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THE GREAT WHEEL

By the same author

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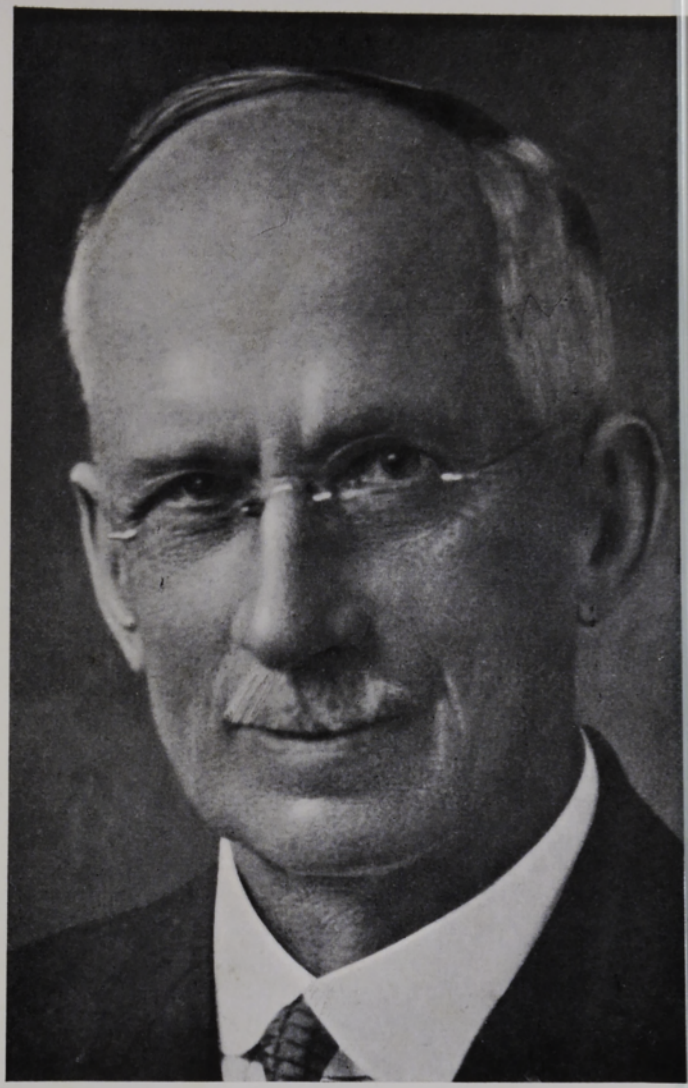

C. BRUNSDON FLETCHER

THE GREAT WHEEL

AN EDITOR'S ADVENTURES

By

C. BRUNSDON FLETCHER

Those He approves, that ply the trade
That rock the child, that wed the maid:
That with weak virtues, weaker hands
Sow gladness in the peopled lands.
And still, with laughter, song and shout,
Spin the great wheel of earth about.

—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

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TO

THE LADIES

OF

CAMELOT

H.M.A.S. *AUSTRALIA* IN HARBOUR

7 JULY, 1914

(From a Bedroom Window in Macquarie Street)

A gleam of light in the early gloom
  Lies like a lance at rest;
Shaft and point from this topmost room
  Caught on the Harbour's breast.
    Light clear and low;
    Rain falling slow;
Clouds o'er the murk with the shadows awry,
Sunshine aslant through a break in the sky.

Thunderbolts rest 'tween the lance-head and me,
  Shrouded in crimson and grey;
The *Australia* lies in this arm of the sea,
  Mocking the militant day;
    Great god of War,
    Hammer of Thor,
Cradled in steel where the busy tides twist,
Feeling their urge as a babe softly kissed.

A fortress of stone in the opal haze
  Faces the bright'ning sky;
Tower and wall beginning to blaze
  Under the battleship's eye.
    "Pinchgut"* no more—
    Dungeon of yore—
Lifted by Light to a plane nearer heaven,
Losing its curse in the world's better leaven.

Island to starboard, our "Garden" of old—
    Twin hills bared to the sun—
Belches out steam in a gloom burned to gold,
  A crib for torpedo and gun.
    Beauty belied;
    Its mission defied;
Touched to fresh life by the magic of rain,
Sounding new notes to the War god's refrain.

---

* Fort Denison is on a rocky islet in Port Jackson near Garden Island.

Glory descends through the opening door,
My shaft has turned to a shield;
'Tis a mirror of silver from shore to shore—
The shadows reluctantly yield.
Hunger and clamour,
Hate, lust, and war,
Lightened, transformed, in the rising morn,
Lifted and flushed with a day new born.

C. B. F.

Sydney,
July 10*th*, 1914.

FOREWORD

By

SIR MUNGO MacCALLUM, K.C.M.G., LL.D., D.Litt.

THE reminiscences of an experienced editor are sure to be of interest and especially so when he has gathered them in various quarters and has not always been a journalist. This is notably the case with Mr Brunsdon Fletcher's book, which has the additional attraction of dealing with the recent past of Australia, and of giving us glimpses not only of times just gone by, but of many distinguished men who played a large part in them. The side-lights shed on this and that stirring episode, and the personal impressions they left on the narrator, give a zest to the entertaining pages. They will be welcome both to those who have already some acquaintance of their own with the facts, and to the larger number who know of them only as ancient history.

And all this is presented, sometimes with a good deal of humour, but invariably in a kindly, genial spirit, more ready to look for the good than for the bad, eager to pay fitting tributes wherever they are deserved, and not inclined to underrate the difficulties in the various situations described.

Few have had such opportunities for observation, or have heaped up such a store of memories as Mr Brunsdon

Fletcher, and we may be grateful to him for now making them accessible to a wider circle. But perhaps the chief charm of the book is the portrait it unconsciously gives of the fair, sympathetic, and honourable character of the author.

PREFACE

THESE reminiscences are the best I can do in recalling the adventures of a long life. They remind me of a story about Thackeray read long ago. He was a guest in New York and was offered three large Rock Island oysters on a plate. They were a plateful, and he realized that he was expected to do his duty by them. It was a dilemma, and only Thackeray could have met it without offence. The first great oyster he put aside as too much like a human ear. The second he did swallow with some difficulty throwing up his eyes after the effort; and when asked how he felt he said that he seemed to have swallowed a baby. Nothing was reported of the third oyster.

The first oyster, like the ear Thackeray imagined, is the ear of my reading public. If my critics and readers will give me their ears I shall be content. What is now offered may be considered like the second oyster and my readers may feel as if they had swallowed a baby. Thackeray's third oyster, which apparently was left on the plate, is like my experience of the mass of mischief Germany attempted in the Pacific Ocean in general, and in Australia in particular, about which I have already written three books. Let my readers sigh their relief.

Otherwise the better way to explain my feelings would be to recall Mrs Gunn's experience with a giant damper told in *We of the Never Never* when the exigencies of camp-life required a special effort. The dough in her biggest pan was well kneaded, and with Dan's help was put into the heart of the glowing embers; but when baked and broken the centre was found to be "just a bit boggy." Now one feels very sympathetic about that damper after wrestling with and kneading so much literary dough. Nevertheless there has been great good will, if not enjoyment, in attempting so much, and the proof of the damper must be in the eating.

May I add a word. My life as a journalist has been full of zest and inspiration. When asked how it has been possible to carry on day after day under the strains of night work, and keep up a level of efficiency, I have only one answer. Every day has been a new day and something has always been happening. If one has the faculty of taking a real and abiding interest in things, whether they be dog-fights or earthquakes, the actual work becomes easy. Interest in the world's doings makes good sauce for every job and gilds most disappointments.

My final word is a quotation from J. A. Spender's preface to his autobiography, *Life, Journalism, and Politics*. The last sentence runs: "I would ask the reader to bear in mind that the life of a newspaper editor is so essentially a collective thing that almost nothing can be recorded about it which does not imply the co-operation of colleagues and fellow workers."

My thanks are due to my friends Sir Mungo Mac-

Callum, Sir David Ferguson, Dr Gordon MacLeod, and the Rev. Joseph Bryant for their reading of the manuscript, and to my old colleague P. S. Allen of the *Herald* literary staff, for valuable help with manuscript and proofs.

C. BRUNSDON FLETCHER

Sydney,
September 1940.

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PART ONE

HOW IT ALL CAME ABOUT

FROM ENGLAND TO AUSTRALIA

CHAPTER I

"IN SEARCH OF SCOTLAND"

My father born in Merthyr Tydvil and Mr W. M. Hughes's challenge—Sir Samuel Griffith also born in Merthyr Tydvil—Sir William MacGregor and the *Celtic Monthly*—The Clan Fletcher a sept of the Clan MacGregor—A puzzle in origins discussed as typical of the British Empire—My grandfather's garden and my raid upon his red-currant bush—Early days in Taunton.

REMINISCENCES in my experience are like a swarm of bees, especially when one is asked to count or brand them. A story heard by me at a New Year's Highland Society luncheon may better illustrate the point. The president had taken up nearly all the time available, when addressing himself to the great audience after the luncheon, in recounting the victories of Scotsmen in peace and war. He could not stop, and had to come down in a power dive because everybody was fidgeting to get out to see the games start. Then there was only time for the vice-president to propose the toast of the guests, and the one who rose to reply made an ideal speech. He stopped when he had finished.

His name, I remember, was John Smith. He had just arrived from Scotland where he had held high office in some of the Highland Societies. After briefly thanking the proposer of the toast he told us a war story. During the war of 1914-18 the military authorities gave orders to the farmers on the west coast of Scotland to brand

their stock, so that in the event of a German raid the cattle and other animals could be identified by their owners. But one old farmer had disobeyed. He had done nothing. When interrogated by the inspecting officer the dejected old chap shook his head drearily and said: "I canna do it!" He was told that it was an order —he must do it. But he still shook his head crying out: "I canna do it! How can I brand ma bees?"

Reminiscences that crowd upon one may be impossible to brand, in the nature of things, because for instance, somebody still alive may be hurt or scandalized. The only alternative, under the circumstances, perhaps, would be to write down everything. Then when all the most interesting matter was included, libellous or scandalous, to wrap up the story in a strong parcel, seal it, and deposit it in the Mitchell Library with instructions that it was not to be opened until the author had been fifty years dead and forgotten. Nevertheless there must be something worth putting down unafraid.

It is one of my best reminiscences that the Fletcher family has English, French, Scottish, Irish, Welsh, New Zealand and Australian blood in it. It is a good illustration of the constitution of the Empire. My father, for instance, was born in Merthyr Tydvil in Wales. Sir Samuel Griffith was also born there, and each was a son of the manse. But neither would be judged to be Welsh, because he left Wales too early. At least when I laughingly told Mr W. M. Hughes about them he asked whether my father could speak Welsh. Sir Samuel Griffith he disregarded. Nobody that I ever knew could say they had heard Sir Samuel address an audience in Welsh, or make any remarks about it. But the Rev. Edward Griffith, his father, was a typical Welsh-

man in appearance. I not only heard him preach, but I watched him at election time on the streets declaring the gospel of "Our Sam" to working men, when the Labour Party in Queensland was hardly born. "Labour" was like a tadpole, all head and tail, and the idea was to give its innocence a training in Liberalism with Samuel Griffith, a rising barrister, its political leader.

My interest in Welsh, however, had another source. A Wesleyan minister had just come from Wales who could speak English well enough when he was not excited, but who would lapse into Welsh during a sermon as soon as his emotions were roused. We boys loved his sermons for that reason, and never missed them during the term of his appointment. But Sir Samuel's father made no such lapses. He was minister of the principal Congregational Church in Brisbane, and his white hair and bushy white beard were my signal to get out of the way when he was bustling about. Sir Samuel was a distinguished Australian all his life. He was never a Welshman to boast about it.

When Mr Hughes asked me if my father could speak Welsh I told him the story of an effort which settled the matter for ever. My father was a passenger to Auckland with his wife and five children in the first iron sailing ship to cross the Pacific—the *Surat* of 1000 tons—and when he and some friends got off on the long wharf at Auckland they saw an old Welsh woman in her native costume sitting beside a basket of beautiful apples. Her tall steeple-crowned hat and Welsh dress made a picture, and when the passengers stopped to admire and handle the fruit my father unwisely gave her greeting in Welsh. It was like a bombshell. She rose, upsetting the basket of apples, and flung her arms round him with an

outpouring of excited speech which was more a rushing torrent than a stream. It was some time before he could disentangle himself but, "never no more" he said, with a laugh, when describing the incident to my mother afterwards. He never took any liberties with the Welsh language again.

But he was born in Wales because his father had been appointed minister at Merthyr Tydvil, and could not stay more than three years under the rules of his Church. Three of his eldest children had been born in the West Indies among the negro slaves to whom he was sent as a missionary in the early days of his ministerial life, and the rest of them were born in the south of England. He himself was a typical Englishman. But Scotland comes in. Sir William MacGregor* had sent me a copy of the *Celtic Monthly* soon after my first war book was published by Macmillan in London in 1917. In this book Sir William had received due prominence as one of our great Empire builders. He was very pleased about it. So the *Celtic Monthly*, with a five-page article on the Clan Fletcher, was read with interest. I had never before heard of this clan which at one time was a sept of the Clan MacGregor.

With the arrival of the original Fletchers in one of the vacant Highland glens the story began. They obtained

* Sir William MacGregor was a great builder of Empire in the Pacific. Born of humble parents in Scotland in 1847 he graduated M.D. at Glasgow University. He became Resident Medical Officer in Fiji in 1875 when that group had been ceded to Great Britain—then Acting Receiver-General and Administrator of Fiji and Acting High Commissioner and Consul-General for the Western Pacific; Administrator (1885) of British New Guinea, and its first Lieutenant-Governor (1895); Governor of Lagos, West Africa (1899); Governor of Newfoundland (1904); and Governor of Queensland (1909 to 1914). He retired to his estate Chapel-on-Leader at Earlston in Scotland and died in July 1919.

possession by being the first to raise smoke to boil water. Such was the traditional method of securing a title, and that must have been in or about the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Through all the centuries since, the Fletchers multiplied. They inter-married with other clans, but retained a definite individuality; and they had a tartan of their own. At last, probably after the battle of Culloden in 1746 when the clans were broken up, the Fletchers migrated to various parts of the Empire, to Australia, Canada, South Africa, and the United States. The graveyards in the glen to-day are full of Fletcher tombstones, but there is not a corporal's guard left to bear witness for the clan.

Sir William MacGregor did not press the point of my Scottish lineage, and we never discussed it before he died, though we corresponded almost to the end. It would have been interesting to hear his opinion of my conclusions that the Fletchers who ultimately became a clan in Scotland, were originally Englishmen, who had kept the name from the beginning when the first Fletcher was a Frenchman. The name derives from the French word *flêche* an arrow. This was translated into Gaelic by the clans as "Mac-an-Leister," man of the arrow.

The English Fletchers, long before, had a remarkable history. There is little doubt that when the bow and arrow were the mainstay of English armies, right up to the fifteenth century, the English bowmen increased in numbers, and the demand for well-balanced accurately fledged arrows must have risen sharply. The skilled French arrow-makers found a profitable opening on the other side of the Channel, and soon the Fletchers made a name and a place for themselves, when they had multiplied and counted for something.

One of my correspondents, thinking I might be interested, sent me a cutting from an English journal which had been discussing various names, including that of Fletcher. This is the paragraph: "Fletcher is a name of high renown in English history. The Fletchers were the arrow or *flêche* makers in an age that had not yet learned the secret of gunpowder, and their ancient craft is recalled by the three arrows on the Coat-of-arms of the Fletchers' Company, an ancient City of London Livery, with an unbroken history dating back to 1467."

It is suggested also that the Fletchers turned to literary pursuits when they had to give up munition making. But there is another point to be made. When gunpowder became a recognized factor and an aid in warfare, and the bow and arrow were out of date, the Fletchers had to look round for other ways of making a living. It is probable that a band of them went to Scotland and in the succeeding centuries became a clan. This has been my explanation of Sir William MacGregor's paradox which would have made me a Highlander. A paradox has been defined as something opposed to common sense but true in fact. In this case it is the fact that has been turned right-side up—or words to that effect.

But I have not given my grandfather's case in the controversy. How can it be proved that he was not of Scottish descent, and that in some past period his forbears had not left the Highland glen and come to England? It is, no doubt, possible; but my grandfather was a typical Englishman. He can best be described in the words used by the writer of a recent *Nineteenth Century* magazine article, to describe Captain Hardy, in whose arms Lord Nelson lay dying at the battle of Trafalgar. There has been no biography of Hardy

because he was a plain, obstinate, devoted Englishman, and all his life he was a sailor. The article describes him as English to the backbone—a typical Englishman. "He was slow-moving, inarticulate, and unintellectual, but reliable, cool-headed, and possessed of a sense of humour." Nelson was attracted to him by the law of opposites, because he himself was "irritable, over-excitable, and temperamental." It was Hardy's reliability, his steadfastness, his sound good sense, and refusal to be "rushed" that made possible a gallant friendship in all the stresses of tremendous war. In the main this was my grandfather Fletcher, Methodist parson, and missionary adventurer as he was.

Perhaps I write with enthusiasm because the first five years of my life were spent under his observant eye. In old age he lived in Taunton, Somerset, where I was born, and my home and the parsonage were near enough for me to be in and out. I can see the cottage, and the great elms opposite, whenever I think of those early days of my life. The parsonage, however, was open house to me. On one occasion my grandfather had told me that I could visit his currant bushes, which had been out of bounds until the fruit was ripe. Now I could help myself; but a single red currant bush which was his special care, and did not contain too many berries, was prohibited. It was "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" as in the Garden of Eden. Being more than four years old my Bible lessons had included a word or two about Adam and Eve, which made me ask numerous awkward questions. But the story had nothing to do with red currants, and I made at once for the red currant bush. When my grandfather paid it a visit not long after, he could not find a speck of fruit.

At the following court martial no evidence was called because my pinafore was red with it. The cat could not be guilty this time. But all the punishment I got, so my mother said, was my grandfather's remark to me: "True son of Mother Eve, aren't you?" The humour in his eye had evidently relieved me, and there was nothing in the situation to cause anxiety or create an emotion strong enough to impress that part of the episode on my memory. So I went on with the next business. But at this end of my life I realize afresh, as I did when Sir William MacGregor hoped to make a Scotsman of me, that only an Englishman could have dealt so philosophically with such a case of barefaced robbery.

The attraction of opposites found a happy illustration in my grandfather's wooing and winning of a remarkable girl and becoming engaged to her without having seen her. It began in quite the best story-book fashion. When young Joseph Fletcher had finished his studies, passed his examinations and had been ordained a minister of the Wesleyan Church, he offered himself for foreign missionary work. His great leader, John Wesley, had said, "the world is my parish," so he offered for world service and was sent to India. At Bombay he found another young missionary whose name was John Horner, and the two became fast friends. Their English letters were almost common property.

But John Horner had a sister Mary. She was her brother's constant correspondent; and he wrote long letters in which praise of Joseph Fletcher became constant. In time the Horner correspondence divided, and Joseph Fletcher and Mary Horner began to write to one another. Then an engagement was announced. Joseph Fletcher was transferred to the West Indies to minister

to the negro slaves there, who were being driven like cattle. The English planters dreaded negro risings on their canefields, and kept them chained in gangs. Meanwhile a campaign against slavery was becoming a feature in the public life of England.

After a term of hard work and much privation Joseph Fletcher went down with yellow fever; and an emaciated lover, "yellow as a guinea" with little hair left, was what Mary Horner first saw from behind a window curtain as he entered the garden of her home on the Somerset Avon near Bath. In my father's account of the meeting she burst into tears, but she married her man after nursing him back to health. She went with him to start a home at Grenada in the West Indies, and prepare the way for a fine family.

The Horner side of this marriage was full of mental strength and fine ability. Mary's eldest son, Joseph Horner Fletcher, well known in Sydney as the father of Newington College, has paid a high tribute to his mother in a scrap of autobiography which appears in a memorial volume by his own eldest son, J. J. Fletcher. His mother's eldest brother was a celebrated mathematician, William George Horner, and another brother was for a long time Vicar of Everton in Bedfordshire, an M.A. of Cambridge and an artist of some note. Joseph Horner Fletcher says: "Whatever talent I have . . . I inherit from my mother's side. Nearly all the Horners that I knew were more or less witty, poetic, sensitive and ambitious."

Mary Horner was a scholar and much loved by the eldest brother who had distinguished himself by a mathematical discovery which Professor De Morgan brought before the Royal Society. Professor Carslaw, Emeritus

Professor of Mathematics at the University of Sydney, called him "a celebrated mathematician" when his name was mentioned by me at lunch in course of conversation; and one of Sydney's leading actuaries said that his mathematical discovery was still in the textbooks. Behind all this, of course, stood the father of the Fletchers who provided the steel of fine character and good health to offset the Horner tendency to physical weakness. His eldest son suffered all his life from a weak digestion and cried out on one occasion: "Oh! If only I had a wooden stomach!" But he reflected: "Then I suppose the white ants would get to it."

So Joseph Fletcher, the sober Englishman, married a witty scholarly English woman, and the combination was a good one. But there is still a Scottish and an Irish strain to explain on the Horner side, and this is more extraordinary than anything in the family history. The father of these clever Horners of Bath was the Rev. William Horner, and he was born in Enniskillen in northern Ireland! Thereby hangs a tale.

CHAPTER II

"IN SEARCH OF ENGLAND"

An outbreak of smallpox in Taunton and my grandmother's courage—Her story and that of her father, William Horner, born in Enniskillen in 1751—The family and its origin in Bath—The story of James Macdonald, also born in Enniskillen in 1761—Rudyard Kipling's and Lord Baldwin's story begins with their grandfather—John Wesley lays hands on William Horner and James Macdonald, friends and colleagues—My grandfather Joseph Fletcher and his family.

