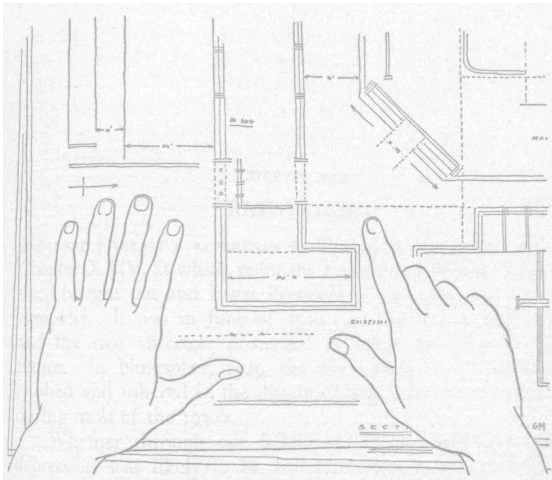
mercenary, but I hope the results of his later work will have proven a justification for his course.

During the years after he was in school in Switzerland he followed his pet avocation in the use of the pencil and the brush, but he also actively engaged in frequent riding exercise. His equitation lessons in Switzerland taught him how to sit on and handle a horse, and he was soon entered in riding and jumping contests as a junior member of Eglinton Hunt. In his nineteenth year he was invited to accept a commission in the Body Guards. I suggested that he was rather young, but Col. Rawlinson wanted him in the Regiment, which so far as horses were concerned, was near the end of its use of the noblest of animals. The Commanding Officer said he would be protected against undue temptation which would affect either his business duties or his habits, and Al went into the Regiment on the understanding that he would confine his drinks to non-alcoholic beverages until he was twenty-one.

The old Body Guards were merged with the Mississauga Horse under the designation Governor General's Horse Guards. Allan had the honour of designing their regimental crest. The regiment volunteered at the outbreak of the last world war, and was known as the 3rd Reconnaissance Regiment. Allan entered the war training as a Captain, trained and fought with his same squadron in England and in Italy. On the 24th of May, 1944, he was awarded the D.S.O. He came through the Italian fighting, had a siege in hospital in Italy but was able to join his old Regiment as second in command in Germany as the war ended. He has, since the war, kept up his interest in the G.G.H.G. and recently retired after a turn as C.O. of the Regiment. He was promoted Lt. Col. and made honorary A.D.C. to His Excellency and is now on the reserve list.

I should like to recall some of the circumstances of one of Allan's early boyhood friendships. Clare Connor, whose family lived near us in Rosedale, and Allan were bosom childhood friends and remained so. Clare took water colour drawing lessons with Allan. The two boys, when sixteen, were pallbearers together at the funeral of their old art teacher. All others at the funeral were grey heads. Clare volunteered for the air force, trained in Canada and served with distinction in the defence of Britain when she stood alone against the enemy. Awarded the D.F.C., he was lost in air battle over the English channel. He was a lovely carrot-headed youngster who in early childhood plotted daily with Allan deep, dark, and mysterious enterprises in Rosedale ravine. A more wholesome boyhood could scarcely be imagined.

Freeman Smith did more than teach drawing. He instilled gentlemanly qualities in two little boys.



## PART FIVE

## CHAPTER XXX

### RESISTANCE

My last narrative reference to Simpson's was at the end of Chapter XXIV, at which point the Fudger and Flavelle interests were bought out and I was President of the new, and present, company. It was in June of 1929 that this was accomplished and the new directors proceeded to shape our plans for the future. In November, 1929, the stock markets of the world crashed and ushered in the disastrous depression which endured during most of the 1930's.

Whether through our failure to perceive how severe the depression was likely to be and how long it was to last, or whether our enthusiasm for the tasks of ownership of the business imposed upon us imparted a headstrong courage to us, we proceeded to put into effect the plans for expansion and change which we had envisioned. While the whole financial and industrial fabric of Canada and the United States shook with the impact of the collapse of November, 1929, Simpson's went ahead with its programme. I imagine Simpson's record of capital expenditure during the 1930 depression was second to none in the commercial field in Canada.

We punished the business by having to build and rebuild during the increasingly difficult days of depression, but the responsibility had to be assumed; and the experience was worth the cost.

In the new role that fell to me as President of the company, I was responsible not only for Simpson's stores in Toronto and Montreal, but now for Simpson's Mail Order as well. When in 1925 Burnett, the General Manager of the Mail Order retired, his place was taken by David H. Gibson, who came to Simpson's after thirty-four years experience in the wholesale dry goods trade. He was one of the most amicable of men, and even then an old acquaintance and friend. I asked him to assume the vice-presidency with special responsibility for Simpson's merchandise, a position retained until his retirement in 1937. He was succeeded in his Mail Order responsibility by H. H. Bishop, now also retired, but who had been for years in charge of Simpson's store service departments. The Mail Order policy of paying charges to all destinations in Canada had naturally eliminated from the catalogue all goods except such as could be sent through the post office. Even then there was the constant temptation to take out quality in order to pay charges. These policies under Mr. Gibson and Mr. Bishop were

gradually changed, but it was some time after both these officers had retired that the catalogue offered all the needs of the customer on a really competitive basis.

The arrangements for producing and printing Simpson's catalogue were not in a satisfactory state. It was not so much a question of whether or not the printing job was good, as it was a question if we had the most advantageous arrangement so far as the length of time necessary between the selection of new goods and their appearance in the book in the hands of the customer. Reports showed that our buyers had to buy some weeks ahead of competitors in order to meet our schedule of catalogue production. This was only one, but of course one of the foremost problems confronting this division of the business.

Our printers were disinclined to modernize their equipment so as to meet our needs. Having come to the conclusion that a new arrangement for catalogue production was essential, we decided that in the interests of facility of preparation and production we should acquire a rotogravure plant, and that it should be established under our own roof. We therefore built an addition to our Mutual Street building, six storeys and basement, adding around 90,000 square feet of space and requiring an outlay of around \$600,000. We also made a new ten year contract with one of our suppliers which necessitated the purchase of plant totalling around \$500,000 which we undertook to absorb with interest in ten years. All this was at the onset of the depression.

Large mail order catalogues were published in Spring and Fall, with certain smaller seasonal editions in between. As our experience previous to 1929 had not been entirely happy, largely due to left-over merchandise which had to be disposed of at some loss, we determined to change the catalogue publication from twice a year to a new catalogue every sixty days. This plan had the advantage in a declining market of offering goods at new low prices, and, of course, the styles shown would also be of later vintage. Finally goods left from the preceding book would be saleable in our stores generally in the season for which they were intended.

There was one fly in the ointment. The catalogue customer didn't like it. Having been supplied twice each year with a catalogue complete with everything the forthcoming season would require, they didn't fall for our new plan. Though theoretically it gave them over each season, in bi-monthly instalments, everything they might need, plus newer styles and current lower prices, it was not what the customer wanted.

We did more business by the new programme, but not enough extra to pay the higher cost of a seasonal catalogue every two months, so we lost money—nearly a million the first year. But we learned in the process how to handle left-over stock so as to save around a million a year. Then, having learned these lessons, the most important being what customers most desired, we returned to the two large catalogues, one for Spring and one for Fall, and to our former additional catalogue programme, and then began patiently and successfully to build our present great catalogue with a separate French language edition published by a staff whose mother tongue is French.

One other considerable division of Simpson's business which presented a serious problem for the new company, was the Montreal store, until 1930 operated under the name of the former owner, John Murphy Company Limited. The Murphy store consisted of a five storey and basement building, built on an area one hundred and ten feet by one hundred and twenty feet, at the corner of St. Catherine and Metcalfe. John Murphy had built the store around 1900 and, except for minor changes, the premises and fittings were as they were originally provided. The fifty-five feet at the corner of Metcalfe was leased from the Brown Estate. The lease provided for what, over the years, proved to be a low rental, but also included a general provision which on the conclusion of the lease became very troublesome and expensive. The particular clause required the lessee on or before the expiration of the lease to restore the premises to their original condition. The fifty-five feet involved was half the old Murphy store, but there were no records to be found which outlined the work of restoration provided for in the lease. Efforts during the first war to buy the property or secure a perpetual lease were unavailing. Additional properties on St. Catherine Street to Mansfield had been purchased. We were prepared to build; but this awkward lease had to expire and be settled.

This, then, was the problem which faced us within the first year of our new company. We must settle the lease and build a new store over the property we owned to Mansfield Street; or, if the Brown property could be secured, over the whole block from Metcalfe to Mansfield, fronting on St. Catherine Street, and to the then public lane in the rear.

Prudence might have suggested, in view of the depression, that we should abandon Montreal, restore the Brown property, sell what remained and, as gracefully as might be, disappear. However, that alternative was never given serious consideration for several reasons. First, these properties were pledged under our Trust Deed to the holders of our bonds, and

secondly, even in the teeth of the oncoming depression, we felt it would have given the business a black eye. People might have been justified in thinking we were lacking confidence in Canada, in Montreal and in our own Simpson business. We therefore secured the corner Metcalfe property at some penalty, which at this date would not be considered great. We built our present beautiful Montreal store at a cost of around \$3,500,000. The action of the company evidently was generally approved because in September 1930 we sold further issues of the company's 6% bonds and 6½% preferred shares totalling \$2,500,000.

In the new premises we did considerably more business than in the old, but the increase in our expenses and carrying charges on the extended premises punished us a good deal until the business developed, as it did early in the last war, so as to justify all our earlier hopes of a profitable venture.

An unusually successful publicity enterprise in the early 1930's was a Simpson exhibit train scheduled through Western Canada points to show our western prairie customers the actual merchandise illustrated in our catalogues. The exhibit was also designed to permit our staff personally to come into contact with the people who were expected to buy and use our goods. Travel equipment during the depressed thirties being in excess of travel needs, we arranged with the Canadian Pacific Railway for the use of several dining cars which we transformed into merchandise display units.