THERE were an aunt, and a great aunt, at the parsonage who spoiled the youngster with the stained pinafore. At least that is the conclusion of my maturer years, though my grandmother's discipline was strict enough. One morning she happened to come over to see how my mother was getting on with preparations for the advent of her sixth child. She was to bear thirteen children before she was finished; but I can never think of her in those early days except as laughing and bright. Motherhood never seemed to give her much trouble, and nine of us grew to adulthood, to cheer her later on with grandchildren and great grandchildren, settled in nearly every State in Australia.

In this particular instance my misdemeanour was a serious one, for my grandmother found me struggling in my mother's arms. I was taken over by the determined old lady, carried upstairs in the morning light, and after being undressed and settled into my nightgown, was put to bed. This was the end of the world; for my mother

had permitted it! She had, indeed, crept upstairs to see what would happen, and long afterwards she helped me to put together the fragments of my recollections of the scene. I was too scared to remember anything in detail. But my grandmother, having got me to bed (staring at her above the turned-down bed-clothes), knelt down by the bedside, and prayed long and earnestly that I might die there and then if I was not to grow up a good man! Was it a handicap or a pair of wings?

But now comes the deed of a heroine, and before my time. It was my mother's story of a near tragedy when her second child was born (I came third) which in the years to come gave me a true idea of my grandmother's character. There had been a terrible outbreak of small-pox in Taunton, when the critical moment for the birth of her second child came, and the nurse arrived. After the baby was born the doctor discovered symptoms of smallpox on the mother, and investigation showed that the nurse had been at the beginning of a case and had said nothing about it. My grandmother, who was waiting to hear how things were going, was informed, and at once took the baby, had it wrapped up, and carried it home. She nursed it until the mother had recovered and was able to get about.

Meanwhile my father could not get a nurse for love or money. He had to nurse his wife from beginning to end, and it was a bad case of confluent smallpox. Yet his mother was in constant touch, looking after details from the outside, helping with food and so forth. It was a desperate time for a large number of people in Taunton in those anxious days; and when my turn came to realize that my own mother was Queen of the Earth, I can never remember when her face was not deeply

pitted. She had been a beautiful English girl before the attack, and it took many years before her skin became like that of other women—if it ever did.

My grandmother was born Mary Horner, and represents the England of my search. Her father was William Horner the Irishman, whose people originally came from Bath. When I found that he had a Scottish ancestry, it seemed about as much as my story would stand. It reminded me, indeed, of the Highlander who was waiting in the Kirk to be married but who looked as if he were about to be hanged. His anxious best man asked what was the matter—had he lost the ring? He replied gloomily: "No, mon, I've no lost the ring, but I've lost all ma enthusiasm."

Now, I had not lost any of my enthusiasm for Scotland, but the thought of a second invasion of that land—and this time by a Horner ancestor—was just a little too much. This chapter, however, would not have been written had not Lord Baldwin and Rudyard Kipling come into it. My great grandfather became an Irishman because James I "planted" his original family in Ulster, but who ever heard of Scotland invading Ireland in this fashion? Yet, after all, a faraway Horner must have been himself an invader of Scotland; and as an Englishman, possibly with a Scottish wife, he might consider the idea of being "planted" in Ireland a reasonable one. The question, however, arises whether there could not have been Scottish Horners, not connected with the Bath family? Well, in Scottish law a "horner" was an "outlaw"! So that it must have been an English Horner, leaving Bath in about the reign of Queen Elizabeth, who made himself at home in Scotland, and by his good works, or his good looks, or perhaps by a certain force

of character, found for himself a good Scottish wife. The rest would be easy.

When the Horner family from Scotland was duly "planted" in Ulster and gravitated to Enniskillen, there came a family of Macdonalds from the Highlands of Scotland about the middle of the eighteenth century. As already noted the battle of Culloden in 1746 had broken up the clans and the Macdonalds left Scotland for Ireland, "planting" themselves. It was of necessity and not by Royal order. Thus it is that their son, the Rev. James Macdonald, great grandfather of Lord Baldwin and Rudyard Kipling, comes into the story. He was born in Enniskillen in 1761. The Horner son was born in 1751.

Thus it was, also, that the life-lines of the Horners and the Macdonalds intertwined in a most extraordinary fashion. The two boys at Enniskillen in the latter half of the eighteenth century grew up to manhood, but in early youth became followers of John Wesley whose call took them to England. First William Horner and then James Macdonald went. They became colleagues in the first conferences which, ever since, have been continued annually to the present day. The two families were representative of the fine type which was filling northern Ireland. The Horners were strict Presbyterians and the Macdonalds were Church of England. Moreover, the two sons must have received the foundations of a sound education.

But the upheaval which came with John Wesley's frequent visits to Ireland must have been like the dropping of a bomb. One of Wesley's preachers, named John Smith, went through northern Ireland like a flame, and his eloquence and personal power carried everything

before it. When he visited Enniskillen he captured William Horner, a lad of sixteen; James Macdonald was much younger and joined the band of Wesley's preachers later, but under the same impulse, from John Smith's appeals. In William Horner's case the result, at first, seemed like a catastrophe, for his father gave him twenty-four hours to leave the Methodists or the doors of the home would be closed against him. But the threat was not carried out. At eighteen he was called upon by John Wesley to become his representative at Enniskillen —the preacher in charge—so full of character and capacity had he proved himself. Ten years younger, James Macdonald had his turn to be put into harness; and the rest followed with his transfer to England. But William Horner must have been helpful, and led the younger man from strength to strength.

Not long after my return to Sydney from the Imperial Press Conference, the interest in this phase of my discovery of Ireland was sharpened by receiving, in 1933, a copy of an Irish journal reporting the unveiling of a tablet to the memory of John Smith. He had been on a journey from Enniskillen to Charlemont in 1774 and was murderously assaulted near Clogher, dying after dragging himself to his destination. That was more than a century and a half ago, and the Wesley Historical Society in Ireland had just worked out the story of this remarkable man. The photograph of the tablet, published by courtesy of the *Belfast Telegraph*, shows the names of ten of the most notable of Wesley's preachers whom John Smith had gathered in, and William Horner and James Macdonald are included. They represented the "second flight" of Wesley's preachers. The first flight contained men of undoubted genius and preaching

power, but it is possible that there were a few like John Smith, who could read but could not write. He had been a noted bruiser and cock-fighter in Newry when one of Wesley's earlier preachers laid hands upon him, and started him on the path in which thousands thronged to hear him preach. But as with Wesley himself, certain Protestants and some angry churchmen became his enemies; and at last they killed John Smith. John Wesley survived till 1791.

It happened that Stanley Baldwin, then Prime Minister, was at Belfast not far away at the time of the ceremony, very much interested in the fact that his great grandfather's name was upon this memorial. He had come over to receive an honorary degree from the Belfast University, and sent his regrets that he could not be in two places at once on that night in October 1933. The name of the youngest of my Fletcher cousins was mentioned with Mr Baldwin's and Rudyard Kipling's in one of the principal speeches at the unveiling of the tablet. The Rev. Lionel Fletcher seems to have inherited a good deal of his great grandfather's preaching power and is known throughout the Empire because chosen to represent the Free Churches of England in a Great Youth Movement.

For the rest, the Rev. James Macdonald's grandchildren in England included (beside Mrs Lockwood Kipling in whom the poet found true Celtic fire) Mrs Baldwin, mother of the Prime Minister, Lady Burne-Jones, and Lady Poynter. It must have been an attractive family circle.

The Rev. William Horner's family gravitated to Bath, as has been explained, and it was the death of William George Horner, the celebrated mathematician, in 1837,

that settled my own fate. He had just greeted his eldest nephew, Joseph Horner Fletcher, as a pupil after seven years at Kingswood School, and would have made a great scholar of him, with every prospect of eminence in England. But Joseph Horner Fletcher had not been three months in Bath when his uncle died suddenly, and he had to set out and make his own place in the world. Eventually, he became a Wesleyan minister like his father, and with the same self-sacrifice offered himself for world missions, expecting also to be sent to India. Instead he was diverted to New Zealand to found Wesley College in Auckland for the sons and daughters of missionaries in the South Seas. Eventually his brothers one by one were drawn to New Zealand, my father among them. Then they gravitated to Australia, and I reached Sydney in 1872.

The year 1837 was a notable one for me. It was in 1837 that John Fairfax after dealing faithfully with wrongdoers in public life at Leamington in Warwickshire came eventually to Australia in 1838, to become proprietor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He had started a paper of his own in Leamington, on the banks of the Avon, and an ensuing law suit though won, had ruined him. On the Somerset Avon (for there are two important rivers of that name in England), Bath was marked in my life with one stone in 1837; and at Leamington on the other Avon in the same year another stone in my fate was set up. One could never have been editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* without John Fairfax's initial purpose and success; nor could that appointment have come about unless my father had gone to New Zealand, and from there had been invited to Sydney by the Australian Mutual Provident Society, to

be its agent in breaking new ground on the Northern Rivers of New South Wales, in Brisbane, and on the Darling Downs in Queensland. He had been showing some of the Horner ability in his platform power as a lecturer, and he had preached a gospel of life assurance with considerable success in New Zealand. But it was John Fairfax who did so much in helping to found the Australian Mutual Provident Society, and a Fairfax has been on the board of directors ever since.

Since this is apparently a question of first causes, I might mention that my father and mother were born one on each side of the New Year in 1837, which brought them just within the beginning of the Victorian era. Queen Victoria ascended the throne in that year. For me it was a great occasion, since I also was coming into the Victoria era. At any rate, the year 1837 for the Queen and the Empire was a notable one, and it marked especially an event in Australian newspaper history through John Fairfax.

CHAPTER III

IN SEARCH OF NEW ZEALAND

Dr F. W. Ward and his beginnings—My arrival in Auckland in 1864 by the *Surat*—Wesley College and two experiences of it—Dr Ward's story of the Maori chief—An old cannibal chief who saw the landing of Captain Cook—Arrival of the Duke of Edinburgh at Auckland in 1869—The Thames goldfield and the Maoris.

In a post-card for Christmas 1931, Dr F. W. Ward* sent my wife and myself greetings in his own pleasant way, ending with the sentence: "I remember to-day in 1931, the little boy who sat on a form in Wesley College, Auckland, in 1856, the last day of his prizeless school life, and the head master and principal sat by his side and kindled a tiny fire of ambition in the child's heart. So I have known your clan and seen it grow and prosper." Dr Ward was nine years old then, and his home was at New Plymouth, two hundred miles away

* Dr Frederick William Ward was one of Australia's leading editors and leader-writers. He was born in New Zealand in 1847 and came to Australia in 1866. He began in the office of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and became editor of the *Sydney Mail* and the *Echo*. In 1884 he was appointed editor of the *Daily Telegraph* and resigned in 1891. Two years later he became editor of the *Brisbane Courier*. In 1898 he went to Melbourne as principal leader-writer on the staff of the *Argus*. In 1903 he reached Sydney again to resume his old position as editor of the *Daily Telegraph* at the invitation of the directors, who had originally forced his resignation. He was one of the delegates to the first Imperial Press Conference in London in 1909, and the honorary degree LL.D. was conferred upon him by the Glasgow University. Ill health forced his retirement in 1914. He spent two years in London, returning in 1916 to become editor of the *Telegraph* evening paper in Brisbane. In 1920 he retired and lived in Sydney until he died in 1934, at the age of eighty-seven.

in Taranaki under the shadow of Mount Egmont. The head master and principal was my uncle, the Rev. Joseph Horner Fletcher already mentioned, who had founded and developed the college which he began in Auckland in 1850. It was the first school there to offer education on the higher plane but was originally started for the sons and daughters of missionaries.

It was Wesley College which gave me shelter in 1864 when the good ship *Surat* landed her hundred odd passengers at the Auckland wharf and my father and mother went ashore with the family to find a home, leaving me with my uncle, the head master, and my aunt at the college. But the uncle this time was a younger brother of the first head master and principal and his name was John Fletcher. The hands of both my uncles were upon me almost continuously for ten years. We parted company at Newington College on the Parramatta River where the two uncles had joined forces in a larger school sphere. I left Newington College as a matter of fact in 1874 to become a surveyor. But that is by the way.

I am concerned now with the fact that the man who made a journalist of me was a small boy in Auckland sitting on the same benches at Wesley College as I did eight years later, though I was not entered as a scholar. We had slept under the same roof and wandered about the same grounds overlooking the beautiful harbour of the Waitemata, and never dreaming of the way our paths would meet in mature manhood. Dr Ward has told me often of his experiences in those early days. When acknowledging the congratulations of the Queensland Press Institute on celebrating his eighty-fifth birthday he wrote: "My life began in New Zealand in 1847 only

seven years after the British flag was hoisted over the two islands. I heard the first shot that was fired in the war with the Maoris in 1860, which continued intermittently for a decade and a little more. I served in 1863 and 1864, and in 1866 I left New Zealand for Queensland. Your first Governor had not left when I first saw Brisbane and Ipswich."

That is to say at sixteen and on to seventeen years of age he was fighting the Maoris. He told me that he was one of the "Rangers" or scouts which scoured the country, a mounted troop keeping track of marauding Maoris when they were making a sally for loot or perhaps for a pot-shot at some unwary white man.

The town of New Plymouth was turned into a camp behind barricades, and all the women and children who could be sent away were carried by sea to Auckland in the small cutters which maintained communications with the capital. When my own family landed in Auckland in 1864 the fighting was still on, and the guns could be heard as the *Surat* reached her berth. The first thing I saw when the door of the college opened was my uncle's—the head master's—military cap on the hall table and his musket in a corner. He had been on "sentry go" that night. The friendly Maoris, however, seemed to be numerous enough. In New Plymouth before the war, the lad, Fred Ward, and the other youngsters made friends with them when not playing tricks upon them.

Not long ago he told me a good story of one of their pranks. When the peaches were ripe, a fine tall Maori chief was seen coming into the township with two "kits" of the fruit hanging by flax strings from the fingers of each hand. A plot was hatched in which Fred Ward danced and pranced in front of the leisurely but dignified

chief, calling him names in Maori. These insults were disregarded until the youngster dared to call him a *tow-rika-rika*—a slave—the deadliest of insults to a Maori chief. Carefully letting his two shallow baskets reach the ground he made a dive for his tormentor, with about as much chance of catching him as if he were a fly. But that was just in the game. The other boys were to raid the baskets, to be joined later on by the chief actor in the little play.

This story Dr Ward had given at a dinner of Glasgow graduates in Sydney. He had received his honorary degree at the first Imperial Press Conference in 1909. One of those present at this dinner was a pastoralist who told a story so like Dr Ward's that the latter could not resist capping it. The pastoralist's story was of two crows who decided to have a swan's egg for breakfast. Not far away a lady swan was sitting on a clutch of eggs by a lagoon. One of the crows perched himself so near her that she could almost reach him if she felt any need to defend her eggs. But all the black tormentor did was to call her names in crow language which reached such a pitch of profanity that she could no longer endure it. She reached forward on her nest, lifting her tail to get a good jab at the enemy in front, forgetting the enemy behind who made a dive at one of the eggs. He neatly speared it with his sharp beak and flew away. The game was over, of course, and Dr Ward's story made a delightful cap to it as between Australia and New Zealand.

My life on the Thames goldfield in the sixties brought me into similar contact with the Maoris, but the paramount chief of that area was a high and somewhat haughty individual. He received ground-rents and signed receipts like a white man. He wore a white

man's suits as to the manner born, and across his waistcoat was a heavy gold watch-chain. Moreover, his two sons went to school with my cousins and myself and were quite good company.

When the Duke of Edinburgh visited New Zealand in 1869, the Maori tribes were all agog; and His Royal Highness was reported to be coming on a visit to the Thames goldfield. An old cannibal chief, who had never visited a white man's town in his life, suddenly appeared in the last of the three townships of the goldfield, and made quite a sensation. He was about the most gnarled piece of human timber that had ever been seen, and the two sons of our Maori chief told us that he was one hundred and twenty years old. It seemed quite possible. Moreover, we were also told that he was on the beach when Captain Cook landed at the head of the Hauraki Gulf a hundred years before. According to the story the great navigator had laid his hand on the young Maori's head. Maori tradition, we were told, was to be trusted and indeed there seemed no reason to doubt the truth of the old chief's age and personal history.

But to show how little this Maori relic knew of the white man's ways, one of our two Maori boy friends, when later on we happened to see the old chief in the street, went into a baker's shop and brought out a loaf of bread which was offered to him. This he smelt, turning it round and studying it and finally handed it back with a gesture of contempt. Then the loaf was broken up and pieces handed round for us to eat, to show that it was good food. But the old man when given a crust, just smelt it again and returned it with doubled contempt. He knew all about human flesh, but cared

nothing and wanted to know nothing about this white man's rubbish.

The later story is interesting. The old cannibal had begun to think about turning from heathenism to Christianity, but jibbed over a too sudden abandonment of cannibalism. "Only one more feast," he pleaded. A stern negative did not daunt him. "Well, only one little baby girl?" he pleaded. The negative was still more emphatic, and he grew cold about the new religion. The police, then, put him under surveillance. He had to be watched. This came to us in a paragraph from a New Zealand paper after we had been in Australia for some little time in the early seventies. So that the tough old sinner still lived and clung to the traditions of the days of Captain Cook's visit.

To me, that term of residence on the Thames goldfield was full of incident. Our cottage faced the waters of the Hauraki Gulf; and out of sight, but not very far away, was the estuary of the Thames River. So that day by day the waters on which Captain Cook sailed in 1769, when he named the river and its approach, were always there. Beside our home, on an open space, the Maoris used to camp and pitch their tents, and my study of the Pacific Ocean began with the alphabet of Maori ways in my most impressionable years.

Quite recently I went to the Mitchell Library to see if some better account of Captain Cook's visit to the Thames River existed, when he sailed down the Hauraki Gulf, passing what became long after the Thames goldfield. The Mitchell Librarian very kindly unlocked her safe and brought out a precious copy of Captain Cook's log in which he described the anchoring at the mouth of the Thames and a voyage of fourteen miles up the

river in the long-boat. Everywhere the natives were friendly, but all that part of the first voyage seems out of focus. What we do know, however, is that, sailing away, Captain Cook never entered the Waitemata, where Auckland was placed, and only indicated a possible harbourage. The site for a great city on a fine harbour was never seen by him, just as Port Jackson was passed with practically a wave of the hand. So with Hobart and the Derwent estuary, in his third voyage he missed both by leaving it to others to sail into one of the best harbours in the world. He missed three of the world's greatest harbours on a circumference of eight hundred miles radius, which contains the Tasman Sea.

Dr F. W. Ward and I in his later days had much to talk about when we got on to New Zealand and the Pacific. He read the manuscript of my second war-book, *The Problem of the Pacific*, and encouraged me by his criticism and advice. We were both New Zealanders, as far as inspiration went on my part, but on matters of New Zealand history he was the master, even if he did leave his native land when he was nineteen years old. I saw him first in my uncle's pulpit in Balmain, and I think he was then editor of the *Sydney Mail*. It was again another uncle, this time the Rev. William Fletcher, B.A., one of the missionary scholars who had been for several years on the Island of Rotumah, two hundred miles from Fiji, formulating the native language, reducing it to writing and translating the New Testament for the Rotumans. Now he was settled in Sydney at Balmain, in charge of the Wesleyan Church there and had got Dr Ward to take a service for him.

In his early days Dr Ward had been accepted as a

minister of the Wesleyan Church, but he was a born journalist. He had to be one. When only sixteen, his father who was the first Primitive Methodist Missionary in New Zealand, settled at New Plymouth, got him to write an account of the Maori war which had developed in front of him. The article was sent to London to the journal of his father's Church, and it was so good that it appeared practically without alteration.

This was a tremendous experience for the son, and was never forgotten. He began to write for the *Sydney Morning Herald* when the impulse became irresistible; and then the chair of the *Sydney Mail* became vacant and he put a wealth of energy and enterprise into editing the weekly paper.

One of the things that marked his editorship was the publication of *Robbery Under Arms* by Rolf Boldrewood, who made warm acknowledgment later on when the book was running into new editions and winning its way to a place in English literature. Rolf Boldrewood said that at first no publisher would look at it; and its serial prospects seemed hopeless when the Melbourne *Argus* refused it. The *Australasian* consequently missed a great chance, and to the *Sydney Mail* was given the opportunity of saving a great book from the oblivion of impossible manuscripts. Dr Ward told me long after that it was touch and go. Sir James Reading Fairfax who had to make the decision was afraid of it, and it was only after long consideration that he was willing to give the editor his heart's desire. Even when it was running and proving such a success, Sir James had his doubts whether it could be good reading for susceptible youth and was very glad when it was finished.

My first sight, then, of the man who was to give me my chance in journalism, impressed me by his strong personality, and his great head of hair. But I did not meet him then, although I was staying with my Uncle William at the time. He had hurried home after the service, and a mental picture was all that was left to me.

CHAPTER IV

IN SEARCH OF AUSTRALIA

My arrival in Sydney by the *Wonga Wonga* reaching the old Blaxland home, then a college—Newington on the Parramatta River—Watching the funeral of William Charles Wentworth—John Fairfax and his first editor then still alive—Dr John Dunmore Lang and the beggar.

THE steamer *Wonga Wonga* in which we reached Sydney from Auckland, early in 1872, was about the size of one of our larger Manly ferry-boats. She carried among her cargo some Honolulu sugar, and my small brother and I had a cabin close to it. The stench kept me sick and miserable all the way over. Evidently Sydney in those days was still importing this sugar to supply her needs.

I mention the sugar because Sir James Reading Fairfax, when I told him about it, gave me some interesting facts which I have never forgotten. We were in the editor's room and I had not long arrived from Brisbane to take up my job on the *Herald*. The building in which we sat was a purchased addition to the fine front office built by John Fairfax in 1856, which had become too small for the paper's needs. This addition had been an auction mart and sugar-store and extended from Pitt Street through to O'Connell Street. There the sugar imported from Honolulu and elsewhere had been sold by auction, and when the building was taken over by John Fairfax, the main floors were simply covered with candy,

hardened like cement. A gang of navvies with pick and shovel had to be brought in to chip it off as though it were so much asphalt. On those floors I spent many of the years of my life on the literary staff of the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

It was a sugar-sick, not a sea-sick, youngster who left the *Wonga Wonga* in charge of an aunt, the lady paramount of Newington College and wife of its president, the Rev. Joseph Horner Fletcher. She had been on a visit to New Zealand, and I was to spend my first days in Australia under the roof of the old Blaxland home as her guest.

This was the first great fact when we reached the Newington wharf on the Parramatta River. Here was the fine old mansion, with its saltpans still in action on the river brink. I was told that its twelve hundred acres of bush and peppermint scrub extended far away to the Parramatta Road. Parramatta itself from the lodge gates was only three miles away; but it could also be reached by the river where another old mansion could be seen on the way at Subiaco. At Parramatta lived Dr Normand MacLaurin, the college doctor and congenial friend of my uncle who found him a mine of knowledge and a great conversationalist. He was the future Chancellor of the University of Sydney.

What a wonderful place this old Blaxland home was. It had now become a college with hundreds of boys being trained through the years to be good citizens. But while I learned something of the history of the place with its barracks for a small army of convicts, I found that there was plenty of room everywhere for sport and play. But Sydney was calling. My people were looking for a home and I was to join them. When that time

came I discovered a city so full of wonderful things that it can only be indicated by the peaks of emotion and experience which found my memory a very sensitive plate.

For instance I was taken later on to see the State funeral of William Charles Wentworth. It was something to remember because we viewed it from the site of Captain Cook's statue in Hyde Park. One needed no introduction to Captain Cook, which came in 1879 when the statue was erected. But I could not help noticing that he seemed only just to have found Sydney Harbour. I wanted to climb up and comfort him.

My questions about the funeral and the great man going to his last home came back full of fruit. Especially was I interested in the fact that William Charles Wentworth had been an explorer and had helped to find a way over the Blue Mountains. It seemed right to be looking on at the funeral with Captain Cook in mind. And then came the name of Blaxland one of Wentworth's companions. Surely I was in the thick of things! What a lot of talk, about that exploring expedition, there must have been in the Blaxland home, though it had been made so many years before the mansion was built; for the explorer was a brother of the owner.

Later on, when I came to the *Herald* office after my twenty years in Queensland, I met an old surveyor who had been a young man in the days of Wentworth's vigorous prime as a leader in public life. This young man's father had been a friend of Wentworth's, and was also a surveyor engaged by him. The young man was in his father's office and had just qualified as a surveyor when the great man came in, and at once

brusquely wanted to know who he was and what he was doing there. As soon as he found that the youngster was a son of his friend and seemed capable and eager to make a start as a surveyor Wentworth promised him his first job and was always ready to hear of his progress. It was a most interesting story; the more so, for my informant told me that his father in those old days had actually helped to pull the first sheet of the first copy of the *Sydney Herald* from the Columbian press, which needed three men to work it!

In time this teller of stories about Wentworth became a little difficult. He was old when I first met him and had become garrulous and hard to deal with if his letters did not appear in the *Herald*. He had been a constant correspondent on all questions dealing with old Sydney. At last he was greatly offended with me and told me he would "get even." This came with an ominous head shaking. Then, soon after, his death was announced in our columns and I gave a sigh of relief. We published a good obituary and he deserved it. Imagine, then, my astonishment to meet him in Pitt Street a week after alive! It was my tormentor greeting me with a sardonic grin and thoroughly enjoying the success of his practical joke. Someone must have helped him with it; but, whether or no, it was impossible to take any action in the matter. The public would have enjoyed the joke to the full, and I left the old sinner to his glee. He was probably not quite sane, but sane enough to revel in his obituary which he no doubt read and re-read until his death not long after.

One of my favourite American authors has said that certain events in life seem to stain back through its pages until they colour it to its very beginning. My nearly

forty years of close association with the Fairfax family is like that, and I make no apology for introducing here the interest which has always prompted me to consider myself a part of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Its first formal editor, the Rev. John West, was alive when I landed in Sydney from New Zealand in 1872, though he died eighteen months later. So also John Fairfax walked and talked, and was a power in the land till 1877. Both of them knew my uncle the president of Newington College, as a fine schoolmaster, and an outstanding preacher; but it would have aroused their curiosity if they could have looked forward less than half a century to find a nephew of his the fifth editor of the *Herald*! When, therefore, I began to wonder just what sort of a man the first of my editor-predecessors was like, the main facts became very interesting. These need not be recapitulated. Any one can get a better idea of them than I can offer if he will read *A Century of Journalism* so wisely ordered and so well produced by the present managing director, Mr Warwick Fairfax.

The side-light which took me back to those early days came from the publisher of the *Herald*, James Henderson, who joined the staff of the paper when only fourteen years old. He retired after sixty years of faithful service on the paper and lived to more than ninety years of a long and sober life. He told me that his widowed mother was a tenant of Dr Dunmore Lang in a cottage not far from the manse of Scots Church in Jamieson Street. The rent was paid once a fortnight to Dr Lang himself, but on one occasion he came over before the fortnight was half through to ask Mrs Henderson if it would put her out too much to let

him have the rent in advance. He said he was short of cash. The money was readily found, but young Henderson who happened to be in at the moment told his mother that he would follow their landlord home "and see what he was up to." He followed him to the manse, and there on the steps was a ragged individual to whom Dr Lang gave the fortnight's rent. I like to think that this fighting Scot had a great heart. But his record on that side needs no advertisement. Those fighters of the past seem to have been alike. John Fairfax was another Greatheart, who did good by stealth while he was making a fine fight for liberty and fairplay through his paper.

But let me finish with John West. The youngster Henderson on one occasion, from his own niche near the editor's room, heard him dictating the morrow's leader to Sam Cook, later on the general manager, who said at last that the column limit had already been exceeded. The editor told him to carry on and he would make two leading articles of the dictation by cutting it in half. Probably it was during the passage of John Robertson's Land Bill of 1861 through Parliament. The *Herald* was dealing faithfully with it.

One morning, not long after, the sharp-eared youngster heard John Robertson himself on the floor exclaiming that he wanted to see the editor. Very soon a sight of the editor was followed by a tirade in John Robertson's best style. He was well known for strong language. This was met by language as forcible but kept within the bounds of devastating English, and argument persisted for half an hour, nearly raising the roof. It was a real dog-fight. Perhaps that was a boy's excited recollection translated through the passing years into amused

exaggeration, for the duel ended by John Robertson saying: "Here, we've had enough of this. It's time for lunch. Come along!" And the two left the editor's room arm in arm as though nothing had happened. Sir John Robertson was noted for language which lapsed into profanity at the least provocation; and it is probable that face to face with the Rev. John West it would be more bellow than bull-fight. But John West himself had been a trenchant speaker and writer for years and would submit to no browbeating. He fought the convict system, and attacked even William Charles Wentworth on the question of transportation.

It was a time of fierce fighting. The most interesting case is one in which John Fairfax himself took a part. The columns of the *Herald* had been constant in support of the candidature of J. H. Plunkett, a Roman Catholic, in the first election of members for the Legislative Assembly which followed the granting of responsible government to New South Wales. There was great public excitement; and for the four Sydney seats, six candidates had been nominated. Mr Plunkett, who had been Attorney-General under the old order was being boycotted by a "ticket" in which Messrs Parkes, Cowper, Campbell, and Wilshire sought a plumping vote.

John Fairfax was thoroughly roused. The lion in him had to roar, and he took the platform with a rousing speech which was heartily cheered. He, his editor, the candidate J. H. Plunkett, and the Venerable Archbishop Polding had been called "The Holy Alliance" in an advertisement by the other side, and that provoked his scorn and indignation. He said that the candidate's religion had nothing to do with the case. He himself was a Protestant to the backbone, and all he asked of the

electors was that the merits not the accidents of the case should be considered. It is easy to imagine how the two valiant supporters of justice and fair play would rise to a great occasion. I have felt as if their spirits had inspired many of my own leading articles in the *Sydney Morning Herald* when my blood was up and the cause was worthy of the best that was in me. In the event, Mr Plunkett was defeated by only one hundred and one votes and the "ticket" succeeded. But the protest was not lost; for no one can read the account of the fight in *A Century of Journalism* without a cheer, if he has any sporting blood in him.

It is interesting as I look back to realize how full of important happenings the year 1872 was, and how one's reaction to them has been personal for good reason. Take, for instance, as the outstanding event of that year, the completion of the submarine cable from Australia to England. The first official cablegram reached the *Herald* office on 2 July 1872, and twenty words each day cost nearly ten pounds. Special comment was made in the leading columns of the paper, and a banquet was held in November in the Sydney Exchange to celebrate the event. At this function, very appropriately, John Fairfax was asked to respond to the toast of the Press; and in his speech he remarked that he was not sure that the very expensive telegraphic tariff might not send newspaper proprietors "up King Street"—into the Bankruptcy Court. At this there was laughter. But if some of the laughing guests could have looked ahead and seen the cable costs of modern newspapers, and the actual volume of cabled news, they would have exclaimed in astonishment. They would have realized more profoundly what the first cablegram meant to Australia in

1872. She was being joined not only to England by cable but to the rest of the world. It is the beginning that counts in most things.

There is just a rider to be added. It is difficult to imagine even John Fairfax looking far enough ahead to realize that the time would come when the Eastern Extension Cable Company's activities would cover the world. Its monopoly would give the Australian newspapers an ever-increasing sense of its power to make them pay to the limit, and so make them help to bear the initial costs of a service being run without a competition which would keep them within bounds. The laying of the Pacific cable, whose advent was heralded when I entered journalism in 1893, was greeted with enthusiasm, and then came the beam wireless. But when the Imperial Press Conference met in London in 1930, there was continued critical discussion about the Eastern Extension Company, with the British Government behind it. No doubt the second Great War has provided reasons for which no valid grounds seemed to exist ten years ago.

The development of wireless has been phenomenal. It has made practicable a world-wide distribution of news at very low cost. But in Australia we are still far from enjoying the full benefits which the peoples of other countries enjoy. Until quite recently it was costing about eight times as much per word to land European news here as to send it to the United States. It still costs us four or five times as much. Efforts have been made to remove the severe handicap but without success.

Added to this the charges for distributing the news in Australia are enormously in excess of those borne by the United States. Public funds here were heavily in-

vested in the oversea cable system. Doubtless governmental minds decided to protect those investments. So the rates were piled up above a fair charge for wireless communication. But never was it more needful than it is to-day to keep our people well informed upon world affairs. We should benefit at least as much as other peoples from the economies made possible by science and invention. The overcharges seem scandalous.

CHAPTER V

TEN YEARS' SURPRISES

Sydney in 1872 and its cesspits—After ten years a sewerage system begins—My advent as a surveyor upon it—Dr Badham gives me a puzzle—His personality and J. J. Fletcher's experience—My departure for Queensland—Sir Samuel Griffith and the Literary Circle.

SYDNEY in 1872 when it first swam into my ken was not only a city of a new alignment and of streets all jagged with old buildings sitting on the footpaths, but it was overflowing with cesspits. Looking back, a skit in London *Punch* comes to mind. After a visit to one of the London slums a writer was alleged to have put his experiences into a sentence. He said he had counted "seven and twenty stenches all well defined, and several stinks."

The last two words are appropriate because I woke up one night when a cesspit was being emptied. But this is only mentioned because ten years after, in 1882, I was surprised by a letter from Surveyor-General P. F. Adams, asking me to report to Mr Fred Poate, head of the Detail Survey of the city of Sydney. I had just passed the final examinations for licensed surveyor, among a number of other successful men, and had been chosen to assist in a survey of the city which was preparatory to the installation of a sewerage system! The honour, however, was not realized at its full value at the time because I was overwhelmed. The best men were being selected to assist Mr Poate in this very im-

portant survey, and one felt the weight of the responsibility. My two years in the field had been passed in country districts and the life in camp had been full of discipline. Surveying in New South Wales had ranged from Queanbeyan over what is now Federal Territory; then to Grafton in the District Survey Office for a spell, in a summer hotter than anything I had known; and finally down to Cooma where the following winter was colder than the coldest of my life's temperatures up to date. We were out in all weathers and none the worse. Now I was called upon to show what I could do in a city survey linked up with the great trigonometrical survey of the colony.

The city was divided into sections, and experienced surveyors under Mr Poate were given charge of them, with inexperienced men in city work like myself allotted to them to pick up the procedure. Thus I found my good fortune in being associated with one of the best of the sub-chiefs in W. M. Thompson. He was a bachelor, living with his father and mother in a comfortable home on Bellevue Hill, which I often passed in later years when a member of the literary staff of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The name of the house was "Trahlee." It was close to "Ginahgulla" which had been built by, and until he died was the home of, the Hon. John Fairfax. In my time on the Detail Survey, his son James Reading Fairfax was in residence. "Trahlee" was open to me like another home while I was associated with the son of the house. His room was upstairs in front and became our office with a window overlooking the harbour. Our drafting-table was set up underneath it, and when our field work in the city of a particular block was finished, we went to "Trahlee" and drew a great plan.

I was a good draftsman in those days and was delighted to show what I could do in this more complicated work. Whenever I lifted my eyes I could see the masts of the submerged steamer, the *Austral*, which had sunk at her moorings, across the water. But the thing which has always intrigued me was the fact that Sir James Reading Fairfax whom I got to know so well and to whom I owe so much should have been so near and yet so far. I did not meet him until 1903; then "Ginahgulla" became more than well known because of the hospitality I enjoyed there later on.

All this had come about in a curious way. I was a day-boy at Newington College until 1875, for our home was at Parramatta. It seemed as though the University might be the end of my school-days. Certain of my cousins were undergraduates one by one and had obtained degrees. I had passed my "Preliminary" examination and shall never forget this introduction to the University. The examination was taken in a room off the Great Hall and Dr Badham himself gave us dictation. This is specially fixed in my memory because he spoke in the round voice of an orator and one word he mispronounced to my foolish way of thinking. "The malign influences of Court favour" was the beginning of a sentence in the dictation which gave me pause. "Malign" was pronounced as if it rhymed with "bowline"—"mowline"—and I had never heard of such a word. Clearly the sense called for the only word in my knowledge and I wrote "malign" in fear and trembling. And that was my first sight and sound of the great Dr Badham, whom I learned to honour above other men.

My cousin, J. J. Fletcher, was an undergraduate when Dr Badham arrived in 1867. He told me so much about

the professor and his masterful personality that I have always been glad to have seen him so near that I could touch him. It seems that he found his classes in an indolent mood. At his first lecture not half a dozen students put in a prompt appearance—the rest began to dribble in much to his disgust; and he went out like a whirlwind, his gown flying out behind him, and gave them a piece of his mind. At his next lecture he found most of his students still lounging about, but not inside the lecture room, so he locked them out. When the hour to begin came again, and the lazy ones were still outside the lecture room, he again locked them out. Then when the lecture was over he opened the door and proceeded to skin the defaulters alive. My cousin said there was no more "slacking" after that.

But Dr Badham had a humorous vein, and another cousin told me of his own experience. The professor was discussing the corruptions in a Greek text. A good deal in one case depended upon whether a certain word began with a capital letter or a small one, and this student looking up from his own copy of the text cried out: "I've got a little one." Dr Badham at once responded: "Oh have you, Mr Fletcher, allow me to congratulate you."

J. J. Fletcher had some vivid recollections of Dr and Mrs Badham and never forgot their enthusiasm when the *Phormio* of Terence was to be given in Latin at the University on the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to Sydney. My cousin had shown such aptitude in both Greek and Latin that Dr Badham cast him for Nausistrata—a woman's part—and Mrs Badham was concerned to see him properly dressed. It was a reversion to the days when boys took the place of women on the stage.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* said of his acting on this occasion: "This gentleman's impersonation of the angry and jealous wife excited much merriment." Fellow actors with J. J. Fletcher were Edmund Barton who became the first Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, and Pope Cooper, later Chief Justice of Queensland, both knighted for their services. A. H. S. Lucas, in the first Fletcher Memorial Lecture at the Linnean Society, said: "But it was not as an actor or a lawyer, still less as a politician that Fletcher was to win his bays." He became a man of science, one of Australia's best, known far beyond the Commonwealth for his labours as biologist, botanist, and zoologist.

Yet he had been a singularly successful schoolmaster. It was in the blood. He was in the succession which began with William George Horner of Bath, celebrated mathematician but also a great schoolmaster and a fine scholar. Then came his own father, Joseph Horner Fletcher, and now he himself followed. Yet each was distinguished in literature. They were fine scholars; and mathematics and science came in to give the great uncle and grand nephew well deserved fame. But in J. J. Fletcher's case it was Dr Badham at the University of Sydney who laid the foundations of scholarship so truly and so solidly. The passion for science came later.

It is not astonishing that I took a University degree for granted as the natural completion of my education. My work at Newington College was following the usual course and the classics were becoming part of my school routine. But for some reason my father decided that I had a mathematical brain, and at a critical stage he withdrew me from college to sit in a competitive examination which would give me a cadetship in the Government

Survey Office. This would lead to the acquisition of a profession. In the end important positions on the survey staff would be open which would carry a pension when the retiring age was reached. But I had to go through a period of preparation in a special class at the Fort Street Public School under Mr Fred Bridges. It meant hard work, for I had done no trigonometry or higher algebra. All I had got was the ordinary mathematical grounding in a college which specialized more in the classics and cognate subjects.

Then came success at the competitive examination and my appointment as a cadet draftsman in the Government Survey Office in Sydney. It was still a passing of examinations, for one had to prove oneself fit to be promoted within the office or to be sent into the country as staff field assistant. Two years in the field in the latter position was imperative; for while the office gave one plenty of time and opportunity to become an expert draftsman practical experience in the field was necessary for training as a surveyor ready to be tested in the series of examinations which would allow the magic letters L.S. (licensed surveyor) to be placed after one's name. Then came the actual appointment to the Detail Survey, which was an unexpected honour.

But now I had to face the crisis in my life. My people were living in Brisbane and we were a united family. My father had a sound and profitable connexion as an accountant and a land and estate agent. He had a large family and the future seemed assured. But I heard to my dismay that his sight was threatened, so I resigned my Sydney job to stand by him and get a survey licence in Queensland. A land boom was on, money was plentiful, population was increasing and everybody was optim-

istic. A Queensland licence would enable me to work up a private practice with estates to cut up all over the place and the city growing fast. Meanwhile, until my father's sight was settled for better or worse I could stand by in the business and get into touch with the side on which my experience would count.

The getting of a licence in Queensland, however, was not as easy as it seemed. The Survey Department in Brisbane would not let me sit for examination for six months. There was no reciprocity in those days, and although the New South Wales certificate had a high reputation, it was waste paper north of the border. When I did sit, I found a roomful of men, many of them surveyors from other colonies anxious to cut into some of the cake which the land boom was providing in the way of profitable incomes.

During the examination at which the Deputy Surveyor-General, Mr Davidson, presided, I found in one of the papers a question on the magnetic meridian which was in my opinion wrong and unfair. I thought that it should be withdrawn. On reflection, I decided to put the position to Mr Davidson, and we argued the matter out while the candidates put their pens down and waited. Finally the question was withdrawn. I heard later on that I had been called "that damned Sydney miracle," when the results were announced with my name first on the list of passes.

I mention this incident, because a little later Mr Davidson asked me to call on him. Wondering what could be the matter, I went to his room and was very heartily received. After a few words of congratulation he said: "Look here, Mr Fletcher! Why don't you study for the Bar. There cannot be much in surveying even

for a man of your capacity, and there is, I am sure, a future for you at the Bar." This was a surprise! Later on I had settled down and my father's eye troubles ended with an operation which left him with one eye full of promise. Then I found the idea of studying for the Bar becoming more and more attractive. Soon I went into the matter seriously, and began to study. Mathematics gave no trouble. The Greek and Latin subjects only meant some more hard work. Demosthenes's *De Corona*, Cicero's *De Amicitia*, and Terence's *Phormio* were all worked through with a good coach and the rest seemed easy.

Then I fell in love and got married, thinking that I could finish my studies and pass my examinations later on. But my survey practice left me less and less time. Meanwhile the Survey Department had asked me to accept a position on the Board of Examiners for Licensed Surveyors. This I resigned in five years' time when asked to become editor-in-chief of the *Brisbane Courier*. But it had all been to the good as far as a coming career in journalism was concerned.

I had been honorary secretary to the Brisbane Literary Circle, quite an important and ambitious movement of which Sir Samuel Griffith was president, and Reginald Roe, head master of the Brisbane Boys' Grammar School, and a Balliol College graduate, was one of the moving spirits. We had quite an interesting time with reading classes. Books were specified and examinations held afterwards. Plays were given on Saturday afternoons in the open air when up-the-river arrangements could be made. We had very profitable evenings for debates, or papers were read and discussed. Altogether the honorary secretary had a driving time with a presi-

dent who took a great interest in the work of the Circle and was always ready with help and advice, and with his presence at our Council meetings. Sir Samuel Griffith's love for literature and his regard for a sound scheme of education were never in doubt. He was a tower of strength.