All our expectations of interest in this train were more than realized. One could scarcely do such a stunt except when railway equipment was in excess of the need. The schedule of stops was carefully arranged and suitable proclamations sent out to each community.

The exhibit train had not travelled far before its existence became a matter of wide general interest. Pains were taken to see that local events in various towns were not interfered with. For instance, the train was scheduled to stop at Carnation, Alberta. To our dismay, we discovered the circus was due to arrive the same day. Our officers, thereupon, decided to send our exhibit train to Castor instead of Carnation. What was our surprise to find that the circus at Carnation had few attendants. The people of that town all came to Castor to see Simpson's exhibit.

During depressions a common practice in business is to reduce staffs. In the case of a manufacturer he has little choice if he cannot sell his product.

During the 1930 depression the need to reduce expenses in every way possible was everywhere pressing.

Simpson's, however, decided at any cost not to add to the unemployed by discharging any whose services were not urgently required.

It is quite probable that had we eliminated as many as could be spared from our services we might have saved enough to have maintained our dividends at the pre-depression rate. However, there was never any doubt in our minds that, while we did not need to replace any who voluntarily left our employment, we must not add to the unemployed.

The record of Simpson's in this respect is probably unique. When the depression began we had over six thousand seven hundred people regularly employed. By 1932 the number was six thousand two hundred, the difference being due to those whose circumstances changed and who decided voluntarily to quit. Some years after, when we were again paying dividends, a retired banker shareholder who had had to forego his dividends during the depression remarked to me that he had only one criticism of Simpson's: we used the employees better than we did shareholders. I enquired how many shares he held. He gave me the information, whereupon I suggested he had better sell them as we would likely always do more for our employees than for shareholders.

With a grin my shareholder friend said he thought he'd better keep them after all as our policy seemed to work out pretty well.

Depressions are hard on everybody with perhaps the exception of politicians. As if we were not having enough trouble on our hands at this stage of affairs, the parliament of Canada chose this particular moment in history to appoint a committee to enquire publicly into the question of prices. This was the famous Price Spreads enquiry and my experience of it constitutes one of the most amusing and at the same time most gratifying of my life.

The parliamentary committee is a well established feature of our legislative system. The Hon. H. H. Stevens who, before the 1930 election, had raised the question of scandal in the administration of Canada's Customs Department, won a sufficient measure of support to be a powerful influence in ousting the Liberal government by giving Mr. Bennett's Conservative party a substantial majority of the seats in parliament. Whatever was done about the Customs Department after Mr. Bennett and



Mr. Stevens achieved power I cannot recall, but very little was heard of the “scandals” after the election was won.

The depression proving too difficult of reversal by all of Mr. Bennett’s “blasting” methods, and the life of that parliament having passed its maturity, Mr. Stevens thought up a new scandal. He alleged that the practices of business were detrimental to the best interests of those who had to pay the prices marked on goods offered for sale, and detrimental to the employees of these businesses because they were paid too little.

Business now had to undergo the racking trial of a public enquiry wherein any member of the Committee could ask anything he wished, could at his own sweet will and without challenge cast reflections upon anyone who might be called to give evidence, or anyone or any firm whose affairs might be under discussion.

The protection of parliament was given to all members of the enquiring Committee so that those who, as the enquiry proceeded, thought they could gain publicity or notoriety, might if they felt so inclined cast scandalous imputations upon all and sundry.

One interesting feature of such a Committee’s transactions is that no matter who or whose affairs are under enquiry, the person affected has no right to appear either to deny the charges or submit evidence as to the alleged facts.

In this so-called Stevens’ Enquiry, the work of the Committee was not concluded by the time parliament adjourned, and its work was taken up by a Royal Commission, consisting of those Members of Parliament who had sat on the Committee. Now for the first time those involved could ask to be represented by counsel.

The record of this enquiry is open to all who care to peruse it. Partisan considerations manifestly marred the usefulness of the performance and its conclusions. The minority report of Mr. E. J. Young was, in my opinion, the useful one of the two reports. The conclusion of the majority report cast unnecessary and improper reflections on many of the companies whose businesses came under scrutiny. Simpson’s having nothing to hide and nothing to fear from facts as revealed by our accounts, was quick to respond to the Committee Chairman’s request that we should facilitate the work of audit and examination of our accounts. Mr. W. L. Gordon, then a young man, and one particularly well qualified for the job, was commissioned to report on Simpson’s accounts. When the request from the Minister came we gave immediate assurance of co-operation and set aside as many members of

our senior accounting staff as were necessary to enable the public auditor to complete his work as early as possible. In spite of our co-operation we got little consideration from the Committee and its chairman. No effort was spared to place as unfavourable a construction upon the evidence as possible.

Often in a public enquiry of this kind it is difficult to keep up a steady flow of submissions. As Simpson's accounts were ready early they were seized upon avidly because the Committee had a hard time to keep up public interest in what was manifestly a political fishing expedition. Therefore, when Mr. Gordon was called as the only witness on Simpson's affairs his testimony was often switched and twisted to make some things appear sinful even if there was no evidence of Satan having had any hand in the alleged sinning. Simpson's—the new Simpson's of 1929, with all its heavy problems of reconstruction and of the depression—was rather painfully injured by the very fact of having its affairs publicly examined into and by the occasional misconstruing of facts by some designing politician. The fact that such twisting of facts so as to suggest legal irregularity or misfeasance could not by the Committee's procedure be challenged and corrected at the moment of the unfair and unfavourable comment, gradually spread a mist of doubt upon the bona fides and moral character of those in the company. It is little wonder that Simpson's business was unfavourably affected. No wonder the stock market gave us apparently the worst of it when Simpson shares were up for consideration.

Here are two episodes which come to me as worthy of inclusion in this record. One is in the form of a letter from the late General Nash, one of the senior partners of Clarkson, Gordon, Dilworth, Guilfoyle and Nash. He wrote to me on June 11, 1934, in part as follows:

We felt very keenly the responsibility of presenting the evidence in connection with an organization so large and important as yours, particularly in an enquiry of this nature, and it is pleasing to know that you felt we had done it quite impartially and fairly.

I want to express to you personally and to your Associates my very sincere thanks for the ready co-operation and assistance in compiling the necessary information. Investigations of this nature are always trying to both parties, but in this instance we found it a very pleasant contact because of the cheerful spirit in which information was made available.

I would also like to say in all sincerity that I was much impressed with the calibre of your senior officials and the efficiency of your whole organization and can now quite appreciate your pride in it.

The other episode concerns some political developments, if I can call them such, following the conclusion of the Price Spreads enquiry and the report of the Royal Commission thereon.

As luck would have it I was on the inside of some vaudeville-like situations growing out of a feverish desire on the part of the chairman to keep stoking the fires of public interest to produce what he considered to be good political party heat.

Some time after the Committee's enquiry, I was on a visit to Lethbridge, as the guest of Dr. Jack Stewart, then M.P., on an occasion when a large party from the nearby Blackfoot Indian Reserve was being entertained. Dr. Stewart who had been chairman of the Conservative Study Club in parliament told me that Mr. Stevens had addressed the group extemporaneously on the subject of the Price Spreads report. The Minister's speech was stenographically reported. As Dr. Stewart put it, "It was practically certain that without some spectacular plank in the party platform, approximately seventy of the sitting Conservative members had little hope of being re-elected." The facts given to me by Dr. Stewart explained the action taken by Mr. Stevens, early in August 1934, which I found it difficult, otherwise, to understand the reason for.

The story was simply that many of the members of the Conservative Study Club thought the matter contained in Mr. Stevens' speech would make good campaign material, and at their suggestion Stevens caused several thousand copies of the several thousand word address to be made available for campaign purposes in the forthcoming 1935 general election. Stevens was a convincing speaker. Many thought him a master campaigner—enthusiastic, magnetic, and, in a sense, forceful. Had his statements been true or even accurate they would doubtless have been of powerful effect in a hard political fight.

He had the stenographic record of his extemporaneous talk printed and bound in the characteristic cover used by the Bureau of Statistics, changing the titles and cover printing as suited the document.

The statements made were in many respects, certainly insofar as they referred to Simpson's, not only inaccurate, and contrary to the sworn

testimony which the address was supposed to outline, but were highly libellous.

The speech having been made outside parliament, the speaker could be held responsible for his misstatements.

Had the speech been held back until the heat of the campaign, or had Stevens taken the trouble to have the statements in the speech checked with the Price Spreads records and report, he might have got away with it. However, he couldn't wait. He caused a number of copies to be handed to certain newspapers. Not all the newspapers. For instance, while a copy was sent to the *Toronto Globe*, and to the *The Star*, none was sent to the *Telegram* or the *Mail and Empire*. There were certain other anomalies in this distribution to the press.

Now, however, the speech was out for publication. What were the newspapers to do? If they printed libellous matter, they would be liable for damages. Certain of the papers took some pains to confirm the accuracy of the allegations made in the speech. The news despatch from Ottawa releasing the text of Stevens' speech was dated Friday, August 3, 1934. It was the day upon which a luncheon was given at the Royal York Hotel by Mr. A. E. Ames in honour of Mr. S. J. Moore, who had attained his seventy-fifth birthday. About one hundred and twenty guests were seated at tables placed around the walls of the Ball Room. Mr. Moore, having achieved fame and wealth in industrial and financial circles, was acclaimed by an unusually distinguished group of his fellow citizens and friends, most of whom were well past life's meridian. The post-prandial orations got out of hand, and instead of ending around two-thirty as expected, the luncheon lasted through until three-fifteen. I was one of the first to get away, as I had arranged to spend the Civic Holiday weekend with my family in Muskoka. As I left the Ball Room, Val Mason, formerly an assistant manager of the hotel, and later the highly competent manager of the Toronto Hunt Club, stopped me and said, "The newspapers are looking for you. I think it is something important." As one scarcely ever needs to chase after newspaper men if they want you, I passed on without feeling much concern.