CHAPTER VI

ADVENTURE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Sir Samuel Griffith and Henry George—My entry in local government and I discover the Griffith Act—The great depression of 1890 and a fall in values—Taxation on unimproved values—Thousands of allotments rateable but valueless.

An adventure which began in 1890 brought me face to face with Sir Samuel Griffith, but not in the flesh this time, and journalism for me was still three years away. It was not even above the horizon. I was married, a householder, and earning a satisfying income as surveyor and business man, with some reputation through the Literary Circle in Brisbane. It should be mentioned, however, that I had begun to try my 'prentice hand in short impressions for the *Boomerang*, run by J. G. Drake. Ten years later he became prominent in Federal politics as one of the first senators in the Parliament of the Commonwealth and one of its first ministers, succeeding Sir James Dickson, when he died, to represent the State of Queensland in the Barton Cabinet.

The *Boomerang* had been transferred to William Lane of the New Australia venture in Paraguay, a man of great ideals and volcanic energy, a Labour leader until he got tired of the Queensland Labour Party and launched out in a new world of experiment to show how the common man and woman could bring heaven

to earth. Well, I sent a skit or impression of a voluble old woman whom I had heard instructing her husband in the way he should go—with a broomstick—and William Lane published it, sending a polite invitation to me to call upon him. Thus we met for the first time. The second time we met was in Sydney, after the debacle in Paraguay and he had flung the fragments behind him to become editor of the *New Zealand Herald*. He was living in Auckland where I had made my first acquaintance with England in the Pacific. Meanwhile I had become editor-in-chief of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and we two journalists met after all the years, but never a word passed about Paraguay. We had come together to forget—if possible—and to discuss on common ground the events of the day. But neither of us forgot.

The adventure in question came through the operation of Sir Samuel Griffith's Local Government Act which had been trampled on by the local body in whose area of administration I was a ratepayer. The great depression of the nineties had begun. A great land boom in Brisbane and elsewhere had ended, and the millions of English money put to Australia's credit in London were being withdrawn. The banks were calling up overdrafts and killing great fortunes (on paper) without benefit of clergy, and they themselves were being cruelly crippled. Advances had been made on doubtful security; but local governing bodies who had been given money to burn were still good security.

The catch was that local bodies had been trying to do great things in a hurry. Our own area had been allowed to overdraw its account with the bank to twice its legal limit, and we must begin to pay back the money. That is to say under the Griffith Act we were not

legally able to increase the coming year's overdraft beyond the amount received as revenue in the preceding year—a very wise provision.

My own shire, whose main boundary ran with the city's, had no doubt doubled the number of its ratepayers, because vacant lands had been cut up and sold, on small deposits and long terms. But the multiplied allotments and the new streets opened were hardly occupied—just a cottage here and there. All this wonderful increase of ratepayers and of prospective revenue was worth so little that nobody had any doubt about the pressure of the problem. The official valuators could quote the purchase price of allotments and enter valuations in their books in black and white, but vast numbers of ratepayers were not accepting liability and many of them had gone—never to return.

This is where my adventure began, and where I learned a good deal about Sir Samuel Griffith and his wonderful ability. A new council had to be elected. The retiring councillors were anathema, and among them were two publicans who had been having a royal time in the boom. One of them was a representative of my own ward and was an honest man, but old and bewildered. He stood to his guns and defied opposition or adverse comment. He had many friends. I was implored to come out and help a vigilance committee that was ready to put up new candidates if a good leader could be found. One man was indicated who seemed to inspire confidence, and it would help materially if I would stand and fight the defiant publican in his, which was my own, ward. It was all very surprising and not at all attractive. But my father-in-law who

was a substantial ratepayer and a minister of the Crown, promised to take the chair at my first meeting.

It was like asking David to put on Saul's heavy armour against Goliath, for I had never stood on a public platform in my life. However, in the event I was elected, and I believe the publican was only hurt after being defeated because I had compared him to the old lady who had been ordered by her physician to take a shower-bath. She was represented in a cartoon in her mackintosh and goloshes, with her umbrella up under the shower in the bath-room, saying: "It's so nice!" I said that my opponent in his speeches had refused to face the facts. He had stood under the shower of public criticism, smiling, and all he had said was: "It's so nice!" This brought down the house. But the old man showed that he was a good sport, for he came to me when the numbers were up, shook my hand and promised to do all he could to help me. He and his friends certainly rallied round me when I most needed it, for when the re-elected council met and I was asked to become chairman of the finance committee, the storm of my anxieties began.

For eight years I was kept at the job until the moribund horse was flogged alive. Then I became president of the council when the tramway system of Brisbane was converted from horse to electricity. The buses were to go and the whole of our wide district was to be incorporated with the city in an up-to-date electric-tram system. This can still give Sydney points in the type of car with low steps and the general lay out which has made the growing city of Brisbane such a success in transport if not in municipal politics. That eight years' experience in local government proved invaluable

to me when I became editor of the *Brisbane Courier* on F. W. Ward's retirement. My retirement from the local body was a natural sequence. But I found that I had made many friends in that year 1898, when the editorship was as unexpected and as unwanted as a blow in the face.

The catch in Sir Samuel Griffith's Act was that he had been flirting with Henry George and the single-tax gospel of salvation. Local government revenue was to be obtained from a tax on the unimproved value of land. During the boom this was accepted without question. The number of rateable properties had increased enormously with the sale of estates cut up into allotments, and the purchase price was duly noted by our valuator. On the face of it we had an expanding revenue, though the number of new streets meant that much more expenditure would have to be faced.

But when the boom burst all these lands had no market value, because there were no sales, and the purchasers of allotments were hard set to find food for their families. Many had disappeared. How were we to get a fair basis for revenue? Then we discovered from a close study of the Act that Sir Samuel had anticipated something of the sort. It was provided that a minimum value of £40 could be placed upon any property which could not be valued on any reasonable basis. Whether it would be possible to follow ratepayers who had thrown up their purchases, or who had left the city, was another matter. Banks were in trouble. They had granted overdrafts on properties cut up and sold by syndicates who had not been able to collect outstanding purchase money. When the banks held the properties which had been surrendered to them we were in a quandary.

Should we send them rate notices? Could we put up to auction the allotments which had practically been thrown on our hands? And so the merry wheel went round.

But Henry George should have come back again in the nineties after making such a haul of our prominent men, convincing them that a tax on land alone would bring heaven to earth. Sir Samuel Griffith must have had some searching of heart at that time. A little document of his own upon the land was printed, which made us sit up and take notice. Was the Premier going to do something in the way of an experiment with Henry George's gospel? To the wonderful man who had been preaching it with the fervour of a Peter the Hermit or John Wesley right through Australia, to packed audiences, anything seemed possible. But Sir Samuel did nothing. It was noted, however, that when he defeated Sir Thomas McIlwraith in 1883 on the latter's land grant railway scheme to the Far North, he included in his ministry one credited with being a convinced single-taxer, who became Minister for Lands. In his term of office it was declared that not an acre was alienated that could be leased.

During my editorship of the *Brisbane Courier* the man on the land was continually complaining. He had to settle on the Dutton system of leaseholds, instead of obtaining areas with a title at the end of fulfilment of the conditions, and maintaining payment of instalments. But he could not get accommodation from the banks. Eventually the argument for freehold against leasehold was settled in favour of the old system. Human nature was too much for Henry George. My argument about it all took the shape of a personal illustration. The

Henry George ideal was so attractive because it seemed simple, if it were regarded without the perversities of human nature and without thought of the accidents of life.

I had stood at the door of the *Herald* office one wet afternoon ready for a railway tram that would take me to the station just in time to catch the train that would land me home for dinner. If I did not catch my train I would have no dinner, for I had a leading article to write and must be back by a certain time to get at it, so that it might be put into type in time for me to see a "proof." Well, there was the tram as I stepped down to the pavement, the tram was as good as caught, my dinner would be as good as eaten as it had been done a dozen times, my leading article was as good as written and published, and there was nothing to argue about. But at the critical moment two old ladies with their wet umbrellas up, caught me in such a coil that I lost the tram, and my dinner. Nature and the chapter of accidents were too much, and always will be, for the best laid plans of mice and men, and of single-taxers.

Perhaps Henry George would, as a retort, have compared one of my old ladies with the wet umbrellas, to my strong and stubborn daily newspaper, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, so often called "Granny" by her critics, but who has defied them successfully for more than a century.

CHAPTER VII

MY START IN JOURNALISM

Bank smashes and my need of work—Begin to write articles for the *Brisbane Courier*—The great flood of 1893—Brisbane almost wholly under water—Two great steel bridges washed away—Newspapers in trouble and a story of success—An account of the flood.

FATE seemed to have played with me in 1892. The depression and the consequent bursting of the land boom, the breaking of the banks, and the hurrying away of a multitude of young men to Western Australia, all helped to diminish my resources and indeed threatened serious privation. I had a wife and two children to support, but fortunately had not been involved in the prevailing speculations. The syndicates that would have given me work in cutting up estates if I would join them, had to look elsewhere. What I owned was my own and was not involved in any collapse from the calling up of bank overdrafts.

The family business was now like a plank that once gave both my father and myself room, but would no longer hold him and me. My surveying was poor support, because surveyors were all competing for crumbs and I wanted a loaf. So I began to write for the newspapers, realizing that I was not a journalist and knew nothing of the technical side of journalism. But I could write. I came from good literary stock and had been a persistent family correspondent. Essays for the Bris-

bane Literary Circle, and a good deal of fiddling with verse had helped me to form a fairly good style; and I was full of knowledge and experience, as I thought, at the age of thirty-three. So I sent articles on subjects of immediate interest to the evening paper opposite my office, and two of them, as they were written, appeared as leading articles!

But when the payment came in three free copies for each article, I decided that I could not feed my family on newsprint. I felt like the musician who was invited by Lady New-Rich in a *Punch* cartoon, to come to her castle and play to her "and I will show you my roses" she said graciously.

"Tank you, matam," he said, "you are ferry friendly, but pardon me I haf a vife and six children and dey cannot live on roses."

So I sent my next efforts to the morning paper—the *Brisbane Courier*. Again to my surprise, two of my efforts appeared as leading articles and then came a cheque! From that day to this I have never ceased writing, and in five years I was editor of the *Courier*. The Hon. Charles Hardie Buzacott gave me a start. He was managing director and editor-in-chief at the time, but offered me little hope of permanent employment. I was not a journalist and was too old to begin to learn the technical side of the craft. I had no shorthand and to this day am ignorant of it. All my notes of speeches in or out of Parliament have been taken in long-hand, but I have often found that I obtained a much better idea of a speaker's mind and of the main points of his speech than the reporter who had to condense the speech without using his mind—he was the slave of his pencil.

However, Mr Buzacott told me that he was temporarily in difficulty. He did a good deal of writing himself but was too much occupied and worried with the business side of the paper. The Saturday leading articles were his difficulty, because his principal leader-writer was ill, and my proffered articles were just good enough. He wisely gave me little encouragement. I had not even a good leader-writing style—it was so overloaded with literary references. He hoped his chief leader-writer would soon be well, and so on.

It was "Good Day" and that seemed final.

February 1893 had begun—a momentous month for me indeed. The heavens opened soon after and the greatest flood of its kind in modern Australian history began with two tremendous cloud-bursts within a fortnight. The first came in a flood which floated our gunboat, the *Gayundah*, up on to the Botanic Gardens near Government House and left it high and dry. Then in the succeeding flood, ten days after, she was floated back again, after the Government had accepted a tender for more than £6000 to provide a slipway. It was easy money for the contractor and the Government had to pay.

It all comes back in a great picture as I write, for I described the first flood in a special article, which appeared in the *Courier*. It is now condensed as an appendix to this book for those who may be interested. I consider it an historic document. Perhaps that may be forgiven when I explain that it probably gave Mr Buzacott a new idea of my ability as a journalist. He published it at once and gave it a clap. It was my good fortune to view the rising waters from a vantage-point with a fine telescope which swept round the circle of

the city as it was submerged, and far away almost to Moreton Bay. The ocean seemed to be coming fast to town, until even the Pacific itself appeared to be at our feet in one vast sheet of water. My father-in-law's property was on a hill-top on the west of the city, near my own home, and commanded a view equal to some of the best I have seen in my tours in eastern Australia, and that is saying a good deal. From the verandas of the larger home I studied the rising flood.

My wife and I had locked up our cottage, and with our family went over to take charge of the combined household with the six children and our own two, while their fathers, greatly concerned, said good-bye. Then my father-in-law went to Ipswich to meet my mother-in-law who was returning from Sydney and who would be alarmed by the news of a great flood that would perhaps reach her. Could she reach home? We had word of a cloud-burst on one of the two tributaries of the Brisbane River near Ipswich, and already seventy inches of rain had been recorded until further registration was impossible—six feet of rain and over! It was incredible! The hush over the doomed city was like that before an impending seige, or bombing—in modern phrase. It was like war when it comes; nobody could visualize the possibilities. The actual destruction proved to be beyond all experience.

We did not see my wife's father and mother for a fortnight! We expected them back in twenty-four hours and the days followed one another in dreadful suspense. Meanwhile I filled in the time taking notes. The water at last cut off every road into the city proper, except our own road which ran at its critical point into the higher sections of the metropolitan area along an

embankment only twelve inches above the rising flood. Part of Queen Street was above water, but it had got into the basements farther down and made the publication of the *Courier* very difficult. My own description of the flood came out in a very badly "set" edition, reduced in size, and evidently ashamed of itself beside the evening *Telegraph* which was well out of the mess. The two great steel bridges went at last, houses of all sizes built of wood were swept down the river, disgorging their furniture. The contents of warehouses were spread upon the waters, and sacks of flour, cases of kerosene and endless floatable goods found their way down, to become salvage on the shores of Moreton Bay. It was the Deluge with a vengeance.

When the first flood went down and everybody got to work to clean up or mourn over losses in land that had disappeared and homes lost for ever, the wanderers of our household returned. It was a fortnight between their going and coming—counting their arrival at Ipswich which had been recorded as the start of their disappearance. Then came the second cloud-burst on the other tributary of the Brisbane River and brought down another flood that reached within eighteen inches of the first flood's height. It was loss upon loss.

Meanwhile we had the story of the lost travellers. The mail train with the reunited husband and wife on board had steamed out of the Ipswich station, full of passengers anxious to reach Brisbane and in doubt whether they would ever get there. The waters were out. Would the train be caught in the flood and were the bridges safe? Reaching a platform which was little more than a siding, the train stopped, though usually it went through. Soon it became evident that it could

not proceed. The flood-waters were not only over the track but several feet above it. Brisbane was quite impossible that night, or next day. When, indeed were they to see Brisbane? Should they ever see it? The train must be taken back to Ipswich. But a little investigation along the line showed that Ipswich was as inaccessible even as Brisbane. The flood had got them both ways. Then what next?

Further investigation revealed that fortune had not deserted them. Redbank, the small siding at which they were held up, was on high land and likely to be safe whatever happened. The farming district which it served had a public school on this piece of high land, and the buildings and school-grounds seemed full of people. The train was soon emptied and the Attorney-General, our lost head of the family, was looked to for advice and a lead. He quickly went up to the school-grounds and interviewed the farmers, who with their families had apparently taken refuge from flooded homes on the lower lands. They explained that this was the only available area, small as it was. It was higher than other levels to which they could flee. They had brought food in carts and various other vehicles, and it looked as if the place was to be akin to a besieged town.

What was to be done, with so many more mouths to feed? The Attorney-General asserted his authority as a minister of the Crown and appointed a committee to take charge of all available food. Another committee had to look after sanitation and arrange for sleeping and feeding. The food was rationed. Everybody loyally fell in with the proposed arrangements, often bettering them by shrewd advice. It was a self-selected community of sensible men and women, as it happened,

and the common sense of the farmers and their wives fitted in with the business experience of many of the passengers who had to make homes of their carriages and find means for preparing and taking meals. Then the best way of keeping everybody interested, patient and self-helping, soon appeared; and for a fortnight they were beleaguered.

At last the flood-waters began to subside and the track became visible. Were the bridges safe and in good order? While this was being debated the Governor, the Chief Railway Commissioner, and two other officials appeared on a trolly car used for inspections, and the way to Brisbane was reported safe. It may be imagined what my wife, the children and I went through in that fortnight with visions of a train wrecked and everybody drowned. And so came the happy reunion. There was so much to talk about, with questions to be answered from both sides—it all makes a story about which a book could be written.

CHAPTER VIII

NEARLY HALF A CENTURY

F. W. Ward's arrival in Brisbane—He becomes editor of the *Brisbane Courier*—The Pacific Cable and the first linotype—Sir Thomas McIlwraith, Premier of Queensland, and his problems—His attack on F. W. Ward—An awful accident on the still flooded river—My job as writer fairly assured.

ALMOST half a century of journalism began in 1893, and when F. W. Ward arrived in Brisbane from Vancouver our forty years of warm friendship made its start and it continued till he died in 1933. He was forty-five years of age when we first met and I was thirty-three. The day before he died he gave me his last greeting and hand-clasp. It was characteristic of the man throughout his eighty-seven years of life that he did nothing by halves. He was as direct as he was dynamic, and as straight as he was fearless.

I said in a previous chapter that the arrival of the first cablegram to Australia in 1872 was one of the great events in Australian history. It is also true that by 1893 the Eastern Extension Cable Company, with Sir John Pender the masterful director, had got Australia in its grip. There seemed to be no hope of loosening it, and Mr Ward was as much concerned about the pressure of its monopoly as any Australian newspaper proprietor, though he was unattached at the moment. No particular newspaper claimed his services. But when he

landed in Brisbane by a steamer of the recently started Canadian Australian Steamship Company, he had been three weeks in companionship with two remarkable fellow passengers. The Hon. Mackenzie Bowell, and Dr Sandford Fleming were on board; and their mission to Australia was to preach the gospel of a Pacific Cable. Mackenzie Bowell was a proprietor of several Canadian newspapers and became Premier of Canada. Dr Sandford Fleming was closely associated with the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. He was consulting engineer to the Government whose head was Sir John Macdonald, mightily concerned in carrying through that great transcontinental line.

The All Red Route was to be completed with a Pacific Cable, and F. W. Ward in the preceding three weeks must have been good company for the other two. At any rate he put his strength into supporting the project of this great cable line. Its engineering difficulties would have been discussed with Dr Sandford Fleming, who insisted that the vast distances and tremendous deeps of the Pacific Ocean could be conquered. And conquered they were. While the Pacific Cable, laid down and working, may not have done all that was desired of it by its sanguine promoters and advocates, it certainly proved a good fighting weapon in the hands of the newspapers for obtaining concessions from the Eastern Extension Company later on.

F. W. Ward had brought with him from Canada another very important aid to newspaper production and future expansion in the linotype. All the type setting in 1893, when I began my apprenticeship to journalism, was by hand. The compositor stood at his case and picked out the type one letter at a time. When

the columns of type were no longer needed, because the paper was being printed, the type was "distributed" and had to be picked out letter by letter before any more printing could be done with it. From the United States of America F. W. Ward had brought back with him the plans and specifications of the first linotype that could be landed in Australia. He had full authority to place the privilege of buying where he pleased. It was, as everybody knows, a machine to do away with the hand-setting of type, and it has since been developed.

When F. W. Ward and I became friends after his arrival in Brisbane (for he knew my people) he and Mrs Ward were often our guests, and the guests of my father-in-law. Thus I learned confidentially what was in the wind with the first linotype and how much F. W. Ward was taken up with the idea of a Pacific Cable. But neither he nor I had any idea that he would be offered the editorship of the *Brisbane Courier*, at the moment.

In the meantime his arrival was full of immediate interest and not a little humour. Mrs Ward was at the wharf to greet him when the steamer from Canada arrived in March 1895, and she was astonished at the great head of hair and the massive beard he had raised since she last saw him. His hair had always been red since she first knew him, but a month's growth had given her a new idea of its possibilities. She wasted no time, however, in getting him into a barbar's chair; and when he came out, she sent him in again—we paid sixpence a hair-cut in those days. I fancy she would have sent him in a third time if he would have gone, for he still looked unusually hairy.

This was not my opinion alone, for next night

I received a humorous endorsement. Sir Thomas McIlwraith, Premier of Queensland, was addressing a public meeting which he had called in order to take the citizens of Brisbane into his confidence. He wished to talk about the serious position created by the terrible double flood which had submerged the city, destroyed our two great steel bridges, and caused almost incalculable loss. F. W. Ward had paid his duty call that afternoon upon the Premier and roused his wrath and indignation by taking an optimistic view of the situation. He told Sir Thomas that he had just returned from America where floods, bank smashes, and "busted" land booms were a commonplace. But all these trials and losses did not seem to prevent prosperity and abounding optimism. Queensland had limitless resources —and so on.

From what the optimist told me Sir Thomas McIlwraith, also a red head by the way, went off like a packet of crackers; and I suspected that in his speech that evening he would give this irritating visitor a piece of his mind. At any rate I thought my friend would like to hear the speech and he said he would. To make sure that he heard it full and clear, I got a seat on the platform, and when he arrived I vacated it in his favour. Then I stood at the back of the platform where a bunch of young fellows had placed themselves. As soon as the stranger with his striking head of hair and voluminous beard appeared, one of these whispered:

"Hallo! Who's this with the hair?" His neighbour said: "I don't know, but it looks as if the bank has a lien on his crop, and won't let him cut!"