I hurried back to my office where I found my old friend, Major Claude Pascoe of *The Star*, awaiting my arrival.

He informed me that his paper had received a despatch from Ottawa, that the item purported to be a speech by the Hon. H. H. Stevens, in which he named Simpson's as having been found guilty of various improprieties. Before publishing, *The Star* wanted to know if the statements made in the

address were correct. Pascoe informed me that Eaton's was also mentioned in similar fashion, that Mr. Atkinson had sent Vernon Knowles to see Eaton's, while Claude had the responsibility of interviewing me. I was overdue to leave for Muskoka, and I had no intention of letting anything in the way of a news despatch interfere with my weekend. I told Pascoe that if he would come in my car up to my house, where I had to collect some personal things, I would read the despatch on the way up and arrange with another of our officers to go into details, after which if *The Star* wanted to take the responsibility for publishing the despatch they were welcome to do so.

On the way, I read the despatch. The statements were quite evidently contrary to the facts, and in the main, contrary to the sworn testimony on the Parliamentary record. I say in the main because some of his statements were not even referred to in the record. Simpson's comptroller had the record of the sworn testimony referred to, and I arranged for my newspaper friend to go over the records of the parliamentary Committee to confirm the facts. While the reporter sat beside me I dictated a telegram to the Prime Minister, Mr. R. B. Bennett, as follows:

Newspapers bring to our attention alleged publication issuing from the Bureau of Statistics under authority of the Honourable H. H. Stevens, Minister of Trade and Commerce stop In the publication allegations are made reflecting upon the Simpson Company stop These statements are not in accordance with the sworn testimony given before the Price Spreads and Mass Buying Committee, nor are they in accordance with the facts stop The publication of these statements is a contumacious libel, calculated seriously to damage our company stop We request you to suspend issue and publication of these libellous statements, pending investigation, and we can only say respectfully, that if these statements are published, we shall immediately take suitable legal action for criminal and deliberate libel stop May we request your personal intervention to prevent a scandalous misrepresentation and damage, not only to the company and its shareholders, but to the business interests of Canada as a whole.

Then before leaving for Windermere I asked another of our officers to arrange an appointment for me with Mr. Bennett as early as possible. Telegraph office facilities at Windermere are not very extensive, but arrangements were made to receive any despatches which might be

addressed to me. Around eight p.m. I received two telegrams. One was from the Prime Minister as follows:

Have made every reasonable effort to prevent publication document mentioned.

The other was from the Simpson officer who had arranged for me to see Mr. Bennett. The appointment was for eleven a.m. Wednesday August 8, 1934.

Meanwhile Canadian newspapers, with one or two exceptions, refrained from publishing the libellous matter. The *New York Times* of August 5, 1934, published a column or more in which among references to other concerns and other people, it included the following reference to Sir Joseph Flavelle, and to Simpson's:

He accused Sir Joseph Flavelle and his associates of "milking" the Robert Simpson Company of Toronto of \$20,000,000 and of selling to its employees \$2,000,000 of stock "not worth a snap of the fingers and never to be worth a snap".

Mr. Bennett's telegram and the news that he would see me the following Wednesday, enabled me to spend a happy and carefree holiday with my family on Florence Island, Muskoka, where I had spent several weeks on holiday each summer for many years.

Promptly at eleven o'clock on Wednesday the eighth of August, I presented myself at the Prime Minister's office in Ottawa and was almost immediately shown in to the august presence. The Hon. R. B. Bennett was his usual ebullient self. He was one of those men who may quite properly be said to have an aspect.

His brisk manner immediately impressed me. Before assuming the proffered seat, I suggested as meekly as I might—at least meek for me—that I presumed he would expect me to justify the urgency of my telegraphic message to him. He did. As I was being seated the Prime Minister demanded to know where I got the word "contumacious" which was included in my wire. I replied that I was rather unaccustomed to its use. In fact I believed I had not seen or heard the word myself since it was used by Canon Gould in 1917. In that war year the Canon spoke to the Toronto Canadian Club in the programme of war propaganda on behalf of the British government. Canon Gould in referring to conditions in the Near East described one of the races of that area in a rather perfervid sentence, including the word "contumacious" and ending the sentence with the word "liar". Having

explained this to Mr. Bennett I concluded by saying his Minister was so far as I knew the first contumacious liar I had known of since 1917. Mr. Bennett dryly remarked, "It's a good word."

There were six statements in Stevens' speech which referred specifically to Simpson's. Not one of them was true.

I had in my hand a memorandum in duplicate which set out in order the statements which Mr. Stevens had made, and for each statement the reference in the Price Spreads Committee's records to the sworn testimony bearing on the point. Under my left hand, interleaved for ready reference, I had the sworn testimony presented to the Committee.

I asked Mr. Bennett's permission to read the memorandum and suggested, if that was agreeable, that he might wish to have a copy of the memorandum I was to read. He quickly agreed and I handed him the duplicate copy. As I read one by one the statements Mr. Stevens made, of which I was complaining, I followed each statement with the facts as shown in the Price Spreads official records.

Mr. Bennett was one of the most perspicacious of men. One did not need to belabour a point, he got each point like a flash. In fact, as I read some of the items in the official evidence his hawk-like eye ran down the memorandum. Stopping me after the first two or three references he pounced upon statement No. 5.

In this statement Mr. Stevens had alleged "that Simpson's had increased their mark-up from 30% to 45% to take care of additional fixed charges on increased capitalization."

I replied, "Mr. Bennett, that statement could scarcely be wider from the fact." Simpson's not only had not increased their profit mark-up but had in fact reduced it.

The sworn testimony on these points was the evidence by the government's own auditor, Mr. Gordon.

Mr. Bennett at that particular time was by no means indifferent to any situation which might enable him to "contain" his Minister, Mr. Stevens, who had openly made a bid for ascendancy even to the leadership of the Conservative party.

After I finished my presentation, Mr. Bennett let down his hair, a difficult trick for so bald headed a person. He frankly asked me what I thought he should do. I suggested the legal adviser to the Commission might adopt a more impartial attitude, at least he should be fair. So far as dealing

with one of his own Ministers was concerned I thought he could be trusted to see that justice was done. He revealed the fact that my urgent telegram of the previous Friday had caught him entirely by surprise. It was the first he knew of his subordinate's action. He finally found the stored up stock of copies of the famous extemporaneous Stevens' speech in the vault of the Department of Trade and Commerce. He confessed that he and his faithful secretary, Miriam, had remained on duty until two-thirty Sunday morning, by which hour he had personally spoken to the newspapers across Canada asking that the Stevens speech be withheld. What a man!

I left him around three-thirty p.m. There had been no lunch for either of us. He had in a most friendly and intimate manner quizzed me regarding my early years, my years with Mr. Fudger, my travels to the West and to Europe, and then all about Simpson's, a business for which, in spite of the enquiry, he had a deep and wholesome respect. I didn't get my lunch; but I didn't miss it.

Words of mine are hardly necessary to describe the political happenings of the days that followed. Mr. Stevens was on the train west when Mr. Bennett received my telegram. However, the fact that the Minister almost entirely forgot to mention the Price Spreads report when in Winnipeg, Vancouver and other Western points indicated, at least to me, that he must have heard some very plain words from the Prime Minister. Just a few days were to elapse before Mr. Bennett left for Britain, whether to do some more blasting into the British market, or to prepare the path for his elevation to his peerage, I never could learn. On his return, however, the breach was widened between him and his Minister of Trade and Commerce. Mr. H. H. Stevens took the cold plunge and formed his new party, which was soon doomed to extinction.

I suppose Stevens' course simply confirmed what I believe is a well-known fact, that no one can kick over the party traces in Canada and politically ever again be heard from.



## CHAPTER XXXI

### EUROPE

The nineteen thirties, for all their tribulations and such diversions as the Stevens incident, were not without their compensations as far as I was concerned. As President of the company I was free to gather around me a staff of men who shared my views with regard to the principles and practices of department store and mail order operation. The hardships, problems and difficulties of that strenuous era merely served to bring to the fore the best type of men, so that by the time the depression was ending and a second world war threatening, Simpson's had an organization that was a sheer joy to direct. I did not relax, by any means, the stiff routine of my daily business life, which had by then taken fairly solid possession of me. But I did allow myself two trips to Britain and Europe, in 1937 and 1939.

In the spring of 1937, my wife and other members of my family had gone over for the coronation. Owing to some item of business I had to miss the coronation but I arrived in London a week later, in time to be in on some of the celebrations following the great event.

The Rt. Hon. Vincent and Mrs. Massey were indefatigable in their activities to further the plans of all Canadian visitors. Not only were we feted time and again in their own commodious home, but Mr. Massey, through Canada House, saw to it that names of visitors were placed on such official lists as would bring them the honour of participating in a number of highly important and interesting social events, some of which were under Royal Command or given Their Majesties' patronage.

The two London events which stand out in my memory were the King's Levee at St. James' Palace (men only) and a great garden party at Buckingham Palace.

The King's Levee was the first function of its kind that I had attended. My problem was what should I wear. What to do is made simple enough if one follows the printed instructions before arriving, and the verbal admonitions after.

We had the Buckingham Palace garden party too. So knowing that I needn't bother my head about what the ladies would wear, I sought out my tailor in Savile Row and exposed my problem. I had intended indulging myself in a new morning coat and suit, and while certain tailoring

preliminaries, familiar to most men and pleasing to few, were proceeding, my tailor called the Chamberlain at the Palace and got the information on what a gentleman should wear to be presented to His Majesty.

For the Levee there was a proper uniform: black satin cutaway coat with flashing steel buttons, even on the long tails; white satin vest, knee breeches with steel decorations; silk stockings, black pumps with steel buckles. The garden party garb was less trouble, simply a black or oxford grey morning coat, grey vest, striped pants. The tailor sagely and very properly advised me to visit the firm of Moss Bros. on King Street, for the Levee uniform. The Bros. is pronounced as in Moss; so to Moss Bross I repaired.

When the day of the garden party came we were quickly, and with a minimum of formality, ushered into and through the Palace, and into the beautiful park grounds which on this particular occasion were bathed in precious sunshine. The Royal Family, His Majesty with the Queen and the two Princesses, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and the Duke and Duchess of Kent, all seemed to try to see and converse with as many as possible. One thing I could not help noticing, all the male guests were, like myself, garbed in the conventional dark morning coat with striped pants; but their Royal Highnesses, King George and his two brothers, shone out with their light-weight grey morning coats, with matching pants. Truly the tailors of London are wonderfully informed what *not* to make for their customers, if the occasion upon which the garments are to be worn have been by Royal Command prescribed.

My visit to Moss Bros. to secure the correct outfit for the King's Levee was my next concern. I had already known of this celebrated concern, having bought from them some saddlery and other stable equipment for which they were noted. For untold years this firm was in the position to secure various equipment from British estates being broken up. Evidently it was their practice, upon news of an estate being disposed of, to make offers for such part of the assets as might come within their operations. It was common knowledge that they had in their stock every conceivable costume and paraphernalia which might be called for on any occasion. They not only hired out formal civilian clothing for various social functions, but they were said to be able to furnish correct military and naval uniforms for the services of all modern powers.

When I asked if I might rent the proper uniform for the King's Levee I was shown into a cubicle. The expert attendant sized me up and asked me to remove my coat and vest. He then disappeared for a few minutes, and on his return he brought in a tin case bearing the name and armorial bearing of

some eighteenth century knight. He opened the case, tried on the white satin vest and black silk long-tailed coat, almost immediately indicating his satisfaction with the fitting. I then was told to take off my outer clothing, including shoes and socks. I was instructed to pull on long cotton stockings, reaching above the knee, then a pair of black silk hose over the cotton pair. The knee breeches were next, after which I redressed and took the paraphernalia home with me.

At the proper time I dressed and took a taxi to St. James' Palace. Guards and attendants, all fitted out in mediaeval fashion, handed me on through the various rooms and apartments of the Palace. We were directed along, four abreast, through two or three huge rooms, all lined with precious works of art and old armour. We proceeded through room after room, soon three abreast, then two abreast, until we reached the large salon immediately outside the Presence Chamber of His Majesty.

There being hundreds of prominent Canadians in the procession, one would see here and there as we passed on well known and familiar faces. Now, finally, we were in single file and we passed through a small corner door and found ourselves in His Majesty's presence. Our names were called in the order of our entering, and as each name was called the individual would step out, at a respectful distance before His Majesty, bow and, retreating a step or two, continue out of the Presence Chamber by a door in an opposite corner.

So far my outfit had stood the test. I had a cocked hat, which I carried in my one hand, the other holding the grip of an ornamental or ceremonial sword. Just as I retreated and started to move away, what was my consternation as I felt one of my shoes slipping off. The pumps with the steel buckles to match my buttons were a couple of sizes too large. I fortunately was able to shuffle out, not I fear without my face being red.

After the show was over, by request of my wife and daughter, I had to go to be photographed. After that ordeal I went to my daughter's house where we were staying. Just as I got into the taxi my ornamental breeches split behind. The hole I found was about fifteen inches long, but as the show was over the rip didn't really matter.

The principal reason for my trip in 1937 to England and the Continent, was to discuss with trade authorities some features of Canada's new 1936 trade agreements. Canada had made a number of trade agreements over the previous years, but the new trade agreements with Commonwealth countries

and Canada included, in some features, trade with the United States. Now there was a new trade agreement with Hitler's Germany.

I had always been rather astonished, when Hitler's anti-Semitic campaign affected the trade between the United States and Germany, and Germany lost in the early thirties a very large customer for their consumers goods exports, that Britain did not step in and try to replace Germany in American trade. It was a perfectly natural consequence of Hitler's policies that the Jewish trade connections and merchants in the United States and Jewish consumers in the United States, should, without much ceremony, throw overboard German trade amounting to hundreds of millions a year. Not only was this trade of long standing, but it had developed in spite of the forbidding American tariff with its arbitrary appraisals and value for duty-revisions.

I visited the British Minister first. I told the Hon. Mr. Hudson, then Minister for Overseas Trade, that I was impelled to seek a conference with him out of various considerations which arose from the Canadian-British-American trade agreement, as well as the Canadian-German trade agreement. There was always the expectation, on the signing of a new trade agreement, that something wonderful in the way of trade development would result. I felt that if Britain was to continue to import tens of thousands of tons of food and other commodities from Canada, a means should be found of increasing the tonnage of goods being shipped from Great Britain to Canada on the return of those ships. Up to the time of the new agreement of 1936 this return freight had amounted to a few hundred tons instead of thousands of tons.

I could testify that so far as Simpson's trade, which was not inconsiderable, was concerned, none of the trade agreements, including this last one, had done very much to increase our buying of consumers goods in Great Britain. There was a great deal of sentiment in Canada which might be called pro-British so far as trade was concerned, but the goods produced continued to be of limited suitability. Although the framers of the trade agreement expected large additions to the business, the failure to add substantially to lines suitable to the Canadian consumer meant that such a prospect was a forlorn hope.

I was able to say to the Minister that at that moment there was a most favourable sentiment in the United States to the purchase of British made goods, that American shops which showed British articles with a sign "British Made" found customers cleaning them out of the British lines before suitable arrangements could be made for fresh supplies. Though

sentiment was in favour of goods made in Britain, yet enterprise in Great Britain was deficient, and the means were not provided to enable the willing American buyer to replace quickly enough British goods sold nor to experiment more widely with British imports.

I informed Mr. Hudson that I had an appointment with the Exchange Division officer in Berlin, and if he were interested I should like to give him some views I held regarding the opportunity which Britain had of replacing Germany as the source for the United States buyer of consumers goods aggregating hundreds of millions of dollars.

As was perhaps natural, the Overseas Trade Department treated the United States as a foreign market, whereas trade with Canada was grouped under the designation of Dominions trade.

I confess that it was rather hard for me to understand why some agency in Great Britain should not have taken the pains to secure samples of the individual articles which constituted the large part of the German exports to the United States closed off by the Hitler policies. Having secured these samples, strenuous efforts should have been made to capture the trade. I pointed out that even Canada was at a disadvantage so far as buying German goods was concerned. There was in Canada some of the same sentiment as seemed to control the trade to the United States; but in addition, when the United States buyer ceased to enter the German market, German manufacturers themselves almost immediately seemed to lose the power to produce goods as suitable for the Canadian market as had been produced when they were at the same time turning out in larger quantity for the American demand.

I pressed for every effort by the British manufacturer to capture what business could be had in the American market. True there were many discouraging features. One could not pick up an article made in England, ship it to the United States, without regard to United States tariff provisions. Somebody must take the United States tariff provision, compare it with the specifications of the article proposed to be shipped into the United States, and if necessary redesign, repack or modify it in such a way as would not bring it head on in collision with these drastic, arbitrary, protective provisions of the American tariff. This sort of administration of the U.S.A. tariff had been from time immemorial as a "closed door" to enterprise.

I pointed out to the Minister that the British manufacturer should not too easily come to the conclusion that the American tariff was prohibitive or that the trading conditions were too difficult. They had before them the examples

of years of German trading which was done in such a manner as to meet the difficult conditions of the American tariff and still produce an article which Americans could buy.

At this point Mr. Hudson, who seemed very deeply interested in the problem, wanted to send for the Director of Dominions Trade, upon which I remarked that while I was quite happy to discuss the matter with anybody he suggested, I was discussing with him an item of American trade rather than Canadian trade; but it had this incidence that if he were to move in a direction that would enable the British producer to capture a perceptible part of the American import business he would automatically find himself producing more and more goods suitable for Canada. Canadian demand was greatly influenced by our U.S. neighbour, whereas the same was not true and did not affect trading in Australia, South Africa, India, etc. Therefore I questioned the advisability of pushing this question off to the department that dealt with Dominions trade.

For thirty years or more previous to this conversation I had been in constant contact with American buyers who bought goods in Germany and in England. I pointed out, for instance, that most of the American buyers were of continental extraction, and not of British extraction. Their first thought, in going to Europe, was not to go to London. The inclination of the American buyer was to go to Paris, and to have his continental and British goods paid for through Paris. Likewise instructions regarding orders and correspondence was with their Paris offices rather than through a point in Britain.

The American buyer did not like the British climate, did not like the British food, and did like the continental climate and food. Being only human beings who usually go along the lines of least resistance, they found it easier to find the manufacturer and buy on the continent of Europe than attempt to find the British manufacturer and buy in Great Britain.

At the time of my visit there were a number of serious efforts made to bring out to New York collections of samples of various British goods, but in the preparation of these collections of samples the selection was not made from the standpoint of what the American customer would buy, but rather from the standpoint of what the British manufacturer would like to sell. In the United States market that simply does not work.

I illustrated my point by saying that I should like to make him an offer, which he might not wish to accept, but which was made to illustrate how I felt the American market should be approached.

I proposed that I should send say seven or eight of our most experienced buyers to England with one thought in mind and one job to do, namely to select from among the British manufacturers the particular articles that in their judgment the American consumer would buy and use. Assuming that it were possible to get a collection of such suitable British wares together in the proper season, then I should like to propose that the Grand Central Palace in New York should be engaged sufficiently before the first of January so that the British samples for the succeeding year could be put on show. The whole month of December might be used in setting up the display suitable to the American eye. I suggested that we might lend him half a dozen or so display men who could set this exhibition up in a form that would please the American buyer. The articles were all to be priced in dollars and cents at laid down cost in New York.