We had a good laugh, after the meeting, over this and the Premier's indignant protest against visitors who

wanted to teach him how to suck his own emu eggs. But F. W. Ward recognized that Sir Thomas had the best of the argument after all. He had to clean up a mighty mess and needed help from everybody. Then came comparisons. Australia could be proud of her great men and Sir Thomas McIlwraith was one of them.

Sir Henry Parkes was another whom F. W. Ward knew very well, and whose leonine head and plentiful hair reminded us of the story with, which the evening's experience was well matched. Sir Henry in one of the general elections in New South Wales had a young candidate for a doubtful city seat which was likely to be lost. To give the supporter a good start Sir Henry promised to speak at his first meeting which was sure to be a rowdy one, and free trade might need very careful handling. The Premier was well received and made a capital speech. When he was about to hand it over to the young candidate, someone in the audience rose and asked if he might ask Sir Henry a question. He wanted to know whether the Premier really believed in supporting native industry, and another quarter of an hour went in Sir Henry's affirmative. Came the retort like a flash: "Then why don't you get your hair cut?" It was a rowdy meeting after that.

When we drove F. W. Ward and his good wife out and round the city next day, the extent of the flood and the serious damage that was done came more fully into view.

Not long after came an appalling accident due to the flood's carrying away of the Victoria Bridge, which was really an extension of Queen Street, in the heart of the city. Something had to be done at once to carry on the traffic, and the river was still flowing strongly

with waters fed from a thousand flooded creeks and streams throughout the watershed of the Brisbane River. So a steel cable was placed across near enough to the bridge-site for vehicular traffic to be carried by punts running at intervals. Small steamers also ferried passengers to and fro until the life of the city revived again. One of these steamers with something like three hundred people on board had been allowed by the captain to get too close to the submerged cable. The current carried the steamer down on to the obstacle and she turned over, drowning many of the passengers.

This helped to show how grave was the burden which Sir Thomas McIlwraith had to carry, although F. W. Ward's optimistic forecast was amply justified. Good seasons and strong hearts soon told. The bridges were rebuilt and Brisbane grew and prospered.

Perhaps F. W. Ward's greatest interest at the moment was the return to a city which first commanded his attention when he was a youth still under twenty-one. He had come to Queensland in 1866 when the capital of the colony was only seven years old, and the Governor was the first of a series which included, later on, Lord Lamington and Sir Henry Norman. Moreover, it was not in Brisbane but in Ipswich that he felt the social and business life strongest. Like Parramatta in relation to Sydney, in the first years of possession under the British flag, the life of the colony seemed to leave the coast and the inevitable harbourage for the towns. These grew up at first at the head of the several rivers. An important pastoralists' club was the rallying point in Ipswich for the wealthy landowners of the Darling Downs and the country between. So Parramatta disputed the right of precedence until there was no room

for argument left; and Port Jackson and Moreton Bay came to their own without much need to fight about it.

F. W. Ward in those days was a young Wesleyan minister on probation, and he went on to Sydney in due course. Thence he was sent to Bathurst and the country beyond. Returning to Sydney again, he found a wife, one of the best, and in due course became a journalist, editor of the *Sydney Mail* and the *Echo*, an evening paper issued from the *Herald* office.

CHAPTER IX

A GOOD BEGINNING

Five years in full harness—The Chino-Japanese war—Lord Chelmsford's approval of leading articles—Fight for Federation and a Constitution—The thunderbolt—F. W. Ward's resignation of the editorship—I am offered the chair and a world of responsibility.

In the months following F. W. Ward's appointment to the chair of the *Brisbane Courier*, until his arrival to begin work at the beginning of May, the way seemed to open for me. Looking through my leading articles from March to and including May 1893 I find myself fully employed. Among other gifts from the gods came my appointment to the position of Queensland correspondent of the Melbourne *Argus*. But Mr Ward's advent had made the difference, when he began to write, that I was turned on to the *Evening Observer* and the *Queenslander*, our weekly journal, with *Courier* leaders at intervals.

My table in the editorial rooms was a sign of something doing. But it was still all tentative. The question of continuing the *Evening Observer* was being debated by the directors and my editor. I knew they had not much time for a morning and evening paper from the same office, each in effect saying the same thing. But he had been editor of the *Echo* in the olden days, issued from the office of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and he could see the difficulties. So there was a pro-

blem, the solving of which might throw me out of a job. Yet I never lost my enthusiasm. The imprisoned literary spirit in me was finding its wings, and my enthusiasm was growing. But, otherwise, I could see daylight ahead. If I had to return to business and my surveying, this was the odd string to my bow. Things were improving. I also knew that I had at least an introduction to journalism if it meant trying my luck in Sydney and Melbourne. It never came to that on such terms. But whoever could have dreamed of the sequel? Certainly not I.

And now began my five years' work alongside one of the best and most experienced journalists in Australia. It was like standing on the footplate of a locomotive beside the driver, with every bolt and rivet quivering under the power being developed. It was when the Chino-Japanese war began in 1894 that my chance for a "spree," as my chief called it, began. When hostilities ceased I was told that we would "get back to work." This meant that I had been told off to write the leading articles for the *Courier* on the war, which was being followed by our readers with increasing attention. My articles continued during the war, and Lord Lamington, the Governor of Queensland, complimented Mr Ward upon them, and on one occasion said they were as good as any in the London *Times*.

It was just like my chief to tell me when my work had attracted attention, and I certainly put all my time and enthusiasm into them. Every book and magazine article, and anybody who had been to China and Japan and knew something of their peoples and resources at first hand—all were read, and studied, and interrogated; and I quite enjoyed the writing which followed.

But the greatest and most interesting time of my life was during the campaign for the election of delegates to the Federal Convention. The *Courier* urged that Queensland should be represented, for the great work of drafting a constitution for the coming Commonwealth was of supreme importance. Queensland, if not represented, might find it impossible to join the Federation; and to be outside was unthinkable. It was paradoxical, too, that Sir Samuel Griffith should belong to Queensland. He had done so much for Federation, and had already laid the foundations of a constitution in a Conference of the States called by Sir Henry Parkes not long before. He was now our Chief Justice and could not be elected as a Queensland delegate, but his advice would prove invaluable. It would be a disaster if Queensland were not represented in the coming Convention.

But Sir Hugh Nelson, our Premier, and his colleagues were afraid. The Labour Party was growing stronger. Its members seemed determined to force unification into the constitution; they would abandon the vital agreement already reached, with the American Constitution as the model. The colonies were to have equal representation in the Senate, though the Senate as we know it seems to be just another House of Representatives with a different form of election. Sir Hugh and his colleagues found that the New South Wales Labour Party was going to vote a "ticket." If the Queensland Labour Party did the same thing, the two tickets would carry a solid Labour delegation into the Convention. What would happen? Unification would probably win. So Sir Hugh Nelson, shrewd and capable

man as he was, would not proceed with an Enabling Bill, and the Convention met without Queensland.

What was amazing, however, when the election of delegates in New South Wales took place, was the failure of the Labour Party ticket. It did not send a single member to the Convention! Not even Cardinal Moran had been elected, though nominated with the idea that he might attract a substantial body of votes. The thing we had pleaded for in the *Courier* was to trust the common sense of the whole electorate—of all Queensland as one. Give it a chance of concentrating on the job of sending the best men to the Federal Convention. This is what New South Wales had done, and so demonstrated the truth that left to itself there is always a great fund of common sense in every British community.

When we got the surprising news Mr Ward said to me: "Now go ahead. Let me see what you have to say about this surprise." It was a great trust. It must have appealed to my chief to write himself, for he was an unceasing commentator upon current events and his leaders always attracted attention. So I went ahead. When I had nearly finished he came to my room and sat by my table. He picked up the sheets I had filled and began to read. I could feel that he was approving for he would have stopped me if I had "missed stays." He would not have allowed any waste of time if the leader had to be rewritten. When I had finished the article he slapped his hand on the table with a "good." Then he took it away to be "set," so that he might see it in print. He had hardly altered a word when I saw it, the first leading article in next day's paper.

Then came 1898 and it seemed as if the devil were

loose again upon my affairs. My chief had been offered an important position on the editorial staff of the Melbourne *Argus* and had accepted it. That was bad enough, and the devil had left me to consider the mess which I was likely to be in, with my mentor and friend gone to Victoria just when Queensland needed him more than ever. Nothing could be worse, it seemed, and this was the devil's day out. It reminded me of a story heard many years later of an old Highlander visiting Australia who called upon a brother Scot, whose father and grandfather he had known—both Presbyterian ministers in Scotland of stern unbending type. When the old man was asked: "Have you been to the kirk yet?" He replied: "Aye, but I dinna like the hymns they sing. They asked me to sing:

> For Satan trimbles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees."

The old man said indignantly: "That was not your grandfather's divvil!"

"Oh, but," said my friend, "that was a hymn of the great poet Cowper, and has been in the hymn books for a hundred years."

"I dinna care. It was not your grandfather's divvil. He nivver trimbled. He was a fechtin divvil."

There was, of course, no arguing with fate, but I did fear the event which sent away the only man who could make a journalist of me. I was nearly forty years old and time as well as fate might be against me. I could only wait.

Next morning Mrs Ward, who had always been a good friend, met me in Queen Street and told me she was in a great hurry. "You have heard the news?

Well," and she leaned forward to whisper: "Be ready for a surprise!" I shook my head. I was ready for any surprise that could be sprung on me, and the fighting devil of my career had multiplied them just when I wanted a settled outlook. So we parted. I had to remind myself that the five years with Mr Ward as my editor had not been in vain, but who could replace him? Who could carry on the good work?

In the afternoon came the thunderbolt. It was something that I had never imagined, or dreamed of, and did not want. Mr Ward asked me to accompany him to his room. There, on behalf of the directors, he offered me the editorship of the *Brisbane Courier*! Mr Ward said that the directors had asked him to nominate a successor, or to suggest somebody, and he had nominated me. I was dumbfounded. This was the fighting devil with a vengeance. I was to write half the leaders and edit the paper, and we were really but beginning the fight for Federation! I only assented to the general statement, but could not discuss it, asking for time to consider the whole business. I had never once relieved Mr Ward in the chair, for I could not be spared from leader-writing. The chief-of-staff, old and trusted, took the chair, though I had more than once relieved the editor of the *Queenslander*.

It has been said that fortune is offered once at least to every man in his life-time, and I have heard many people say that they knew just when they failed to grasp the skirts of Happy Chance. Nearly always it was because the person concerned was not ready to face what was, in effect, an adventure which looked too much like a forlorn hope. Well, this was just my confession when Mr Ward admitted all the difficulties and

said that he had considered them. Nevertheless it was my great opportunity and I should regret it always if I put it aside. My wife, who would have to bear the brunt of the burden, with her usual sound sense and good humour, told me that we had come through more serious troubles and had survived, so why not go ahead? The problems would solve themselves if we faced them in the right spirit, and she expressed her faith and confidence in me. We had then been married nearly ten years; and we should have had nearly fifty years of happy married life when she died—after I had been editor-in-chief of the *Sydney Morning Herald* for twenty years.

CHAPTER X

A FOOL OR A PHYSICIAN

Beginning as editor—A discussion of my staff—First trial with an unravelled murder—Outbreak of plague and the devil to pay—A course of plague to settle a doubt—Coronation of Edward VII—The postponement and my greatest trial—News after midnight—A Coronation Supplement in distress—Federation and Sir Samuel Griffith.

At forty, it has been said, a man is either a fool or a physician. That is to say he has become set in his ways and thinks he knows as much about himself as most doctors. Now, this supreme adventure of the editorship did not trouble me at forty so much as the possibility of not "making good." It was partly due to the immensity of the problems ahead, the chief of which was the best way of getting Queensland into the Commonwealth; and partly to the handicap of following a man so well known in Australian journalism as F. W. Ward. It was here, as in so much else, that the first step counted.

I considered the men upon whom I must depend and was encouraged. My assistant editor was also my chief-of-staff. He had been a long-tried sub-editor under previous chiefs, steady but conservative and often a trial to a man of volcanic energy and so full of ideas as my predecessor. But E. J. T. Barton was good steel and well put together and I had no fear about his supply of petrol. Another good man at the opposite pole was J. J.

Knight, an English-born pressman who had responded to Australian conditions with a spring and enthusiasm which in its turn was somtimes a trial to everybody. But his ability and fertility of ideas brought him first into the chair of the *Brisbane Courier* after Barton, who was my successor, and then eventually into supreme command as chairman of directors. He was editor of our afternoon paper, the *Evening Observer*, in my time, but I had measured him up in the previous five years and we had become fast friends.

With two other such men as R. Sanderson Taylor, who followed J. J. Knight in the chair of the *Courier* and died there, and Major-General Spencer Browne, I was well set. All I had to do was to go ahead. And we went into the valley of the shadow of death with a double murder at Gatton, a place between Brisbane and Toowoomba. This made me the point of reference for a dozen other Australian editors. "Shake up Fletcher" I could hear in all the southern editorial sanctums. We had sent our best men up to Gatton, and the southern papers had also dispatched their sleuth-hounds to the place after we had seemed to have failed them. But nothing was ever discovered for publication. While the pother lasted, it seemed as if the devil had put thorns wherever I trod in those initial months.

Then came the outbreak of plague and the strain of trying to prevent a panic. Few people to-day can have any conception of the terror which an outbreak of plague may arouse in a community that has had no experience of it. In Brisbane soon after I became editor of the *Courier*, there was the hope at first that the beginning of the outbreak might prove to be the end. The Board of Health insisted, however, that all doubtful

cases must be reported at once, but everything was done to avert a panic. I could not help remembering the legend of the traveller leaving Damascus who met the Plague coming in: "What are you doing here?" he asked the Plague. "Oh, I am going to kill ten thousand people," the Plague replied. Coming back he met the Plague leaving Damascus: "What is the meaning of this?" he asked, "You said you would kill ten thousand people. You have killed fifty thousand!" The Plague shrugged his shoulders: "I killed my lot," he said; "the rest died of fright."

There was in Brisbane a Dr Lucas, a remarkable personality. He was a man of science as well as of medicine. He had a great range of knowledge, and was the brother of the late A. H. S. Lucas, who became head master of the Sydney Grammar School. I allowed two or three of his letters to appear, discounting the danger; but one evening the President of the Board of Trade came to see me in great perturbation. Several cases which had not been reported were now developing all the symptoms of plague and the Board was preparing for the worst. Would I keep Dr Lucas out of the paper? I at once agreed, but said that I would like to take a course of plague. Could I go to the Bacteriological Institute? I knew Mr Pound, the Director, very well. This was heartily approved and next morning I took my course.

I was shown the textbooks, the specimens of plague prepared for the microscope in which the typical bipolar staining of the bacilli could be clearly seen. They were like carraway seeds with each end distinctly stained and the centre free. Then we went to the cultures in agar-agar jelly, where the curious ropy formations could be seen with the naked eye. Guinea pigs

had been inoculated and could be identified as suffering from plague. Finally a piece of the spleen of a man who had died of plague was shown to me spotted as a plague victim's would be. I asked no more questions and went back to assist the Board of Health to the limit. There had been neither comment on, nor opposition to, the Board as far as we were concerned; but now it was a case of backing up the Board, and informing the public as far as it was considered possible. Until the final victory was won, and the city declared free of plague, I was naturally on tenter-hooks.

But my worst and most difficult dilemma was yet to come. The Coronation of King Edward VII, after some delay, seemed to have been settled as to date, and we went ahead with a Coronation Supplement. It was illustrated, carried a fine body of advertisements and, of course, the date. It lay in great piles in the publishing-room ready to be "inset" directly the day's issue began to fall off the machine. I could not help wondering what would happen if the King were not crowned on the day of days for the *Courier* Supplement; and that is precisely what did happen. Thinking of nothing, except getting out our enlarged paper, I waited for the final word of a completed ceremony. I had written my leading article; everything else was ready to close up, and get the paper to "bed."

Brisbane was the last in the cable round, to get the word we waited for. It came by the Eastern Extension Company's service overland to Adelaide, when it was sent on to Melbourne, transmitted to Sydney, and we came last. Thus, near midnight we received the news: "Coronation postponed." My leading article had to be re-written in a hurry, and everything was switched off

to an ordinary issue. But soon the publisher sent up word for instructions about the supplement.

Now, my immediate difficulty was that the managing director was many miles away and it was quite impossible to get near him in a rush at midnight. The general manager also could not be reached, but, like the managing director, he was not in or near Brisbane. So alone I had to decide, almost at once, whether to publish the supplement or not. To bring out a fat supplement of pictures and reading matter about a Coronation that had been postponed would certainly be ridiculous, because everything had been made to hinge upon an event of "to-day," which would not be true. Nor would it be true for to-morrow, but on some undefined date ahead. An operation on the King seemed to be indicated; and there might, God forbid, be no Coronation at all.

On the other hand not to publish the supplement would be loss upon loss. The cost of producing it was no small item, and the loss of revenue from the unissued body of advertisements would be disastrous, because we needed every penny we could save or get together to keep the income of the young proprietor-in-chief in London up to the mark. I had a few minutes to decide, not an hour or two. At last I gave word to get ready to "inset" the supplements, and make a welter of it. Often afterwards as I have looked back I have said that no event in my life seemed to last so long and yet took so short a time. The settlement of my fate was apparently so surely wrapped up in it. I would not be through the mill until the morrow, when my decision would prove to be right or wrong. The night had to be gone through, and the next day too. Yet as the die had been cast and nothing else could be done, I, like

many men condemned to be hanged in the morning, went home and slept as usual. Then in the broad daylight when I had finished my usual late breakfast I went into town to find that the paper, in the words of the publisher himself, had "sold like hot cakes." It was a happy release from prison.

In Marion Crawford's *Doctor Claudius*, the Duke who is a burly, active, good-natured Englishman, proposed to his friend staying at the same hotel on the Continent, that they should go for a walk, and was given a flat refusal. The American said: "If God had intended a man to walk he would have given him four legs." This is not quoted because I approve of the sentiment for I believe in walking and like no exercise better. But it indicates a frame of mind. I was beginning to realize that an editor needs to cultivate a spirit of humour in which the apparently impossible becomes a natural way out of a difficulty. Silas Barker did not want to go for a walk, but a Duke is not a personage to be lightly refused when he makes a suggestion, and in this case the Duke liked Barker because he could say funny things. So they went for a walk.

On another occasion, after surviving the Coronation dilemma, I was really between the devil and the deep sea. F. W. Ward when he went to Melbourne left over the problem of the Constitution and how best to deal with it. Its provisions were beginning to emerge from the Convention in Sydney from which Queensland was absent. Not that I felt helpless or incompetent. The broad issues were clear enough. I could have dealt comfortably with the whole problem of publishing reports of the progress of the Convention in its struggle with the

Constitution had not a paradox caught me between wind and water. The humour of it, on one side, was as compelling as Silas Barker's little joke.

Sir Samuel Griffith sent for me, or rather he wrote a courteous note inviting me to see him. It was the Convention and the coming Constitution that were occupying his mind and making him anxious. He wanted to help me, though of course he could not appear because he was Chief Justice of Queensland. Indeed, through the whole of the passage of the draft to its final acceptance by the Convention I was in touch with Sir Samuel. It was when the problem of the Privy Council, and the thorny question of a right of appeal at all, was being discussed that he was most exercised. He must have been quietly consulted by the members of the Convention most in sympathy with him, and at last his views were practically embodied in the Constitution. That is to say the final right of appeal to the Privy Council was carried against the little Australians, who wanted from Westminster no last word upon their affairs.

I must say, however, that Sir Samuel under full head of steam was a very different man from the genial host in his own home. There, nobody could be kinder or more considerate. But when he sent me something explanatory in his own writing upon some knot which the Convention was fumbling over, and it did not appear exactly as he wanted it, he could be very caustic. One could not explain or argue. Compositors are only human. But we got through, and nobody was hurt. The *Courier's* supposed all-embracing knowledge was being continually reinforced by Sir Samuel Griffith's wisdom. And so, as if he occupied an outside seat in

the Convention, he screwed up the last few bolts needed to complete the Constitution. We never compared notes afterwards. The Boer War was on; and the Constitution, accepted by the Convention, had still to be ratified by the British Parliament and to receive the Royal assent. We both had our hands and heads full.

CHAPTER XI

SEA DUELS AND SEA POWER

The *Graf Spee* starts a story—Duel between the *Alabama* and the *Kearsage*—The *Surat's* excitement while on her way to Auckland—Duke of Edinburgh visits New Zealand—The *Galatea*—My thoughts of naval warfare at Spithead in 1911—The Admiralty's surprise for journalists in 1930—Mimic warfare at Portsmouth.

THESE reminiscences were being written when the *Graf Spee* was finding that her eleven-inch guns could not save her when opposed to British courage and seamanship even in smaller vessels with lighter guns. It was a duel at which the people of the United States and of South America were onlookers, and as keenly concerned as Germany and the rest of the world. We were all in it. But my mind goes back to another sea-duel during the American Civil War at which England and her Empire were onlookers and the United States the combatants, and in which the *Surat*—my ship for four months—was so close at hand that I have felt ever since as though I had been in a front seat, had heard the crash of the broadsides for seventy minutes, and had seen one of the combatants sink out of sight after hauling down her flag.

This seems quite a stretching of the long bow even for an imaginative youngster not then five years old. But it is not as big a tarradiddle as it looks. The *Alabama* and the *Kearsage* fought their battle off Cherbourg on

the French coast on 19 June, 1864, and the *Surat* was there or thereabouts. She is reported in the records to have cleared the Downs off Deal in the English Channel on about that date, but Captain Dunlop's log is not available to check the details. What I do know is that the fight was a subject of discussion for ever afterwards, among those passengers who had a story to tell. Some of them declared they had heard the firing, and so on, and so on. My receptive mind retained enough to prompt me in the following years to try to get at the truth, and I am still seeking it. But the essential fact is unshakable. The fight took place, and the *Surat* was near enough to it to have heard something, and possibly to have seen enough as well, to affect my memory and inflame my imagination.