I suggested that the British government then should engage a King's warehouse in New York to which would be sent quantities of goods equivalent to the initial purchases that were made by the American buyers.

After the first of January each year there is a trek to New York of thousands upon thousands of American buyers in all lines for the new season.

One could not hope for a more sympathetic hearing than was accorded to me, and I got the impression that the Minister was not only extremely interested but was vitally concerned that something along the lines suggested should be worked out.

Shortly afterwards, the Honourable Mr. Hudson became the Minister of Agriculture, and I suppose whatever record there may be of our conversation in 1937 may be found in the secure grave of government files.

Trade agreements are just so much waste of good flesh and blood, and of the time of useful men whose efforts are brought to naught if the needed enterprise in selling is not exercised.

What would be the effect of such an increased export trade to the United States upon Canada's buying in Britain? As the business developed and the increase resulted in larger assortments of new goods being created suitable to the U.S. trade, the Canadian buyer would most certainly be interested in the new lines and thereby resultant trade with Canada would similarly increase.

This then brings into focus another point. It is easy enough for trade agreements to prescribe that all goods coming from Great Britain must go

direct from a British port to a Canadian port. If we really want to do more business in Great Britain what does it matter whether it comes through a King's warehouse in New York, if by so doing there are many times more trade?



## CHAPTER XXXII

### NAZIS

More practical considerations than attending levees and communicating my thoughts to British ministers were on my agenda for Europe. I wanted above all to see Germany. By 1937 the Nazis were in full control of that country. What interested me, with my still vivid recollections of my youthful buying visits to that country, was how anything or anybody could interrupt the immense and energetic flow of manufactured goods of every conceivable category that I had been so impressed by twenty-five years earlier. Yet interrupted it was. And I was still a buyer.

Before going to Germany, however, I travelled to Paris for a day or two, and to Milan. I knew that few of our buyers had bothered to visit Italy that year.

Our agent in Italy was a very fine Italian named Scalia, who had spent a number of years in England in various lines of international trade. He had gathered himself a fair competence, and in his early sixties had decided to set himself up in a commission business in Milan. He proved to be, not only for us, but for a number of others, a very useful commission agent.

I was not buying goods, but I wanted to see what goods were available. I asked Mr. Scalia to make for me appointments the following day, say at twenty minute intervals from morning till night. I visited, first, about a dozen manufacturers of women's handbags, where I found there were some extraordinary samples of good-looking handbags, although some of the manufacturers, as is usually the case, made goods suitable for other markets than ours. Whenever I felt there were useful lines I had samples sent out. The transaction in each case took only a few minutes.

I finally found myself in the sample room of a manufacturer of rugs. The manufacturer explained to me that Mr. Bennett's tariff, which Mr. King had, out of great consideration to the Canadian rug manufacturers, left on the books exactly as it had been, made it prohibitive to import the rugs. There was some easement of duties from the friendly country of Belgium and therefore we could bring in a Belgian product without the penalizing rates of duty, but the rates on these Italian goods, seemed, as the Milan manufacturer pointed out, practically prohibitive.

For instance, he showed me a cotton rug of oriental pattern, approximately 6' × 4'6". The price at the then exchange rate for Italian lire was \$2.01 per rug. The duty into Canada on the same rug was \$3.79.

I was attracted to the beauty of this cheap rug. I pictured many a Canadian home being made gay by such a rug at the bedside. Had the duty been, say, at the very high rate of 50% ad valorem, the rug could still have been sold at a substantial profit, for under \$5.00. But the duty was nearly 250%. This was fantastic, and was so considered by the manufacturer.

However, I had them send out half a dozen samples to see if we could, by some means, get some easement of the situation.

The Belgian rug of the same size was made of jute. It was a good-looking rug when new, but if one came in from outdoors with wet shoes and stepped on the jute rug, the pile would immediately flatten down and fail to go back into place when dry, whereas the cotton rug could be washed and would not show any evidence of early wear.

It was not a very satisfactory prospect to buy these rugs, but in any case we ordered 10,000 of them and sold them all at a reasonable rate of profit, even on top of the unreasonable laid down cost.

On this same trip I brought out a sample, the first I had ever seen, of a mixture of cotton and casein yarn. The Italians were among the first to produce a yarn from cows' milk that was practically the equivalent of wool, but this material was already in a much higher priced bracket, and there was not the same opportunity of demonstrating what could be done in the matter of increasing, to any great extent, our business in that quarter.

Mr. Scalia, I think, rather rued the day that he returned to his native land. It was quite evident that the Italian people of substance and mental capacity were finding Mussolini's government levies for taxation a burden upon them, and the exactions which were applied on their various business transactions, gradually absorbed not only their current earnings but a large part of their capital as well.

Il Duce's dreams of solving all his problems by imperial expansion in the deserts of Africa did not measure up, nor return in dividends the standard of living necessary to keep the poorer people from sinking further into squalor. At the same time his policies sucked the life blood of those of good mind and body who generally formed the body of citizens who had some material wealth, and the productive capacity necessary to produce for the whole people a bearable standard of living.

There was no doubt that when Mussolini took over, the morale of the Italian people was broken and rapidly disintegrating. One noticed it in their trains and railway stations and equipment, running late and always dirty. The communistic revolutionary spirit possessed most of the people and had made a specially great appeal to the industrial workers.

However, the advent of Mussolini changed the whole scene almost over night, from undisciplined mobs bent on destruction to enthusiastic and disciplined followers of Il Duce. Trains ran on time, were clean, and the buoyant and happy Italian spirit burst forth. Willing hands and smiling faces were evidence of the transformation. How sad it was that there was very little, except the banner and slogan, as a foundation for the Italian people's hope of regeneration.

People on the march in multitudes are either an inspiring sight, if under discipline and fired with patriotic purpose, or they can become the crude and bloody instrument of the agitator, as in the days of the anti-papist riots in England, and the days of the French and Russian revolutions.

By 1937, when I was in Milan, the sands of Mussolini's glory were rapidly running out, or it might be more proper to say, that they were blown in the various shapeless forms in the desert in the north of Africa.

I left Milan by air.

The Italian planes of those days were not as large as the German planes, and those of some other nations, but they were particularly beautiful in design, were smooth in all their exterior finish, and were enamelled in a cream shade, and the black lettering of the Italian line, with the name of the airship, gave a good impression.

The ground crew and the operating crew of the Italian planes were young men who evidently had first class training under fine discipline.

I could not help noticing, as we changed from the Italian to the German plane in Vienna, and again to the Belgian plane when we left Berlin, and finally to the British plane, that the young human material of all these countries who fly the skyways is cast in the same mould.

It is one of the great anomalies of life that young people of every country in their late teens and early twenties are called upon for services, often at one another's throats when even the stones of the earth might well cry out in protest that human affairs have to reach such low dispositions.

We stopped at Vienna and Prague and finally landed at the Tempelhof airport in Berlin.

At Tempelhof part of the ground crew and service consisted of quite young girls, dressed in a sailor-like uniform, with a cap with ribbons something like a Glengarry. These “matrosen-maedchen” by their quick movements and the extraordinary service they performed, made a sparkling addition to the ordinary air services.

Social life and shopping activities had been considerably changed since the days before the war when I regularly visited Germany.

The mile long thoroughfare, Unterdenlinden, could not lose much of its importance because at the upper end was the Royal Palace, and en route along it one passed the Wilhelmstrasse government administrative buildings and two or three of the principal hotels. The Friedrichstrasse and the Leipzigerstrasse, on which were situated some of the most popular cafés, restaurants and shops, however, had somewhat declined in importance.

The department stores in Europe have been more or less characterized by cheap and tawdry assortments of merchandise, which brought into strong contrast the specialty stores such as Rudolph Hertzog’s general retail dry goods establishment in Breitestrasse, and the famous cutlery establishment of Heinkel. The trade mark of the Heinkel establishment was twins, indicated by a rather modern angular stamping on the steel of twins that might very well have been Siamese. In this cutlery store one could secure almost every conceivable sort of tool or cutlery, or hardware specialty, and be fairly well assured that the article purchased would be of good temper and quality.

In the Hertzog dry goods store, before the first war, there were beautiful assortments of cottons and linens for table and bedroom use, and almost every sort of lace and embroidery and textiles, and such things as blouses and lingerie, which in the old days of ample billowing whitewear were generally in profuse assortment.

By 1937 this old shopping and social scene was to a large extent replaced by the Kurfuerstendamm, the wide modern thoroughfare in the neighbourhood of the great Berlin Zoo.

At the time of my visit the offerings of merchandise, even in the best specialty shops, were inferior and the assortments meagre.

My accommodation in Berlin was at the Eden Hotel, which is right opposite the Berlin Zoo. I was made aware of this in the middle of the first night by a tremendous roar from some of the larger specimens of wild animals.

Our German agents were the firm of Loewenstein & Hecht whose establishment was on the Inselstrasse. The Inselstrasse formed one bank of the canal connected with the River Spree which traverses a large area of the city of Berlin.

If I was correctly informed, one of the principal reasons for the destructive inflationary movements affecting the German mark was the export of capital by the Germans to England and the United States. They, of course, had a severe measure of inflation due to the scarcity of consumer goods, but when Canada, in the second war, introduced the price and wage control law, one of the great platform arguments of the administration was that unless such severe measures were taken Canada would find itself in the same position as Germany was after the first war. Had it not been for the fact that we have had a very strict control of the monetary transactions between Canada and other parts of the world through the Foreign Exchange Control Board, such a claim might reasonably have been advanced; but to my mind the impassioned appeals for support for our price and wage controls in the last war were something like the threats in the nursery rhyme which, after describing all sorts of childish misdemeanours, concludes with the words, "The Gobble-uns'll get you, ef you don't watch out."

Trading with the continent after the first war was no simple affair.

Many of the old agents, whose commission firms were well established and financially responsible, had through the destructive processes of the war gone out of business.

In the post-first-war days there were no banking arrangements. In the thirties when, under Hitler, Schacht imposed a "guns instead of butter" economy on the German people, the banks, under the new system were functioning, but under very strict controls.

Foreigners were encouraged to travel in Germany and could buy their transportation and hotel accommodation at about half price.

Any goods which Germany could make from its own resources and which could be used as exports to enable it to support urgent military requirements, were sold to the foreign customer at varying rates for the German mark. These rates varied from twenty cents for a mark-up to forty cents, which was the official exchange rate, and the value which affected every one who lived within the German border.

This Schacht system was a most ingenious one. It had the effect of bonusing exports from Germany of the things they wanted to sell, of

bonusing those who came from outside Germany to spend money within Germany either for pleasure or for business, while the German resident paid for what he used, the full forty cents to the mark. This was a nice bit of hidden taxation, which seems to have been adopted in various degrees by various countries since 1930. It is certainly true in England and the United States where huge subsidies are paid on one commodity or article after another at the cost of a hidden tax on the rest of the population. It is ingenious; but no more ingenious than iniquitous.

Our agents in Berlin, who were new owners after the first war, had the same name as a very reliable old firm which had been trading in Germany for perhaps two or three generations.

I was given to understand that the various German governments after the war refused the right to establish new firms for commission agency business, with the result that those who had the knowledge and the capital simply bought up some of the older reliable firms and proceeded to do business.

The head of the firm which served as our agents was of Jewish origin. From his rough guttural speech I thought at first he must be from Schwabia, but he was born in one of the most eastern areas of Germany. He and his staff were not only well informed but most capable agents for the various lines of exports from Germany.

A good deal of his capital was either in England or New York, and when 1,000 marks became of less value than a similar sized piece of wallpaper, he was able to buy the building, which at that time I would estimate may have cost \$100,000 for the equivalent of about \$6,000. The same situation put him in possession of a beautiful chalet in the Gruenwald which was furnished with every comfort and which housed curios of not easily estimated value.

The evening of my arrival in Berlin in 1937 our agent came to dinner with me in the Eden Hotel. Like every one who was either foreign or of Semitic origin we were closely watched.

My appointment to discuss the new German-Canadian trade agreement was around noon, the day following a visit to Berlin by Canada's former Prime Minister, the Right Honourable W. L. Mackenzie King, who on that occasion was reported to have had a talk with Hitler.

It was the first time in my experience that I had entered one of the Wilhelm Street government buildings, and so that there should be no

misunderstanding of my trading situation I took Mr. Krojanker, our German agent with me, together with the manager of our London office.

Mr. Krojanker, I found later, had by this time established residence in London, England, and secured his British citizenship. It was a good thing he had done so, because had it not been for these credentials he might never have been heard from after this day, as shall presently be seen.

The Exchange Division of the Reichsbank was in a government building and we passed through a number of corridors before being shown to Dr. Landwehr's office. Over each arch through which we passed was printed in German script in black paint on a light background, "Hier gibt's blos ein Gruss—Heil Hitler."

Our appointment was for the noon hour. As we had half an hour to wait we saw a good many people passing backwards and forwards through the building.

The Hitler salute which was supposed to be used by every one passing through these various archways became so perfunctory that it was little more than a slight motion of the hand and a scarcely audible expression.

In the waiting room where we sat as people passed in and out, they would greet one another with "Heil Hitler."

I could not help noticing an older man, who evidently was far from physically well, who as he responded to the greetings of those who came and went, scarcely moved his hands or his lips.

I finally was shown into the office of the chief of the Exchange Division. Dr. Landwehr greeted me in German, and I returned his greeting in the same language. He suggested that for the purposes of our business we should probably talk German rather than English, as he claimed his English was not adequate to sustain conversation. Not having spoken in German for twenty-five years, and then only very imperfectly, I was in a like case. We came to an agreement that I should speak to him in English, which he understood perfectly, and as it was easier for him to express himself in German, he would answer in German.

For two hours we conversed, with only an occasional word of assistance from our attendant.

Dr. Landwehr had at his elbow a very smart young Nazi who could speak English perfectly and who made a stenographic report of every word that was spoken.

We were experiencing great difficulty in getting delivery of the German goods we were buying. I made it very clear that there was very little use of our coming to Germany to buy goods, even under a new trade agreement, unless we could be assured that when we bought goods we would receive them.

Simpson's record as a purchaser in Germany was a consistently good one over many years. Dr. Landwehr immediately assured me that any goods they offered us would be delivered as specified, and that any questions that arose he should be glad to be advised of by cable.

There were things such as cutlery from Solingen which could not be secured due to the fact that all factories were working on munitions of war.

There was one further question which I felt would have to be elucidated, and that was the question of the value of the German mark in Canadian dollars for duty purposes. The official exchange rate being 40c to the mark, and most of the goods we were buying in Germany being sold to us at say 25c to the mark, the question was how could we get the Canadian Customs Department to recognize the real value of the purchases we made and collect duties accordingly.

Dr. Landwehr informed me that Dr. Otto Wagner would arrive in Montreal within sixty days to prosecute trade matters and to make necessary arrangements. On his arrival in Canada he would immediately ask to see me and discuss any matters which should be dealt with.

Promptly on the date mentioned by Dr. Landwehr I had a message from Dr. Wagner, who asked for an interview in Toronto. A couple of days later he presented himself.

There was soon no doubt that his business in Canada had to do with more matters than values for duty purposes and the facilitation of trade under the Canadian-German trade agreement. I supposed he could be numbered among the hundreds and thousands who served Hitler as agents in various countries of the world.

The Canadian customs, however, decided arbitrarily to value German imports at 32c to the mark, which meant generally speaking that Canadians paid an extra 25% duty on such goods as came from Germany after that date.

To give proper credit to Dr. Landwehr I will say that our trade in 1937 and 1938 was carried out with precision and that we had no cause to complain of lack of attention to our orders.



In the evening following my interview at the Reichsbank, I was entertained by Mr. Krojanker in his beautiful chateau in the Gruenwald. Like most German houses of any size, it was surrounded by elaborate Spanish wrought-iron grille work. This has always been a common sight in Europe. We, who expose our doors and windows to the street and to any who may pass by, can scarcely realize the constant fear of the European of the thieves who abound, ready to break in and steal.

Mr. Krojanker's house, so far as its exterior was concerned, was apparently in a state of neglect. The several acres of garden, in which were growing some really fine examples of rare trees, and the garden beds, had all grown up with weeds and grass, largely to advertise to the passers-by that the house was uninhabited.

By 1937 any person of Semitic origin had to take precautions, going in and out by stealth. In Mr. Krojanker's case, he lived most of the time in England, and visited his home in Berlin very seldom.

His wife was a very delightful Viennese woman of many accomplishments. She was of Aryan stock. With only the servants in the house, she lived a rather lonesome and dismal existence.

There were eighteen at the dinner table. It was most elaborately set up, and everything that the palate could wish for was served.

Frau Krojanker could speak only a little English. I was placed at her right. On the other side I found a very beautiful young lady who could speak no English at all. My efforts to recall what German I knew created some amusement because of my manifest errors, but on the whole the people were very pleased indeed that I could use their language to some extent, and made a serious effort to do so.

The next day I flew from Tempelhof to Brussels. My friend, Mr. Krojanker, was to return to London by train. En route he had some rather terrifying experiences. A few days later I met Mr. Krojanker in London and he told me of these experiences.

There had been a huge world trade gathering in Berlin and accommodations were not easy to get. Moreover, military preparations were so general in that year that it was not uncommon for whole passenger trains to be pre-empted for military personnel, especially if any large number of officers had to be moved.

He had secured a seat in a first class coupé, and had no sooner settled himself, in the heat, with a number of bags which he had to look after

himself, in very crowded quarters, when he found his seat had to be given up to a German officer. The train conductor, or Schnaffner, simply came through the train and told various people, especially if they were of Semitic appearance, to make way for the officers.

By the time the train had reached Kassel, the large divisional point, Mr. Krojanker had been settled back into his seat, and had refreshed himself with a bottle of cologne purchased from the steward from the dining car who passed through the train offering various comforts to the stifled passengers. The waiter had demanded an exorbitant price for the bottle of cologne. Mr. Krojanker, having no smaller bill than fifty marks, asked him for change. The steward answered that he could not give him change then but would come back with it. He did not do so. At Kassel, Mr. Krojanker, like all the passengers, went out of the train to walk up and down the platform. Looking into the dining car, Mr. Krojanker caught sight of the steward who had kept his change. He went into the dining car and said, "Where is my change?" The waiter said, "What do you mean, my change?" Mr. Krojanker spoke roughly to the waiter who then said, "Wait just a minute." He went out and got two policemen who took Mr. Krojanker off the train, with his baggage, and detained him for twenty-four hours for no other reason than that he was of Semitic origin. He fortunately had his documents of British citizenship in his pocket. One can scarcely conceive the terror in which these poor Jewish citizens of Germany constantly lived.

On this trip to Europe, I encountered the famous H. Gordon Selfridge. The spectacular rise of Selfridge as a young executive in the great Marshall Field store in Chicago had occurred before my time as a department store man, though his name was a legend in the trade. Early in the 1900's, he had picked up stakes and gone to London, there to open a great department store on American lines, in complete contrast to the staid and traditional institutions of the kind in Britain.

His proposal created a mild sensation in a big city where sensations in business are mostly lost in the shuffle of the myriads of shops and the variety of different usages which prevail.