Moreover, my father, a great reader and news gatherer, had just left an England worked up over the American Civil War, and much concerned about the difficulties, almost the impossibilities, of trading with either North or South. The *Alabama* and Captain Semmes were nearly as well known for their surprises and terrible destruction at sea as was Stonewall Jackson on land. So that there could be nothing wonderful about the passengers of the *Surat* being excited, if it were known before they left England that the *Alabama* had been obliged to call in at Cherbourg on 11 June just when the *Surat* herself was sailing, or had sailed, from the East India Docks in London.

Now the *Alabama* and her commerce destruction cost England more than three millions sterling, and nearly led to war with the United States. This was before the Northern claims were remitted to arbitration. She had been built in an English dockyard, on the Mersey, during

the American Civil War and the Confederate Government had given Captain Semmes instructions not to afford the British Government any reason for arresting her. But the Northern agents began to suspect. This vessel, which had neither name nor destination, was manifestly a ship of war. She was a steam-sloop of a little over a thousand tons, built for speed and was nearly finished before the truth became apparent. Captain Semmes got her away, took her to the Azores where he shipped her equipment, her guns, and supplies; named her the *Alabama;* hoisted the Confederate flag, and set out at once to do four million pounds worth of trade-damage until the steamer *Kearsage*, a war vessel under Captain Winslow, found her at Cherbourg and sank her.

It was all intensely interesting history to me; and my life on the *Surat* and long after was enlivened by the sense of something having happened which was left to me to define and elaborate. The fate of the *Graf Spee* brought it all back.

How far a child's memory may take him can be shown, I think, by the things which were fast in my consciousness before and after my fifth birthday. I can remember distinctly my first sight of the *Surat* from the East India Docks in London. She was lying in the Thames stream with her sails bent, and hanging loose from her yard-arms like a giant's washing. Then when we were at sea the outstanding fact was that we had two Maori chiefs on board, and these unfortunate men attracted me. They were dying of tuberculosis and had hutches on deck away from the passengers. They had been taken to England from New Zealand to advertise the new colony, and were being sent back when it was too late to save their lives. On sunny days they sat

outside their hutches, the picture of misery, but strangely attractive in their feather cloaks, and with wonderfully tattooed faces. I would stand studying the beautiful waves and whorls which filled the curves of nose, cheeks, and forehead. One chief died on board, and the other soon after we reached Auckland; but I have never forgotten them.

The daily life of the ship, and my friendships with the sailors and the saloon passengers, are still clear and comforting. My first visit when I was allowed on deck in the morning, was to the fo'c'sle where the sailors put a lanyard round my neck, and I then went about with a big sailor's knife dangling round my knees. Many events in that four months' voyage still stand out clearly, and it is not surprising that the fight between the *Kearsage* and the *Alabama* should have taken shape as a great event.

It was the *Galatea*, however, with the Duke of Edinburgh on board which brought the British fighting-ship into my consciousness, though I never actually saw her. She was in Auckland and was to have come to the Thames goldfield area, which was not so far away, down the Hauraki Gulf. But pictures of her, and personal descriptions, made her live in my fervid imagination. She was the last word in British frigates with auxiliary steam power, so that she could do thirteen knots an hour! Actually she had done twelve knots, and that was considered something wonderful. She was more than three times the tonnage of the *Surat*, and could carry seven hundred tons of coal alongside her water-tanks. Yet she depended on her sails and her three masts with yard-arms just like my own ship. It

was incredible! And the great guns she carried! I suppose my father, as usual, could help with details.

One thinks of the British Fleet in 1853 from a note in the *Life* of Lord Clarendon. The Prince Consort is quoted discussing the *Duke of Wellington* with her one hundred and thirty-one guns, a greater number than was ever assembled before in one vessel. She "went without sails and only propelled by a screw, *eleven miles an hour*, and this against wind and tide." The note is added, "wooden walls still, you see, but no fewer than sixteen of our battleships are fitted with steam power and screws."

The *Galatea* came up again as I watched the great Naval Review at Spithead in 1911 when King George V took the salute, and the Royal yacht moved down the sea lane between the lines of battleships. Right against us, however, was the *Von der Tann*, a sinister German cruiser. She was near enough to us, on the steamer where we were guests for the great occasion, and I could not help the feeling, even then, as of grit between my teeth. Joseph Chamberlain had tried so hard to come to an understanding with Germany over the respective navies, and to find some common ground upon which the two nations could stand as friends in arms and as emulating rivals in trade. It was in vain. He had only made it clearer that Germany was determined to finish forging a weapon for use against Great Britain when it came to a question of demands. It would then be presented as to an enemy. The *Von der Tann* looked the part in her bronze and black, and it only needed the Agadir incident a couple of months later to demonstrate Germany's ambition and intentions to the full. There could be no doubt about her navy's efficiency.

But it was the King himself who really held my imagination. I could not help thinking of him as a cadet, when with his brother, the Duke of Clarence, he visited Australia in the eighties in the *Bacchante*. In Brisbane, Prince George was the bright spark. The Governor, Sir Arthur Kennedy, had not long come from Hong Kong, bringing with him a staff of fine young Chinese who attracted a good deal of attention. But to Prince George they were irresistible. At a dinner at Government House, so the story went round, he would tweak a pigtail when a Chinese servant was conveniently near, and generally was full of fun.

On a motor trip with a friend not long ago, down the South Coast of New South Wales, we came to the turn-off for Kangaroo Valley and stopped at a tea-room evidently kept by the daughter of an old retired naval seaman who was in evidence in a small room full of souvenirs. He said with a great deal of gusto that he was the only man in Australia who had had the King (George V) on his back. On cross-examination it turned out that he was coxswain of the official boat at King George's Sound when the *Bacchante* arrived; and the Princes had to be taken ashore by the boat's crew, as there was no wharf. When the boat reached the beach the coxswain jumped overboard to give the Prince a "back" and land him dry on the beach. But Prince George, he said, made a flying leap on him and nearly gave them both a ducking.

Perhaps the converse of the great Naval Review at Spithead was the Admiralty's display in 1930 for the benefit of the visiting delegates to the Imperial Press Conference. We had it all to ourselves, and there was not a single battleship or cruiser on the water when we

got to Portsmouth on Thursday, 20 June. Our invitations were from the Admiralty and the Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth. It was described as a Naval Demonstration—entirely for us with no Royalty to mark the occasion and no distinguished visitors from other countries to give special emphasis to the display. Nevertheless, it was a very remarkable entertainment. First we were shown over a converted dreadnought, now become a gigantic plane carrier, with such accommodation and so much elaborate machinery that it left us without words. Under existing conditions of war to-day it would, of course, be impossible to give any description or impressive figures.

The rest of our experience can do no harm. We were all put aboard destroyers and taken three miles out to sea for demonstrations of some of the conditions of actual modern warfare. That is to say we were told that we were to be torpedoed and bombed, and that is what actually happened, for the positions of submarines were indicated and torpedoes were fired at us, with no charges, but we had the actual sense of being hit. It was certainly uncanny to find ourselves become targets, and then to see the track of the torpedo travelling straight for our particular destroyer. The hit was scored, and other torpedoes and destroyers helped to heighten the sense of what really happens, as to-day in actual warfare.

But then came the demonstration of attacks by planes and the dropping of bombs. This was quite new when compared with our great naval review at Spithead, and we realized what had happened in nearly twenty years. Since the second great war began in 1939 and the bombing and torpedoing of all kinds of craft from the

larger passenger and cargo steamers to trawlers and light-house-keeper boats, our Portsmouth experiences in 1930 have been lighted up with a ghastly glare. The only things left out were mines and later developments in their magnetic varieties. But what we received in the way of a naval demonstration was quite enough.

CHAPTER XII

THE MOTHER STATE

John Fairfax and Dr Lang opened my way to journalism—My visit to the Northern Rivers—Dr Lang's demand for the Clarence River as Queensland's boundary—My articles in the *Courier* bring a railway extension—Interesting discoveries in a wonderfully fertile district.

When F. W. Ward went to Queensland in 1866 in his seventeenth year he probably had never heard of Dr Dunmore Lang, and later on he did not give the great fighting parson a thought when he became editor of the *Brisbane Courier* in 1893. Yet if Dr Lang had not persuaded James Swan, who had been a compositor on one of his papers in Sydney, to go to Moreton Bay and start a newspaper there, there would not have been any *Moreton Bay Courier* to prepare the way for F. W. Ward. Also there would never have been a chance for me in the ranks of Australian editors. So whatever I may think and say conscientiously about John Fairfax as the chief factor in my journalistic career, John Dunmore Lang must be given his place.

When, therefore, I was sent to the rivers just over the border into New South Wales to report upon the Tweed and Richmond district I was in the territory over which Dr Lang fought so hard. He insisted that it should be included in Queensland when separation was granted, and the new colony created. The natural

boundary, he insisted, should be the Clarence River. And here was I to prove it—at any rate as far as the Tweed and Richmond were concerned. My greeting from the principal people there was warm enough for a visiting Premier carrying gifts. The leading men in business and Dr Doyle, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Lismore with them, gave me every possible help. It was not that they expected to make anything out of it, because nothing could be altered in boundaries or political allegiance. All that was wanted was a shorter and easier approach to Brisbane.

In stormy weather when the steamers for the Richmond River in New South Wales were bar-bound, the people were sometimes three weeks distant from Sydney! No wonder, therefore, that Dr Dunmore Lang fought so hard to have the Clarence River made the southern boundary of the new colony of Queensland in 1859. My job was to state the case for a better connexion with Brisbane for the rich Tweed and Richmond rivers. I wrote half a dozen enthusiastic articles which so impressed the Queensland Government, that the extension of the railway from Southport to Coolangatta at the Tweed Heads was undertaken almost at once. But this is really an aside. It is not in illustration of the words "things are not what they seem" which may become an aphorism for hasty folk. What I did learn on that trip went a good deal deeper.

Among the visits I paid to various parts of a wonderful district was one to the "Great Scrub." It is gone now. Why some of that extraordinary one hundred thousand acres was not reserved by the Government of the day passes my imagination! The giant fig-trees in the scrub, shallow rooted as they were, seemed to sit

on acres each, not yards, with vast buttresses to their trunks that had to be seen to be believed. The trees themselves in foliage and height reached to the top of the almost impenetrable scrub and were magnificent. But they were forlorn and helpless when robbed of the scrub, because the volcanic soil beneath them, nearly fifty feet deep, was so rich, and was so much in demand, that the fig-trees had to be destroyed. The slogan, "mind your step," should have been posted up on every area on the maps by the Lands Department when selectors were putting in their conditional purchase application for blocks of land in the Great Scrub.

As a staff field assistant in the Government District Survey Office at Grafton fifteen years before, when these selections were being surveyed, I got a very good idea of what lay ahead of the eager and enthusiastic farmers who had never seen such soil in their lives. Many of them came from the South Coast of New South Wales and brought fine herds of cattle with them. Dairy-farming was indicated on a large and very profitable scale. When I visited Lismore in 1895, the chairman who took me to the recently established Byron Bay Butter Factory—now so well known by its brand everywhere—showed me through. It was in full swing. Its size then and its amplitude now are indication enough of the progress of the district since I saw it first.

What was so impressive, however, was the story of the Great Scrub as a courage breaker. One selector, a shrewd farmer with £1000 to his credit and a large block of scrub to clear, went to work with a will. He proposed to deal first with less than forty acres, but had no idea of what demon weeds could do in this volcanic soil under an average annual rainfall of seventy inches.

The crooked elbow of the Macpherson Range caught the clouds which sent down the tropical rains. So when this eager farmer, after intense labour and earnest application had cleared a patch, he neglected to drop maize seed at each step. (These would grow at once and take charge until he was ready later on.) Then the ink weed and other devils of the soil chuckled, and smothered him out before he could really begin to farm and get ready for his cows. His thousand pounds had gone, and he could not carry on. Soon he had to throw up his selection and a golden chance had disappeared.

This again, is by the way. It was an impressive story, nevertheless, and I have never forgotten it. But what came specially under my observation on this trip to the Tweed and Richmond rivers, as a journalist, was the Government Experimental Farm which at the time was in charge of a Mr McKeown—now one of the veterans of the Department of Agriculture in New South Wales. He told me among other things that he could only succeed by his failures. This paradox captured me, for I soon turned it right side up when we got to grips. The first thing was, he said, not to try to make capital out of proving the possible extent of wonderful growth. That really needed no demonstration. It was essential to help where the farmers seemed to be failing, and to prevent them from wasting time by attempting to grow things doomed to failure.

Here was where an object lesson for me came in, for I had asked how it was that the district seemed to contain no orchards. Could not the farmers grow their own fruit by planting a few good trees round their homesteads? Mr McKeown replied that it was not for want of trying. But the farmers obtained all their young

stock from Sydney nurseries, and the trees grew but gave no fruit. They were all root and branch. They had to be acclimatized—a matter of years—before they could begin to bear. The difference in latitude explained everything. So he was persuading them to get their young stock from Brisbane, and the results proved him to be right. The farmers who took his advice were delighted. But such a change over, from bitter disappointment to evident success, could not be reached at once. Moreover, the Experimental Farm would be able to show by experience what varieties of fruits should be followed up. And so the lesson was being taught. I certainly thanked Mr McKeown for teaching me something.

When I got back to Brisbane I told my father-in-law the story. He had a fine orchard, and when he planted it had got a number of seedlings from Sydney of the Castle Kennedy fig, of which he had been very fond when he lived there. But not one of the grown trees had borne any fruit. It was all root and branch, but the trees themselves promised to be big ones. So they were all grubbed out. Happening to call on my own nurseryman and seedsman at his shop in the city, I told him the story. At once he invited me to accompany him to his gardens on the south side of the river where he had several acres. A great tree when we got there at once attracted my attention for its size and foliage, and I found to my surprise that it was a Castle Kennedy fig —loaded with fruit! It had become acclimatized, but more than twenty-five years had been needed to make it bear. So there was Mr McKeown's lesson, back to front. This difference between the growth and habits of trees and all kinds of vegetable, fruit, and herbage

in the temperate and sub-tropical regions of Australia is vital. Each part has problems of its own.

Another experience in journalistic work came when we heard of trouble among the apple-growers in the Stanthorpe district. This, beyond Warwick on the Darling Downs, but on an elevated mountain area of disintegrated granite near the border of New South Wales, has something like a mild English climate. Apple-orchards were failing, and farms were being sold at sacrificial prices after the depression had done its worst.

It was my duty to report upon it all. When I was in Stanthorpe recently one would never imagine that the town and district had been through the doldrums of the nineties. As a health resort it is marching ahead, but one of its mainstays as an agricultural and horticultural area is that it can send strawberries and early green vegetables to market in the south a fortnight ahead of any other district. It enjoys the earlier and longer Queensland sunshine. When I went in so long ago to get material for a series of articles I happened to hear of two working-men who had been out of jobs but had a little capital. They had been born on the land. One was a carpenter, I think, and the other a painter; but they had bought an apple-orchard cheap, and had been in occupation long enough to make people talk about them.

These men told me their story, and indeed took me to their hearts before it was all over. They had started with the idea that they could grow cherries to ripen a fortnight ahead of any cherry grown in Australia, and they got their stock from Armidale, not so far away. But the young trees presented a problem. A so-called

"bleeding disease" began earlier than in Armidale, and it looked as if their enterprise might be doomed. But with real pluck they decided to experiment for a stock that would be resistant, like the native vine stocks that were imported to France from America to fight the phylloxera. These men in Stanthorpe found the right cherry stock for their purpose and then after long trial they bred a cross between the best varieties of cherry to graft on that stock. When I met them they were confident. They were growing cherries large and luscious that could be marketed in Melbourne for 2s. 6d. per pound, and all they need do was to go ahead.

They had also been experimenting on the apple-growing side of their orchard work. The trees had been badly infested with codlin moth. These orchardists had evolved a special variety of apple suited to the district and so vigorous that it defied the pests which had distracted the other apple-growers. So with gooseberries; a couple of yellow gooseberries (as they seemed) that I tasted had the flavour and texture of the smaller variety and were twice as large.

Then came the conclusions of these keen, able, working men. They undoubtedly were bringing a genius for land problems into play and would go far. I never met them again. They said people were apt to forget that every part of a fruit-growing area might have its special problems—a special strength or weakness—thus anticipating the teaching of a thousand specialists all over Australia in the various Departments of Agriculture.

I told them of something I had seen in a scientific journal which interested them exceedingly. It referred to an Egyptian experience in connexion with the growing of cotton in the Nile Delta. An unknown

disease had appeared among the young cotton plants, and all the experts were concentrating upon it as an invader that must be stopped at all costs. The investigation continued for some time, but seemed fruitless until someone drew a bow at a venture. It was suggested that perhaps the water used for irrigation might have been applied too early and so have given the young plants a shock, impairing their vitality. Why not try applying the water a little later when it would be warmer? This was done, and the disease disappeared. It was just like pneumonia with human beings. We all have various disease germs in our systems; pneumonia among them, and we talk of some person "catching" pneumonia and dying after a chill. But a chill might mean reduced vitality, just as with the cotton plants in the Nile Delta, and so a suitable condition is provided for the development of disease germs always present.

My two orchardists were emphatic. Health and a sound constitution were the beginning and end in solving most of their own problems. Life and well being were the same, whether in man or fruit. This was their summing up of the whole matter.

PART TWO

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND THE *SYDNEY MORNING HERALD*

CHAPTER XIII

MY CONTACT WITH THE *HERALD*

The great Press Banquet in Sydney—Meet Mr Geoffrey Fairfax for the first time—Sir James Dickson, first Federal Minister of Queensland—A great dilemma—I seek the help of the first Prime Minister—My speeches and a climax.

A FIRST meeting with Mr Geoffrey Fairfax was made in unusual circumstances. We were fellow guests at the head table at the Press Banquet in the Sydney Town Hall which completed the Inaugural Celebrations of the Commonwealth of Australia. He was the guest of honour and responded to the principal toast proposed by the chairman, Sir William Lyne, who had been Premier of New South Wales but had now become a minister in the first Federal Cabinet. My own duty was to respond for the Press of Queensland, for I had been invited as editor-in-chief of the *Brisbane Courier*.

It was "a devil of a function," to quote one of the tired-out pressmen who had been reporting all the week in these first festive days of the twentieth century, and now was still on duty. My own feelings are difficult to describe. One does sometimes find a gleam of humour in a tragic situation; and as I sat at that great banquet I seemed to be watching the Brisbane flood of 1893 which washed me into journalism. Here had been a flood of enthusiasm and crowded functions, but hurrying down on top of it were certain Queensland interests which I

was supposed to represent. Queensland seemed derelict—floating like a haystack to perdition.

This no doubt may seem like "the doleful dumps." But our minister in the first Federal Cabinet, Sir James Dickson, had died suddenly on New Year's Day just as the celebrations were beginning, and the Queensland Government had asked me to see the Prime Minister about it. That was bad enough. But when I called upon Mr (soon to be Sir) Edmund Barton, about a successor, Mr (later Sir) Robert Philp for preference, who could speak and fight for our interests, and especially for the sugar industry, he had told me quite frankly that there was no hope. He was in the hands of the Labour Party which had made a majority in the House of Representatives possible, thanks to the machinations of certain of his colleagues; and it had been decided out of hand that coloured labour must go—without inquiry or discussion. No one expected it to remain. But even a criminal has a hearing before being sentenced to death, and Sir James Dickson was to have been our representative and advocate in any Cabinet decision.

While I sat at the head table in the banquet on that Saturday night at the Sydney Town Hall, I could not help thinking of myself and Queensland as if Sir James Dickson had been in the Brisbane flood. Now, as I look back, I recall a certain haystack of that period. The flooded river was full of haystacks, and of all kinds of wooden cottages full of furniture, soon to be smashed up by the great steel bridge. This stack had a big Brahmah rooster on its conical top. He was lord of all he surveyed. But just ahead of him loomed the Victoria Bridge which joined North to South Brisbane, and was soon to be washed away. The

flood-waters were then up to the decking of the bridge, and thousands of people on each bank of the river were watching the haystack with its rooster on top. Suddenly he seemed to realize that action was required of him, and he opened his wings and gave a great crow as the bridge loomed close. The watching crowd sent up a hearty cheer, and put him off his proposed lift on to the bridge, so that he was too late to save himself. Haystack and rooster disappeared together without hope of resurrection on the other side. The simultaneous groan from the crowds was like the Hailstone Chorus in the oratorio *Israel in Egypt*, but in the wrong key.

All this may seem so much foolishness, as indeed it was when I recall my gloom at the banquet; but as soon as I rose to speak I determined at any rate to make an appeal for some recognition of Queensland's claims and position in the new Commonwealth of Australia. This is what I said:

On behalf of the Press of Queensland, I desire to thank Sir William Lyne and the Government of New South Wales for the magnificent way in which they have risen to the occasion. The inauguration of union is an Australian responsibility, and we in Queensland feel that our State has done a great deal in bringing about this grand consummation. Is not the Poet Laureate of Australia a Queenslander? Brunton Stephens published what may be called the commencement of a poem on Federation in 1877, and it gave us the key-note which we have sustained through the years until to-day. The completion of that poem has been published throughout Australia and the British Empire.

We feel that Sir Samuel Griffith, Chief Justice of our State, in the good work he did in 1891 has made significant the interest we have in union, and through his intellect and strength of purpose we are sure that Queensland has contributed much to the Commonwealth. Then, was it not Sir Thomas McIlwraith who desired to annex New Guinea in the interests of the continent of Australia and of the Empire? We claim also, through Sir James

Dickson, the honour of being the first to offer the Mother Country help in the South African War and so emphasize the unity of the Empire. And now that Queensland has accepted the union all she asks is that there shall be fair play. Seeing that we have done so much for federation in the past, it is our duty to maintain and strengthen our position in the future.

On this showing it may, perhaps, be imagined that the week of celebrations for me had been full of black shadows; but they were not quite as heavy as they seemed. The chapter of accidents had made Sir William Lyne the principal figure and he was offered the position of first Prime Minister. He could not form a Cabinet and this made Mr Barton's task very heavy. But Sir William was Premier of New South Wales when the call came to celebrate the arrival of the Commonwealth, and he did it right royally. Sydney through the whole week showed the world that, for the moment, she was advertising Australia one and indivisible. And when we came to the last function on Saturday night it was thus my good fortune to find myself in touch with Mr Geoffrey Fairfax, one of the directors of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Coming events might not be casting their shadows before, but certainly in another two years the "moving finger" beckoned to me. The *Herald* then became my literary home for thirty-five years.

Mr Fairfax and I discussed it all again when he and I sat together, twenty years after, at a luncheon given by the Journalists' Institute of New South Wales to Messrs Ross and Keith Smith (soon to be Sir Ross and Sir Keith) on their arrival in Sydney in 1921. This was after a flight from England in twenty-eight days covering one hundred and thirty-five hours—a startling exploit at the time. The Commonwealth Government

had offered a reward of £10,000 for a flight to Australia that should cover not more than thirty days or seven hundred and twenty consecutive hours. It was a great event and we had a crowd at the luncheon to give the Smiths greeting. Each of these daring young men had a remarkable record in the war of 1914 and deserved to be given a rousing welcome by journalists for that alone. To honour the occasion Mr W. A. Holman, Premier of New South Wales, had promised to be present to propose the toast of our guests. At the critical moment, however, he sent a message to say that he had been detained, but would not be long.

Imagine my feelings when our president sent word to me to be up and doing. I was to speak to fill a gap until the Premier arrived! I was now editor-in-chief of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, with a good many speeches behind me on various occasions, and on all sorts of subjects. But never had I been pushed into a hole like this, for I knew that Mr Holman was a very busy man and might be half an hour—not a few minutes—away. Moreover, I had no experience whatever in stonewalling, which was the prerogative of members of Parliament. Well, my audience met me half-way with evident sympathy, and the fine pair of young men not far from me gave my imagination wings. Speech came without any difficulty. Whether I spoke for twenty minutes, or forty, I do not know. It seemed like a month; and what I said was a perfect blank soon after. It was a kind of nightmare in some respects, for I realized that I must not steal the Premier's thunder. Mr Holman came at last and we got to business. Everything went off in good style, and we were all satisfied to have seen and toasted the fliers with earnest good will and heartfelt enthusiasm.

But the speech dilemma has always been outstanding in my memory.

Some time after, Mr Fairfax at another lunch, asked me if I remembered the Smith luncheon and the impromptu speech I had made. My reply was in the affirmative, of course, but with the rider that I had no recollection whatever of what I said or how the speech went. It served its purpose and that was all there was to it. But to my surprise Mr Fairfax had been impressed with the speech and said so—it was a very good speech indeed! This was the kindly recollection which one prizes. But he was like that.

These two speeches and a third made at the Merchant Taylors' Hall in London stand out, in circumstance and occasion, above others made through a long life. Mr Geoffrey Fairfax's name comes up, whenever I think of them, because soon after our last laugh together I had been selected by the directors (he was managing director at the time) to represent the *Sydney Morning Herald* at the Imperial Press Conference which was to meet in London in June 1930. Just before leaving by the *Orontes*, which was picking up a number of delegates on the round to Perth, I got a message from Mr Fairfax that he wished me to have lunch with him. He was very ill, I knew, and my "good-bye" was going to hurt. He had been staying at the Lapstone Hotel, and sent his car down for me. We had a pleasant lunch together, and he wished me success with my speeches. That was the last I saw of him. Word of his death reached me on the *Orontes* before we were half-way to London.

The speech at the Merchant Taylors' Hall in London was a great trial to me. It was the last of a series while the Imperial Press Conference was sitting, and the com-

pany was one of the most difficult in my experience. All the principal business men in London were present, or so it seemed to me. The President of the London Chamber of Commerce was next to Lord Riddell, who sat beside me. He was my good friend throughout the Conference. But the number of noble lords on each side of us at the great dinner was appalling to one unused to address such assemblages. Moreover, the hall itself was exceedingly impressive and the Master of the Merchant Taylors' Company was in the chair. It was my duty to propose the toast of the Master, and as I had to follow other speakers, with an audience that had dined well, the prospect was not encouraging. My cue, of course, was to be short and to stop when I had finished.

In the event I "got going" and was given a great round of applause at the end. It all happened because I had the good fortune to wake up my audience with the story I have already told of the Highlander waiting in the kirk for his bride, but looking as if he was about to be hanged. When asked by his best man if he had lost the ring he said: "No mon, ah've no lost the ring, but ah've lost all ma enthusiasm." It woke everybody up and there was a roar. The rest was easy.

I proposed my toast taking London and the Empire from the point of view of Australia. I had just said good-bye to the consulting engineer of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, then being built. He was leaving to be present at the closing of the great spans of the mighty arch. Then I compared this bridge-building to the growth of the Empire in spite of the pessimists and detractors. In the first two years of our bridge-building there were many critics who said that it could never be

possible to throw fifty thousand tons of steel into the air held by steel cables and expect the spans to close. There were strikes and endless friction between the contractors and their gangs until at last the shape of the bridge began to appear. "We are building a bridge" the men said to one another, and the bridge began to rise in harmony. Discord ceased. The gangs were emulating one another in good work; and the bridge was finished to music. Then I made my comparison with the greater work of building an Empire; and the war of 1914-18 showed how far we were able to be an Empire.

When I sat down Lord Riddell put his arms round me with a hug and exclaimed: "My lad it was not a speech, it was oratory." He repeated this in a letter which I value exceedingly; but one can only reach such a mountain-top once in a life-time.

CHAPTER XIV

TWO GENERAL MANAGERS

My work on the *Herald* begins—Mr Samuel Cook, General Manager—His son-in-law Sir Herbert Maitland praises J. J. Fletcher—Mr W. G. Conley becomes General Manager—My appointment as editor-in-chief of the *Sydney Morning Herald*—Sir James Oswald Fairfax—Three deaths in as many years.

WHEN my work as a journalist began in Sydney in 1903 Mr Samuel Cook was general manager of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a position he had held since 1888. He lived in a suburb not far from the home of the retiring editor, William Curnow, whom I had known in my early days in Sydney as one of the most able and eloquent ministers of the Wesleyan Church. Newington College was not far away, so long associated with the name of my uncle the Rev. Joseph Horner Fletcher; and on this account, because my two boys had been entered as scholars, my own residence was chosen not far away. I found myself in quite a congenial atmosphere, and Miss Curnow became one of our closest and most valued friends after her father's death three years later.

One thing which arose out of Samuel Cook's proximity was an introduction to his home and family which included a son-in-law, Dr Herbert Maitland, who became Sir Herbert later on. The curious thing was that as soon as he found that I was the cousin of J. J. Fletcher, who

had been a master at Newington College in his time, he hailed me as a friend. He said that he owed everything he had been able to accomplish in life to my cousin. This seemed a strange admission until he explained that he had been a schoolboy at Newington and one of J. J. Fletcher's "Forty Thieves." When I asked my cousin about it he was rather indignant. He said that Maitland and other boys in his class had been "slacking" and he had told the forty lads before him one morning that if they did not work when their fathers paid high fees for their education they were little better than thieves. So the class called themselves his "Forty Thieves" and he did not like it.

But he got hold of Herbert Maitland one afternoon at school and invited him to dinner with him that night. There were other boys present, and after dinner my cousin brought out his microscope and slides, and this, Herbert Maitland said, turned the tide for him. From a rowdy careless schoolboy he became a student, and then realized how much time he had to make up and how much ground he had to cover before he could obtain his degree. It was hard going all the time, and he never ceased to acknowledge his indebtedness to the master who woke him up. Before he had finished he became one of Sydney's leading surgeons and was knighted for his eminence in his profession.

Mr Samuel Cook attracted me. I saw him in his own home; and in the *Herald* office I realized that he was a true link with John Fairfax himself on the side of comprehensive and hard-working journalism. He was English like myself; but he had brought with him from England, as John Fairfax had done, a well-equipped mind and soundly-trained body. As printer and reporter he

was still learning when he reached Australia in 1854. But John Fairfax, master printer and newspaper proprietor, was just the one to recognize his abilities and qualifications, and Samuel Cook to me was a product of the training by the ablest member of our craft. Now in old age he was watching the new day breaking; and another general manager was shaping under his eyes in the red-headed young man, William George Conley, who was to work amazingly as his successor for twenty years.

Mr Conley was chief-of-staff when I joined the *Herald* and I soon found points of contact and understanding with him. When Mr Cook retired in 1907 he became general manager. Meanwhile I had discovered that we were fellow Queenslanders. He had been born in Toowoomba, and knew the Darling Downs better than I did. One of his admirers sent me a story about him which I did not pass on to him to verify, because there was no need. In his father's timber-yard and about the place, young Conley was certain to be ubiquitous, and as restless as most red-headed people can be if they have not plenty to occupy them. But the story goes that this youngster was not satisfied with his father's foreman. He thought he was inclined to be lazy, and no doubt he seemed so, when compared with the lad's quick ways. Just to spur the foreman on, young Conley got a piece of chalk and wrote on one of the big circular saws where it could be seen: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Evidently the cap fitted. No name was mentioned, and it might have been considered a general reminder. But the foreman took the matter to Mr Conley senior who promptly "leathered" his too earnest son.

I have given the story, which was sent to me by one of Sydney's prominent business men, because no other eleven words I know in a text, are better fitted to describe W. G. Conley's life and deeds. He energized everybody who had to work with him, and packed into a comparatively short life as much as two ordinary folk could do. I used to see him during his last illness; and even in pain and weakness his strong interest in life and affairs was still evident. He was fighting to the end. When he died at sixty it seemed as if he was still a young man.

Perhaps my thoughts of him concentrate most upon the period of our closer contact in the first half of my twenty years' term as editor-in-chief. Although my responsibility and access were directly to the proprietors, he and I always worked well together and had many a good time. We found common ground and reached a pleasant companionship. But it was in 1918 that I got closest to him. Sir James Oswald Fairfax—the second Sir James, who received his title in 1916—and the editor-in-chief, Mr T. W. Heney, had left for England to inspect the battlefront, and I had to carry on in the chair with serious responsibility under the circumstances. This became greater when news was received that Mr Heney had resigned; and I had to face the probability of a new editor. At my age—nearly sixty—it seemed impossible that my occupancy of the chair could be long continued. But I did not get any endorsement from Mr Conley. He compared me with his own father, as not subject to ordinary human failures! His father was not to be "killed with an axe," was the filial comment in whole-hearted admiration. In the end to my astonish-

ment my position in the chair was confirmed, the managing director, Mr Geoffrey Fairfax, telling me of the decision with a warm shake of the hand, on the following New Year's Day.

But here again my thoughts turn to the tragedy of Mr Conley's death, because it was part of a triple tragedy. The master-mind of the directorate was Sir James Fairfax—"Mr J. O."—as we affectionately called him among ourselves. He was my very good friend from the beginning. It was one of the best things in my experience of the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the editor was given the same wide range of policy which John Fairfax initiated, so broad and liberal was it. It was the trial of a man's character which goes to the foundations. There can be no false pretences, or make-believes, when one is tested every day, not alone by one's readers but by the men who place the paper first in their own regard and conscience.

Sir James and I were in constant touch. He came up to the editor's room for a chat on most afternoons available. There we thrashed out doubtful questions of policy, or perhaps I had to justify some leading article or a presentation of fact in the news columns which might have been done differently. But there was no back-seat driving; and I was never expected to do or write what was against my convictions. Sir James was always the same. He could be depended on in any crisis; and if something was demanded by circumstances which might be the responsibility of the directors rather than mine, he would face it without a word. But it was his personal interest in me, and his immediate helpfulness, if he thought I was taking some crisis too much to heart

(like a possible writ or an actual case in the Courts) that commanded my affection.

Then came news of his death in 1928, and Mr Conley's in 1929, with Mr Geoffrey Fairfax's in 1930, as already noted, the news reaching me on my trip to London to the Imperial Press Conference. Could anything more tragic be imagined? Not by me! Sir James's death was heart-breaking. It was a stunning blow and nothing during the war was comparable to it in the strain and responsibility involved. Not alone was a personal friendship of a quarter of a century closed, but his sudden death had all the impact of a great explosion at the moment. The *Herald* had been gathering strength, and overcoming new difficulties with fresh ideas, under his influence and help; and with Mr Conley's tremendous energy on the business side, we were making substantial progress. Then came Mr Conley's death, almost as sudden, certainly as little expected or imagined as that of Sir James. When I returned from London in 1930, Mr Warwick Fairfax, now managing director, was lifting a burden of almost impossible weight for one so young.

All I can say about it is, that without the fine staffs we had, and a loyalty that responded to every call, we could never have pulled through as we did. A great newspaper is, no doubt, like a battleship which may take a vast deal of power to move, but when moving it will keep going for a long time without the same stoking below, or an equal staff of officers and men above. But the survivors must be reinforced and the old ways re-established at whatever cost. Even so, the public may not see much difference in the end. It only means in regard to the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the founda-

tions laid originally by John Fairfax, and reinforced and extended by his descendants, have proved capable of meeting any strain. To-day the old paper is stronger than ever, and I am only too proud to have been identified with it for more than a third of a century.

A word may be said here of the *Sydney Mail* which has been for so many years the light of country homes throughout New South Wales. When I joined the *Herald* J. B. Dowling was editor of the *Mail*, to be succeeded in two years time (1905) by W. R. Charlton who was still in the chair when I retired in 1938, and then on to the end of the *Mail* which came soon after. That is to say during nearly the whole of my term of service on the *Herald* as assistant editor and editor-in-chief our veteran weekly was in the hands of one man. Writing, perhaps, as an authority, I can only say that no paper of its character could have been better edited. The changing conditions with intense competition made the job sometimes heart-breaking. During the war of 1914-18 it put up a record and we were proud of it.

My own experience of the *Sydney Mail* in my surveying days is full of sunlight; I realized then what it meant to the man on the land. My introduction to Thomas Hardy, I remember, came in its columns with *The Laodicean* running through as a serial. Hardy was beginning to feel his strength, and nobody reads the story now as part of the real output of a great writer. But it sufficed as an introduction. And I never forgot F. W. Ward's hand upon the *Mail* and Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms*.

I find among my notes a poem of Thomas Hardy's, which shows how far I followed him in spite of his

pessimism and my grievance about *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. It fits my feelings to-day:

THE THRUSH IN WINTER

So little cause for carollings
  Of such ecstatic sound,
Was written on terrestrial things
  Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
  His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
  And I was unaware.

CHAPTER XV

LIBEL LAWS AND THE EDITOR

New South Wales and an obsolete libel law—The terrors of editing and a comparison with Queensland—Newspapers considered fair game—The issue of writs to prevent comment—Comes a worse experience than any libel tyranny—Our fire in O'Connell Street and the order to "get out"—Writing a leading article in the fumes—Sir Charles Wade to the rescue with an amendment of the law of libel.

An experience of sorrow and suffering would be an exaggeration, perhaps, to describe my discomfort on joining the editorial staff of the *Sydney Morning Herald* when I first realized what the libel laws of New South Wales had in store for me. It reminded me of the sarcastic lady who turned to her husband on one occasion with the question: "Now Mr Jones won't you admit that marriage is a means of grace?" His reply was: "Well, my dear, if anything that breaks down pride and leads to repentance is a means of grace it certainly is."

I do not mean to imply that I repented leaving Brisbane to come to Sydney, but that any pride I may have felt about my success in dealing with the libel laws of Queensland was gone. And yet I had ample warning. At the great Press Banquet which completed the celebrations inaugurating the coming of the Australian Commonwealth held in Sydney in the first week of 1901, one of Sydney's most experienced newspaper men said some searching and scorching things about the

libel law of New South Wales. Mr Watkin Wynne in his speech declared:

> We enjoy the distinction of living under a libel law which has been obsolete in every other part of the British Empire, except the State of New South Wales. We are labouring under pains and penalties which no people in the British Empire suffer from except ourselves, and there has not been a Premier who has not promised to remedy such a condition of things. I am afraid Sir William Lyne will be like the rest—he is now a Federal Minister.

Sir William Lyne was listening at the moment because he was chairman at the banquet. That the libel law had not already been amended was not for lack of vigorous protest, some time before this, when Mr Samuel Cook, general manager of the *Sydney Morning Herald* was chairman at a conference representative of all the journalistic interests—employers and employees alike. I joined the *Herald* staff two years after Mr Watkin Wynne made his protest.

Coming from Queensland which enjoyed the enlightened legislation initiated and carried through by Sir Samuel Griffith, it was extremely disconcerting to find myself surrounded by flames. The unfortunate editor had to be continually in a fire dance. He never knew when he might not be in trouble for allowing, in good faith and without malice, reports of speeches which in Queensland would be published as a matter of course. During my five years' editorship of the *Brisbane Courier*, I was continually publishing reports of speeches in the public interest and without malice, made anywhere and at any time, which would land the *Herald* in prosecutions and heavy fines.

In those days the legal fraternity of Sydney contained solicitors who seemed to live by putting a tooth-comb

through our columns, and then approaching possible clients to point out what fine cases they had against us in the courts. An instance was given me by one of my own reporters, who lived not far from me and with whom I sometimes walked home. It appears that in one of the lower courts two publicans had been prosecuted for breaches of the licensing laws, and one was fined and the other acquitted. By misadventure, the reporter responsible for sending in the usual summary of the business crossed the facts in his report, and the acquitted publican appeared as being fined. Early next morning the reporter in question got his *Herald* to see how the report had been treated, and to his dismay realized that he was in serious trouble. Unless he could manage to put things right in time the *Herald* would have to pay heavily for his mistake, and he would be correspondingly discredited for carelessness.

Fortunately, he knew the publican, and the public houses opened early in those days. Taking a friend with him he got hold of the publican himself. After calling for drinks, he found to his relief that the *Herald* report had not been seen by the publican. Drawing his attention to the error, the reporter had little difficulty in obtaining an assurance from him that an apology, with due prominence given to it, would be quite sufficient. Then the publican agreed to sign an indemnity in those terms. This was duly made out and witnessed by the reporter's friend.

But the question was, whether Mr Samuel Cook, the general manager of the *Herald*, would be as complacent. When the reporter reached the office the first word he got was that Mr Cook wished to see him. There seemed to be serious trouble afoot. In the general

manager's office he was asked to read a letter from a city solicitor written apparently on instruction from the publican in question, and Mr Cook looked like the beginning of Judgment Day. At once the bare-faced iniquity of the thing was apparent, because the demand was made for a heavy sum of damages and an abject apology was required. The production of the publican's indemnity in writing, and a satisfactory explanation, was sufficient to remove the beginnings of the thunder-storm. But the whole thing was an illustration of the experience a prominent newspaper might go through at the hands of unscrupulous men.

Many a time sums of money have been paid in cases which it might have been right to fight because the law would have been against the blackmailer—if blackmail could be proved. But the expense of fighting many of these cases would more than likely far exceed what has been paid for a composition. This is only offered as an illustration of one of the forms of imposition to which a newspaper may be subject. When the law of libel has been as loose and unfair as it was for so long in New South Wales, the burden of editing a newspaper, and the cost to the proprietors of false steps or even of honest efforts to serve the public, has been colossal.

Even now New South Wales is behind Queensland, for while we are permitted to report speeches in public meetings in good faith outside of Parliament, the Courts, and municipal council meetings, there are still pitfalls for the unwary. There have been occasions when we have reported speeches, and made statements, knowing that we would be likely to receive a writ and have to face a jury. But this has always been a matter in which the proprietors have known all the facts and have been

ready to fight, because it had become a public duty. Sometimes it has cost a good deal of money.

Another difficulty newspapers have had to face, and indeed are still called upon to face, is the issue of writs to prevent comment, sometimes when an election is looming, or in cases where the reporting of speeches, or the making of editorial comment, would be prejudicial to someone. That is to say, a beginning may have been made in ventilating something about which the public has been anxious to know the truth and ought to know. A writ is issued claiming damages, and to proceed with publicity would forthwith become contempt of court. While a case of the kind is *sub judice* the law requires that nothing likely to affect the course of justice shall be published.

But there are a multitude of cases where the writs have been withdrawn when sufficient silence has been imposed to suit the needs of the parties issuing them. Having been before the courts in this way, I have been interested to find how reasonably the judges have discussed the question of what really constitutes contempt of court. More and more it is being held that this issue of writs to stop the publication of matter which should be ventilated in the interests of the public, and without prejudice to the courts, may become an attack upon public liberty, and so much contempt for the courts themselves. However, one has survived it all, and on looking back I can only repeat the lines so often quoted:

> For freedom's battle once begun,
> Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,
> Though baffled oft is ever won.