Mr. Selfridge evidently soon found discretion was the better part of valour as he, at a very early date, conformed to London practices in business. The Selfridge establishment in Oxford Street was at the centre of things. He built a many fluted, many columned structure, which even at this date, and long years since Mr. Selfridge guided its destinies, remains a

beautiful example of architecture. First, however, he found he had to conform to what we, in these days, consider the archaic interior design, which at the date of construction of the Selfridge store required fire walls to be built from floor to ceiling every few bays.

In these days of sprinklered premises and many modern arrangements for protection against fire, the English idea restricts the vista within a large store, as well as confining arrangements for favourable displays of merchandise.

Mr. Selfridge was a human dynamo and prided himself on his early and late attention to business. It was not long, however, before he was possessed of the long weekend habit. He set himself the difficult task of breaking into London society, and in his fifties owned his own private plane in which he often flew to Paris, where the attractions had more to do with social and high life than with the simple activities of prosaic business.

As his business grew he added largely to the original shop, was proud of his gaily uniformed female lift attendants, his porters and his doormen.

Mr. Selfridge made a point of becoming acquainted with and entertaining notable people in all walks of life.

On the occasion of the 1937 coronation his whole shop front was covered with a most elaborate arrangement of draped materials with fringe and tassels, the whole of which was said to have cost upwards of £50,000.

I was his guest for lunch in his office in the store. My fellow guest at this lunch was the brilliant American newspaper woman, Mrs. Ogden Reid, publisher of the New York *Herald Tribune*. We both had the honour of placing our signatures on a large plate glass window in the Selfridge sanctum sanctorum. Our signatures were alongside or among hundreds of others of men and women of distinction in public life in the various professions, of Lords and Ladies of the Realm and, of course, of those who like Mrs. Reid and myself were found among the vocations of trade.

As in all human affairs pride and position often precede a fall. In an unpropitious moment a German bomb later smashed the precious autographed window. The passing of the great Selfridge was not long postponed.

During my 1937 visit I was invited by Selfridge to dinner at the Dorchester Hotel, where over one hundred guests were seated at a great oval table. H. G. Wells, George Arliss, Lord Plender and a great list of London's leaders in society and finance were present.

Selfridge had a great flair for showmanship, and for personal and business publicity. By the time of which I write he had passed the zenith of his strength. When I visited him for the last time in 1939, while he still prided himself on being the first at business in the morning and the last to leave in the evening, I could not help making a mental note that despite his practice of personal devotion to business early and late he had long since passed the days when it would make any difference whether he came to business at all or not. It was a portent for me. I decided to set myself the task of passing on, as soon as possible, to younger shoulders the burdens and activities of the day's work. The decisions I made then have been the most satisfying of any of life's experiences.

In these last two trips I made to London, in the Selfridge store the Chairman was mostly interested in showing the visitors his aquarium on the roof, where he had a most attractive display of tropical and other rare examples of the finny tribes.

When I visited the big stores in West Kensington, the roof of Derry and Tom's had been prepared as a botanical garden with small fountains and running rivulets of water, making a most attractive outdoor area for afternoon teas. Those of us who think of England as being cold and forbidding, and largely a place where one must constantly carry an umbrella, find this rather unusual somewhat tropical setting a matter for surprise.

While I was visiting the Derry and Tom roof a large fleet of more than forty British bombers flew across France and Belgium and returned to their base in Great Britain. They were a forbidding sight, roaring through the air, apparently not too far above the level of the existing city roof. They not only flew across the channel and over France and Belgium but returned in about the same channel of travel so that while visiting with the officials of those stores I saw them both leave for the continent and return. This was the first of its kind, and the demonstration was an effort to show within what period of time a certain amount of bombing destruction could be accomplished on enemy areas. It was another portent.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### WAR

Never having presumed to meddle with politics beyond the point where they impinged upon my own work, I do not presume now to air any views in the great troubled field of world affairs and the politics therein involved. The nearest I have ever come to being involved in politics was when Mackenzie King offered me the portfolio of Trade and Commerce in 1926. I knew Mr. King very well, and frequently saw him either on his visits to Toronto or on my visits to Ottawa. In 1926, when he was a guest at my home for dinner, we were discussing some aspects of the responsibility of government to business and vice versa. Mr. King expressed his regret that men familiar with the ramifications of big and active businesses did not make themselves available to public life and to government. He asked me, then, if I would consider becoming his Minister of Trade and Commerce. I was not as greatly impressed by the suggestion as I might have been ten years later in my life. I replied that I had only a few months previously undertaken serious responsibilities in the Simpson store, and had been very generously treated by the company in consideration thereof, and that I could not assume any outside interests that would interfere with those responsibilities.

The attitude I adopted there has been fairly characteristic of my attitude in most situations throughout my life. I said long ago that I would put all my eggs in one basket, and watch that basket! I do not say that the great rumblings and portents in Europe did not interest or concern me. They dismayed me. But I had my chore to do. It kept me busy.

In 1939, I made another trip to Britain, and hoped to visit Germany and other parts of Europe. In London, I asked some of the British officials whom I had met two years before if they would advise me to go to Germany. Their answer—it was July—was a decisive no.

The evidences of immediate conflict were plain to see. I was planning to return home the first week of August, and I did not alter the arrangement.

Momentous decisions had to be made. On my arrival home I telephoned our two outside directors, Mr. J. H. Gundy and Mr. A. J. Mitchell, and told them my decision: to build 80,000 square feet on our Toronto Mail Order building, 75,000 square feet on our Halifax plant, which increased its size by 66 $\frac{2}{3}$ %, and to rent in Regina a number of buildings, at that time free, for

warehouse use. These expenditures cost \$2,000,000 and the decision to buy all available staple merchandise required an expenditure of over \$4,000,000. There never was any hesitation on the part of our directors to proceed with this development, all of which took place before the government requirements came into the picture.

The additions to our Toronto buildings were planned under our own roof. Mr. Corley, our architect, drew the specifications and by October 15, 1939, six weeks after the war was declared, we let a contract for the new addition. The more others slowed their plans the easier it became for us to complete ours. Our Halifax addition was begun in January 1940 and finished in the following May. Our Regina plans were mostly equipment requirements, and these we proceeded with, without delay. Meanwhile all buyers were posted to secure and take delivery of such staple lines as were available.

Mr. Gordon M. Graham, late of our London Office, was given charge of our catalogue production, and the general management of our Mail Order. The whole job was a signal success. While many of the plans enabled us to launch a greater and more competitive catalogue, it also enabled our retail stores to secure allotments of goods at old prices, which situation began the development of the great growth Simpson's had shown by 1945.

When I began this account of my life, I had no intention of bringing it up to the contemporary scene. I shall leave it to others to view the war and the present state of the world in the retrospect I have availed myself of in coming this far with my own experiences.

I was privileged to serve as Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the National War Services Funds Advisory Board throughout the war, functioning with apparent satisfaction under four successive federal ministers. My son Edgar served as head of the retail section of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board. Other Simpson executives were freely drafted for service in many departments of the government, and Simpson men and women were given every encouragement to enlist.

War proved, as always, the bountiful jade she had been to Canada ever since my grandfather's time. Simpson's, in common with all other retail businesses large and small, thrived upon the immensely quickened and increased buying power of the public. The deferred dividends of the previous ten lean years of depression were all paid up to our faithful and patient shareholders. Other elements of indebtedness were disposed of, and the basic financial structure of the company which we had been at such

pains to build slowly and solidly, was greatly reinforced by the prosperity we shared with our ever-increasing customers.

When all this was done, I figured it was time I handed over to the younger generation. In 1948, I had myself elevated to the rank and station of Chairman of the Board and have been trying ever since to let go of things. It is not easy to do.

Simpson's business, consisting of five department stores, the largest and best known of which is in Toronto, and a coast-to-coast mail order business including scores of order offices and many trading centres, continues to expand and to serve an increasing proportion of Canada's population.

So long as the department store can demonstrate its ability to serve the needs of the people to a greater extent than others and so long as its management can justify its claim to greater and greater family support, its place in the scheme of distribution of consumers' needs seems assured. While the large store must do some things with little or no return, in season and out of season, it is likely to earn a fair return on its large volume, but profit must be a by-product of work well done and of service that earns its inevitable reward.

Since my first conclusion, in the early years of the century, that the day of the wholesaler was finished, I have seen the rapid developments in food distribution which have affected in a marked way the old-fashioned grocery and meat shop and have brought about the rapid multiplication of super-markets.

There would seem to be some question as to whether or not the rule of the survival of the fittest in these food super-markets will not sooner or later apply. Meanwhile there are various chains of specialty shops whose future may be bound up in the soundness or otherwise of their merchandise presentation and service.

Simpson's Mail Order has had a prodigious record of increase, all due to firm policies of presenting better assortments of goods at competitive prices, and to progressive, imaginative management.

After our establishment of a mail order house in Vancouver we bought a substantial property at Burnaby, between the cities of Vancouver and New Westminster.

General Wood, Chairman of Sears Roebuck of Chicago, having a favourable opinion of Simpson's business, approached our President, Mr.

Edgar G. Burton, with a view to combining our effort in Canada so far as catalogue, order office and agency business was concerned.

An arrangement has just been completed which, when approved by Simpson's shareholders, will cause a new company to be formed, half owned by Simpsons, Limited and half by Sears Roebuck & Company. It is a transaction by which Simpson's Mail Order division, order offices, and agencies will, after January 8, 1953, be operated by Simpsons-Sears Limited, the name by which the new company will be known.

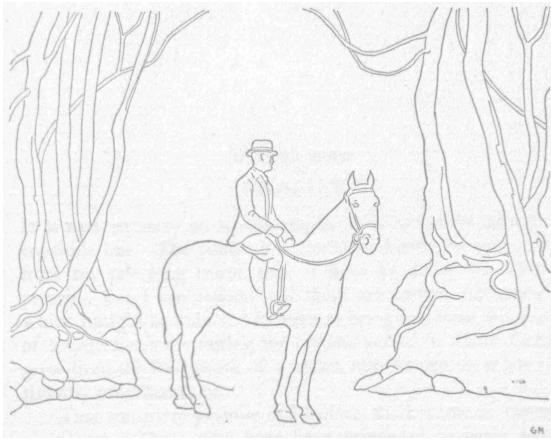
No sale of Simpsons, Limited common shares is involved in the transaction with Sears and the five great department stores in Toronto, Montreal, London, Regina and Halifax will operate as at present. Many favourable joint buying and service arrangements will be available to those stores under the new agreement.

The new company, Simpsons-Sears Limited, will, in addition to the country-wide catalogue business of Simpson's, operate retail stores in other Canadian cities. They will embrace the latest methods of display and service. Each Simpsons-Sears store will be established in new locations with ample parking facilities. Hundreds of important lines will be cheaper and better than ever before. The business will be almost entirely in the hands of Canadians.

A large new volume of business will accrue to Canadian manufacturers.

There are many Simpson men whose names have not even appeared in this book but whose services have been invaluable, nay, essential to my story. But it would have been hopeless to have attempted to assess and name them all. To them I make my grateful bow, with the cheerful suggestion that they go and write a book themselves.





## PART SIX

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### PROSPECT

It is easy to begin an autobiography; it is extremely difficult to conclude one. The reader has doubtless drawn his own moral from my tale long before this. I have no desire whatever to preach. But I can reflect: and there are certain reflections in which I might be indulged in order to bring to a close this record of a Canadian's life during the historic period in which Canada grew from the framework of a nation into the nation it has consistently promised to be.

That consistent promise is, I believe, the keynote of my own experience. Those who have been privileged to share in the fulfilment of the promise are the Canadian men and women who, from early Ontario settlers and prairie farmer pioneers to industrialists, have maintained an optimistic spirit in every situation that confronted them. It is said that success in any field depends upon work plus the breaks plus a certain degree of horse sense. Add an optimistic spirit to this combination, and you have the perfect definition.

Who could fail to be optimistic during the past seventy years of Canada's expansion? That question is easy to ask in retrospect. It is the prospect that baffles. Well, while I am fully aware that optimism is not expected of men of my years, and while on every hand our heavy-duty thinkers are daily uttering dire predictions for the future, I must assert my complete confidence in the future prospects of Canada and, if I may so presume, of the world in general. I take this view not with any regard to economics or politics, but entirely upon my experience of human nature. This, I should remind you, is a merchant speaking. The merchant, it seems to me, is the key man of our civilization. He not only satisfies the needs of the community; he gauges them. From among all that the makers of things offer, he selects. To the makers of things, he conveys, hour by hour, day by day, out of his experience, the requirements, the modifications, the improvements that the public demands. In the opposite direction, he employs his arts and talents to convey to the public the better and the newer, as it is developed by the makers of things. He is, in fact, the middle man, and he has his fingers on the public pulse as perhaps no other servant of the community has.

My impression, after all these years of contact with the consumer, is that the same kind of people who were prospering above the average in my

youth are the people who are prospering above the average now. They are the people who like work, who enjoy their work, who find what they are doing to be tirelessly interesting, who are smart enough to recognize opportunity when it offers, and have the sense to seize it. Such people have always existed, and, I believe, will continue to exist and continue to keep things humming. For, rooted deep in human nature is the need and the desire that things be kept humming for the general good. The mass of mankind is always the consumer, whether of boots and shoes or of political and social systems. Boots and shoes, I might point out, have been much more consistent in their basic design and style than political and social systems. The fact that we are faced now with apparently drastic proposals of change in political and social programmes is liable to blind us to the equally important fact of the drastic changes in those fields which have occurred in, say, the past seventy years. I pin my faith on the consumer. As a merchant I can attest the fact that the public does not, for very long, continue to buy what it does not want or what it cannot afford. This holds true of more things than merchandise.

The way I feel is that there will always be a sufficient number of people among us with the desire and energy to do those things which have to be done. And my impression is that there are more of both than there were fifty years ago.

Apart from the enormous strides of technology and science during my lifetime, the change that has most attracted my interest has been the increase in the authority and control of government over the lives and affairs of men.

My father was a Reformer in politics. Most of us have forgotten that there ever was a Reform Party in Canada. It served a most important purpose in a time no less revolutionary than the present. That purpose was the abolition of privilege and the establishment of responsible government. Remembering my father and his fellow Reformers among the farmers and villagers of Ontario County I have often regretted the passing of the Reform Party.

As was natural in the pioneer days settlements were thin, communications between one man and another difficult and hazardous. The consequence was almost unchallenged central government power and administration.

The Reform Party grew rapidly. It pressed for local self government in matters of local concern. The Tory Party was for things as they were. One of my earliest memories is of my farmer grandfather as "pathmaster". It could

hardly be described as a public office and yet working without pay he was responsible for the maintenance of a certain section of the roadway. Good and faithful pathmasters were much respected among their neighbours, and were given ready co-operation. The Brock road running north via Brougham was always a good well-gravelled road, as was the sixth concession of Pickering, both the result of faithful pathmasters, good Reformers who did their road duty but were always influential to keep local matters in local hands.

Without committing itself to any rigid programme or reform, the Reformers offered a political haven for large numbers of people with varying ideas of reform but with the conviction that reform is a necessity from year to year and from decade to decade. I am told that there never was a period of political confusion comparable to that of the heyday of the Reform party, between 1830 and 1860, due doubtless to the great diversity of opinion among reformers as to what reform was. That is as it should be. The reforms came.

The greatest reform was the reduction of the sense of power and authority which government had enjoyed in the days of privilege and the Family Compact. Government should have an uneasy sense of the will of the people. When it loses that, government becomes out of hand and almost unconsciously sets up its ivory tower administration. During the two wars, our government had to be afforded powers and authority to equal those of the autocratic forces which opposed us. In the first war, income tax and the war measures acts were introduced. They were not gotten rid of even during the depression but continued in one form or another until World War II came along. In the second war, a whole edifice of controls of private business was conceived and patched together, along with excess profits taxes and irretrievable increases in other forms of taxation. I resisted the controls consistently and paid the taxes cheerfully. The most amusing situation arose when I, as President of Simpson's, though serving as chairman of the War Services Funds Advisory Board, found myself battling price controls while my son Edgar was serving as retail administrator of them under the Wartime Prices and Trade Board. We both got the C.B.E. for our services; Edgar executed the will of the government upon the business I directed, and I came out of it as firmly convinced of the basic error of price controls as ever.

One factor of the price control administration that aroused me on principle was the fact that instead of the responsible Minister informing the public of the reasons for the price control policy being adopted, it fell to the lot of the administrator of the law to justify it. So far as administering a

“bad” law was concerned a good job was done, even if any advantage was to be offset by the disadvantage of the law’s requirements.

If any justification was necessary for my position in respect to wage and price controls during the war, the fact is that the government avoided similar action in our present defence effort involving large expenditures which cannot help interfering with our normal economic progress.

It is, I suppose, a question for the up-coming generation to face. It is one of those things to which I have referred as likely to be solved by those with the energy and the will to tackle it.

But it seems to me that those with the energy and the will to undertake anything in the way of business enterprise are being most unfairly handicapped. It appears to be almost impossible for young people to amass any capital with which to embark upon the adventures of creative business for which they are otherwise equipped. Taxation systematically removes the surplus which, in my young manhood, afforded me the means of advancing myself. And regulations, many of them intangible, greatly complicate the exercise of that initiative we must expect of younger men for the health of business and industry. Recollecting my own start in life, I do not envy the young men of today the shackles they wear.

In advancing certain measures for social improvements governments sometimes initiate policies and put them into effect without giving a reasonable opportunity for those in business vitally affected to be heard. For instance, unemployment insurance enactments provide for the same exactions from employee and employer without much regard for whose money is collected for whose support. Some of the industries paying the highest wages are not able continuously during the year to employ their workers. On account of the seasonal or spasmodic character of their operation their employees spend some weeks in each year on the benefits of unemployment insurance.

Businesses like Simpson’s, which have a good record of continuity of employment and whose workers receive remuneration in keeping with such steady work, are penalized by having to provide unemployment insurance from the employer and from the employee at the same rate as those industries whose employment is seasonal.

Simpson employees, like others similarly employed, have little opportunity to benefit by the thousands of dollars they have provided.

In suggesting that steady jobholders be not penalized in this respect, I am merely expressing my life-long partiality for steady jobholders, and at the same time offering an example of that arbitrary spirit that exerts itself when government swells with authority.

The reference to penalizing reminds me of another odd little characteristic of the times through which we are passing. In recent years, whenever new controls or taxes are imposed, there is, to my ears, a definite note of satisfaction or even of glee in the official announcement, the suggestion being that the new taxation or the new control is in the nature of a penalty on those who will be affected by it. Of all the changes in my lifetime, perhaps this is the strangest, that those who do well should be penalized for their accomplishment.

I mention these random instances of my dissatisfaction with things as they are for fear the reader might suppose me to be an entirely satisfied man. I could fill a book with my complaints. Instead, I have filled a book with the account of one man's life in a time of turmoil, growth, disaster and victory, and at the end, I find the world a better place to live in than when I entered it. To be sure there are perils and hazards of a monstrous kind lurking in world politics and the world economy. But there is not only a rapidly expanding social conscience but a furiously accelerating technological and scientific apparatus already on hand with which to face those hazards.

It all boils down to the ancient simple question: who will take the initiative? Who has a sense of urgency? Which of us will take the lead? It is always a new day. And always, somebody is ready to go to work.

I hold no brief for private enterprise. But I have unshakeable faith in individual enterprise.

Come on, you young fellows, whoever you are.

Lead on.

Toronto, Ontario  
August, 1952.

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## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Some photographs have been enhanced to be more legible.

When nested quoting was encountered, nested double quotes were changed to single quotes.

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