It has been a high privilege to have worked with men and under proprietors who have been fearless and fair

minded. Nothing is more inspiring than to be able to write, without fear or misgiving, what is in one's mind upon some public wrong. I cannot remember ever having been reproached or threatened for plain speaking. My own sense of responsibility to my directors and the public was accepted as a sufficient brake upon any thoughtless or headstrong action. This proved my best armour.

I had an experience once worse than the threat of pains and penalties under our libel law. The knowledge of personal danger was conveyed to Mr Heney and myself by the chief officer of the fire brigades that if a fire broke out in O'Connell Street in either of the great drug stores adjacent to or opposite the *Herald* office, we were not to stand on the order of our going. It was in the days when the law allowed large quantities of inflammable oil to be stored in these warehouses. In the event of fire if the spirit spread the flames could not be controlled or extinguished by water, for the burning oil would travel on the water.

Well, one evening when I was in the middle of a leading article the fire alarms started and I was told that the Australian Drug Company's premises just a door or two up O'Connell Street were alight. This, at the moment was an exaggeration, for the fire was located in the cellars, and the stench of smouldering drugs became almost unbearable. All we could learn was that it was hoped to keep the flames from the stored inflammable oils so near to them. Naturally the noise under my windows with the brigades in full working order was increasing. Also the public was becoming more and more excited as the possibilities were grasped. All this did not make literary composition easy. Before long it

was almost impossible to think clearly, but I pegged away until the article was finished. Could it be worth while in any case? I doubted it, and went in to the editor to see how he felt. The boy who stood on the burning deck, whence all but he had fled, was offered as a good illustration of our plight; for, after all, there must be a moment at which we would be obliged to abandon ship if the oil caught and began to spread. We had been warned! The law of libel was simplicity itself compared to this. I was quite willing to stay to get the paper out if that were the alternative.

Then, at the last moment, when the paralysing smoke of burning drugs threatened to suffocate us we were told that the danger was passing. Finally word came that it had passed, and I was told that I could go home. It was an adventure!

Let me pay a tribute before closing to Sir Charles Wade, who when Premier did something to lighten our burden under the unjust libel laws of the State. It was characteristic of him that he should have done what he did, and that he should have been the first Premier not afraid to tackle the job. He was the same in politics as he was in football, determined and straightforward, strong enough to be afraid of nobody. I heard a good story of him from his old head master at The King's School, Bishop Waddy as he became when he went to Jerusalem. I was sitting opposite him at dinner one night when Sir Charles Wade was being discussed. He told me that at a school smoke-concert when every boy was expected to do something, Wade was called upon:

"Now, Charley, give us a song." There was a head shake: "I can't sing." "Well make it a dance!" Again the negative: "I can't dance." "All right, let us have a

recitation." But it was no good. He said: "I'll tell you what I will do if you like—I will show you my calves!" And "Charley Wade" as a footballer and "Charley Wade's" calves were the precursors of his politics, because if he had none of the graces he could be trusted to play the game without fear or finesse. He is not forgotten by the hard-working journalist.

CHAPTER XVI

EARLY DAYS ON THE *HERALD*

Looking back to 1903—My old staff—Dr Bean's advent as a journalist with the *Herald*—Sir Henry Gullett another of the staff to "make good"—The *Herald's* Magazine Page—Its various features and fluctuations—Christopher Brennan's great poem—Pleasure in the preparation of the Magazine Page—The reactions of the public.

To-day as I look back, the staff of the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the literary side in 1903 has almost entirely disappeared. Three men on the reporting staff then were: H. K. Williams, now and for several years financial editor, George Reeve who was our shipping reporter (known to every sea captain in and out of Sydney) who became our chief of staff, and Charles Theakstone who was a kind of editor's rouseabout, keen and almost omniscient. He was for years our chief sub-editor. All the members of the firm at the time, and so many men upon our literary staffs, have gone to the better land. Hardly a finer, more loyal, set of employers and employed could be found in the city. The above three are still alive and active.

But soon to join the literary staff of 1903 appeared such able men as Mungo MacCallum son of Sir Mungo MacCallum, for so long an important factor in the prosperity of the University of Sydney, Sir Henry Gullett, Dr C. E. W. Bean, F. M. Cutlack, John MacGregor, Lance Fallaw, and Elliott Napier. From New Zealand

we were continually drawing good men like Percy Allen and Farmer Whyte. Percy Allen who has been on the literary staff of the *Herald* for many years, and is still in harness, is a kind of father confessor to the staff and a point of reference for information on all subjects which bother the working journalist. The list could be extended indefinitely, and my indebtedness to these is so wide and deep that I could write another book about it.

It was natural that my advent should have reduced the temperature of the office at the moment, for I was an outsider from far away Queensland. What good could come out of that wilderness? But the ice soon melted because it was found that I was human and civilized, and had been a Sydney man come home again. Sir Henry Gullett's advent to help us with our land department revived warm memories of his uncle, the Hon. Henry Gullett who had been assistant editor in William Curnow's time for several years. But this brought in F. W. Ward again who was responsible for the first Henry Gullett's arrival in Sydney.

When F. W. Ward left the *Sydney Mail* to become first editor of the new Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, he went to Melbourne and persuaded Henry Gullett, who was then editor of the *Australasian*, to join him as assistant editor and leader-writer. They were a powerful pair of journalists to draw the newspaper into prominence and prosperity. For seven years this forceful co-operation continued until F. W. Ward and his directors disagreed upon a vital matter and he resigned. He went into the wilderness for twelve years, and Henry Gullett joined the editorial staff of the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The two able men concerned in that breach were shareholders in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, caring for its well being, and would not have left it except under the greatest provocation. It is an ill wind which blows nobody any good, and this wind of change blew good to me. The arrival of the second Henry Gullett to join the literary staff of the *Herald* aroused my interest at once, and brought past events into prominence again.

Another name comes up when the changes and chances of life are being discussed, that of Frank J. Donohue who was a prominent member of our leader-writing staff. He was an able publicist with a fine style, and had a wide knowledge of men and affairs. We soon became friends. Eventually I found that he had married a daughter of another friend whom I knew and valued in my surveying days—an Anglican rector in charge of a parish near Cooma. When the rigours of winter drove my chief and our survey camp into house quarters for two or three months, to get our office work done, my refuge was the rectory and the Canon's library, a stone's throw away. His two daughters kept house for him, and my welcome was a triple one. And here was a son-in-law by my side when I joined up as assistant editor to the *Herald*.

Many pictures of my camp-life, with our cook a Chinaman named Ah Lun, would interest the occupants of the rectory, because Ah Lun's spare time was taken up with a curious volume of flimsy rice paper which turned out to be a Bible in Chinese characters. But at this time Ah Lun was a heathen again. He had taken to opium smoking, and would walk miles to any Chinese mining-camp on our route for a night of "fan tan." Soon he went to pieces and had to go, much to

our regret. As a good emergency man in the field he could not be beaten. On one occasion he walked twenty-five miles, and another twenty-five miles back to camp, for flour when we had unexpectedly run out, with the back load more than any of our own men would have cared to carry. No one could beat him at cards, and even horse-dealers found him a problem. On one occasion he had to buy a mount like the rest of us, and a wall-eyed neddy was brought in which the owner was sure would suit Ah Lun. Now the Chinaman had a a curious turned-in eye himself, which put the pupil almost out of sight. This he called his "long-eye." When he had closely inspected the wall-eyed horse he said emphatically: "Got one long-eye in camp—no want two"—and left the dealer without another word.

This digression needs an apology and I make it with due emphasis. But I offer it because it was used at the time as a humorous justification. It proved me to be a man come home with experiences in New South Wales which made me a fit member of the staff to which I now belonged.

The arrival of C. E. W. Bean made another of those links with the past which interested me. His arrival as a candidate for journalism brought the name before me quite unexpectedly, because he had just come from England as if he were new to Australia. But a cousin of mine, a graduate of the University of Sydney, J. Alfred Fletcher, B.A., had been a master of All Saints College in Bathurst, the head master of which was an Anglican cleryman named Bean. Soon it appeared that C. E. W. Bean was a son returning to Australia after getting his degree at Oxford. His father had left Bathurst some years before. When I was in London in

1911 Bean himself was waiting for me, a member of our staff at the *Sydney Morning Herald* office then in Cheapside.

His father at the time was head master of the Hunter Grammar School at Brentwood in Essex. This was a fine school with a remarkable history. It was founded four hundred years before in memory of a young man named Hunter who was burned to death at the stake. C. E. W. Bean showed me the stump of the tree—the stake to which he was bound to be burned. My wife and I spent a delightful Sunday at Brentwood with the family during our visit to London in 1911. We found Arthur Jose there when we arrived; he was a friend of the family and had been a master in the school.

Dr Bean's advent to the *Sydney Morning Herald* was in this wise. He had written a series of articles on the trip back to Australia, which were handed to me by Mr Heney to see what I could make of them. If any could be used as "special" articles for the paper I was to pick them out and put them into shape. They were all good; but only three, as I remember, could be used and they were very good. Then came the question of Bean's chances in journalism; he had no experience on any paper and could not write shorthand or use a typewriter. We had no way of using him, except as he might become a "free lance."

He took the bull by the horns and spent six months acquiring shorthand, and obtaining an adequate drilling in the use of the typewriter. From then on he progressed; he became a junior reporter, and later a member of the editorial staff, and never looked back. No one was more popular in the office or better qualified to help the paper in every call made upon him. He

was a tremendous worker. The series of articles he wrote on some of the country tours on which we sent him have since appeared in permanent book form. Then in the war of 1914, just when he was engaged in the office writing our "War Notes," he was appointed official War Correspondent by the Commonwealth Government. The world knows him now as Dr Bean, the Historian of the War for Australia, with a permanent position in the literary world.

The third of the men with whom I have been so closely associated is F. M. Cutlack who joined our editorial staff after the war and is now assistant editor and principal leader-writer. He began his literary career in Adelaide on the staff of the *Register*; but not being satisfied with his prospects after a hard working period he decided to try his luck in London, and found no difficulty in getting on to the staff of one of its leading papers. It is characteristic of him that he should have spent his spare time as he did. One would have expected him to enjoy himself as other young men do who are in London for the first time, and who have all England, Scotland, and Wales before him. Most men would begin to get about and perhaps write up their experiences. But Cutlack devoted his spare time to studying for the English Bar and in due time was "called," after he had eaten his dinners in London in their courses and in due course.

Then, he was not satisfied to do as others do. He wanted to learn German by seeing Germany, so accepted a position as tutor in a German family of high standing. When war broke out he enlisted, but soon was taken out as one of the official war correspondents and went through the years of his appointment with unrivalled

opportunities for seeing and recording its terrible strains and vicissitudes in the battles which led up to victory. His book on the turn of the tide, in which Sir John Monash figured so prominently, is part of the summary of 1918 which is full of incident, and gives an adequate account of the struggle which saved Amiens and led to the end.

All this made him a man well worth adding to the editorial staff of the *Herald* when his application came in. And from the first moment of his arrival to my own retirement there had never been anything but the closest co-operation between us. As a leader-writer he was always well informed; if he had strong opinions on certain points or subjects it was all to the good. When he accompanied Sir John Latham, leader of the mission to the Dutch East Indies, to China and Japan, and obtained such a good knowledge of China before the Japanese invasion, his articles proved very helpful.

Sir Henry Gullett's place (with that of Dr Bean and F. M. Cutlack) on our staff again becomes interesting to me when thinking of their work in the war of 1914, and all the hard driving and anxiety it entailed upon journalists who had to keep the home fires burning.

When I ponder on the years immediately behind me I cannot forget one special effort which resulted in the publication of a special Magazine Page in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It was a period full of interest and almost of excitement. The need for a Magazine Page had been asserting itself because we had always been giving special heed to our readers' interest in articles on literary subjects, though verse had not found a place as a matter of permanent importance. For myself the poets have been my friends even in times of intense concen-

tration upon prose and politics—to say nothing of mathematics in my surveying days. In the last-mentioned period of my life I always carried some favourite poet in my swag as well as a prose writer of my affections.

The literary columns of the *Herald* began to blossom with verse. I well remember when Christopher Brennan sent in his poem *Doom*. It was a long poem with the original heading *Ate*, the English of the Greek word for Fate. By itself, to the ordinary reader, this word would seem ridiculous; if it were given in the Greek characters it would still be Greek to most people who had never studied the Greek classics. So with Brennan's permission I altered the word to *Doom* and published it. The reaction was not thunder and lightening but high approval in literary circles, and mild surprise by those who were appreciative readers of our literary articles.

Our Magazine Page was a distinct success, and I put a great deal of thought into it. For some time I did most of the work on it, selecting the articles, pictures, and verse. Contributors like Elliott Napier (who was beginning his career in literature) began to appear; and Inglis Moore came in later on with an academic career to give him a place. An interesting development from my point of view was the initiation of a children's column. It was at the time that the London *Spectator* was carrying on a competition in children's verse. I used some of the poems of Robert Louis Stevenson and others to show what was in the wind. Then original verse by and for the children began to come in. And so it was established, until pressure on our space crowded the feature out. But the Magazine Page, as a whole, was a delight to me. My mind was always upon it. Even when it had to be handed over to John MacGregor my

assistant editor, and then to Lance Fallaw, my editorial eye was upon it. We all enjoyed making the weekly choice of articles and verse as good as possible. Many Australian poets lent their aid. Especially, at one time when I needed help most, did I rely upon and thank Miss Dorothea MacKellar for her contributions.

CHAPTER XVII

THE WORLD MOVES

F. W. Ward's arrival in Sydney in 1903—Rival editors but still friends—Ward's tribute to Sir James Reading Fairfax—Ward's experiences outside of journalism—The locking of the Darling River and Sir William Lyne—Ward's help in Mr Henry Huddart's enterprise—The Canadian Australian Steamship Line.

In Sydney again in 1903 I found myself amid familiar scenes if not familiar faces. By an extraordinary coincidence my friend, F. W. Ward, had arrived just before me to become editor once more of the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*. The directors, who had forced his resignation twelve years before, had given him the invitation to return. It was almost an apology.

My reaction to this surprise was akin to what I felt when we first met to shake hands in Brisbane in 1893, and he became my editor. Here in Sydney we were journalists and friends but on opposite sides. He was back in his old chair, while I was in a building which he had known intimately for some years when he was editor of the *Sydney Mail* and the *Echo* with Sir James Reading Fairfax as his chief in the firm—"Mr James" as he was known to the *Herald* staff. One of the best tributes to Sir James, came from F. W. Ward's pen, and is recorded in *A Century of Journalism*. When Sir James died he wrote:

It was to him that I had chiefly to look for proprietorial discretion and to account for the blunders of inexperience. To me he was

a wise and sympathetic counsellor. He did not talk "down" to the members of his staff who consulted him. There seemed to be on his part an unconscious, but very real and not unwarrantable assumption, that you shared his view of journalistic influence. He seemed to be always appealing to what was best in you. His shy, modest, gentle personality pervaded the office. He watched all that went on around him, but never "worried" the men, who, to the best of their ability, served the firm faithfully . . . I do not fear that he will ever be forgotten; I hope that he will never be unheeded.

This expresses all that I felt myself after the years of my own close association with Sir James Reading Fairfax. He had been a true friend and a great example in courtesy and kindness to me, a member of the *Herald* staff who owed him so much. When a memorial volume was prepared soon after his death, and I wrote the introductory tribute, the lines from Wotton's well-known poem seemed to sum up a fine character, and I used them:

> Whose armour was his honest thought,
> And simple truth his utmost skill.

It was more surprising, therefore, that F. W. Ward and I should have come together again in this way with the *Sydney Morning Herald* our uniting and dividing medium. For F. W. Ward never had anything but good words for his old paper and for its continuing worth. He would tell me sometimes in the days of his retirement and final illness that, when he left me in the chair of the *Brisbane Courier*, he never imagined that I could ever carry guns enough to be editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It only showed, he said, how actual responsibility sometimes brought out in a man unexpected strength.

In F. W. Ward's own case this was continually true. He was full of surprises and ideas. When he resigned from the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* in 1901, he went to London in charge of the *Age* cable combination, a job full of interest and hard work. He met most of the prominent newspaper men there, Moberly Bell of the London *Times* among them. But the severe winter and continuous night work affected his eyes, and he came back to Australia. Sir William Lyne was then Premier of New South Wales and had a great idea of starting a new department—of Water Conservation. Here was just the man for first Under Secretary! It was soon arranged that a preliminary survey should be made of our longest river, the Darling. F. W. Ward was commissioner, and had as colleague a well-known water engineer named McKinney, to report on the locking of the Darling. H. G. McKinney had been in India and had practical experience with works for water conservation and irrigation on a large scale. In Australia he had been employed by Sir Samuel McCaughey on the lands now included in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area.

These two able men went down the Darling, and F. W. Ward told me an interesting story of their adventures which does not appear in the official report, a copy of which is beside me. The rabbit invasion, for instance, was a revelation even at the beginning of the nineties in the last century. Tupra, a pastoral property belonging to Sir Samuel McCaughey, simply "twinkled" with scurrying rabbits when the two commissioners drew near from the banks of the Darling.

The project of locking the Darling was accepted as sound and feasible. We see what has happened with the

locking of the Murray. But simply because the Murray River has always been the boundary between Victoria and New South Wales, something had to be done about it. Now, however, the question is beginning to arise whether, even with the Burrinjuck and Hume reservoirs, there will be enough water to go round. Irrigation is only half of the problem. Eventually Messrs Ward and McKinney prepared an important and interesting report which was printed. Sir William Lyne's defeat in Parliament ended his dream, and made the report no more than an up-to-date but useless document.

Then it was that Henry Huddart was advised to take F. W. Ward to Canada with him. Ward returned with the specifications of the first linotype under his arm and a greeting for me which made me his friend for the rest of my life. The last time I had seen him, before coming to Sydney for good in 1903, was in Melbourne, in 1901, during the celebrations connected with the opening of the first Federal Parliament by the Duke and Duchess of York. What a wild time it was to be sure!

It was in Melbourne that I first met my future chief on the *Sydney Morning Herald*, T. W. Heney. We happened to be standing together on the steps of Parliament House at the top of Collins Street when Mr Heney introduced himself to me. I always forgot to ask him in the days to come how he knew me in Melbourne without an introduction. We had so much to talk about beyond ourselves that it did not matter at the moment, though I could not help wondering. No doubt our impromptu interview had its effect later on when William Curnow was retiring in 1903. He had a long and honourable career on the *Sydney Morning Herald*,

first as assistant editor to Dr Garran and later on as editor himself for nearly twenty years.

So here F. W. Ward and I were together again, in Sydney and not to be separated until the end. We were neighbours after he retired and I was able to see him day by day, almost completely deaf, so that at last the news and any titbits had to be written on a sheet or two before I went in. For nearly eleven years he edited the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* with his old fire. Although we worked in opposite trenches, there was always something to talk about.

Take for instance F. W. Ward's experiences on the Melbourne *Argus* with Howard Willoughby as editor, and the Barton Government carrying through its first tariff. His account of debates from the gallery of the House of Representatives were always either full of humour or seething with sarcasm. I liked to get him on to Sir William Irvine, Premier of Victoria, in the years just before F. W. Ward returned to Sydney. Here in Sir William was the strong, purposeful leader for whom Australia was waiting. He had his admirers throughout the Commonwealth, though he never got as far as the House of Representatives. It was "the Kyabram umbrella" which moved my friend to paint one of his most vivid pictures of the man. Sir William knew his own mind, and on this occasion gave his supporters a heavy jolt.

F. W. Ward explained the position. Kyabram was a small country town in Victoria with ideas on electoral reform. "Reduction of members" was in the air, but it took a meeting of citizens there to carry a resolution about it which attracted immediate attention. The newspapers gave it wings, and public opinion justified the

Government for bringing in a bill in the Victorian Legislative Assembly which clearly meant business. The number of members in a new House was specified. Government supporters were much perturbed. This was carrying it altogether too far! Were members not to be allowed to say how many heads were to be dropped into the guillotine basket? But the Premier gave them no comfort. The bill was read a first and second time, and was taken into committee. It was then that members on both sides of the House became active, and at last a blank in the obnoxious clause of the bill was created.

At once Sir William Irvine brought the Speaker back to the chair and moved the adjournment of the House. F. W. Ward said that members seemed to be delighted. The Premier was taking his medicine quietly, so it was declared, and ministers gave no sign. Everything was as right as right could be! A blank in the obnoxious clause had been created and Government supporters would put in the bill the number of members for a reformed House which they and not their leader considered adequate.

Next day when the House met, the members had not lost their good spirits. But by and by it was noted that something had happened. The Speaker was not taking the chair; ministers were not in their places. Then the unexpected happened with a bang. The Speaker appeared without his wig and gown and ministers filed in as if the end of the world was near. Then the Speaker announced that in effect there was no Parliament. Sir William Irvine stated as a corollary that he had been granted a dissolution.

It was one of those happenings which marked Sir William Irvine's political career. Those who did not like a clear mind and a strong will called him "Icy Irvine."

Outside of Victoria he had many admirers; a brother-in-law of mine called a son after him, "Irvine." F. W. Ward said that the rush for "the Kyabram umbrella" was wonderful. The disgruntled candidates swore from their various platforms at the ensuing elections that they had been loyal advocates of a full reduction of members. Better still, erstwhile irreconcilable members accepted the reduction which Sir William Irvine had provided. The result of the elections may be imagined. Sir William was returned with a good majority.

Perhaps the account of Sir George Reid's rout by the enemy protectionists in the House of Representatives, over the original tariff bill was as dramatic in its way as Sir William's victory. Sir George Turner and C. C. Kingston knew their own minds and had a majority with the help of the Labour Party; but they were afraid of the Reid tongue and technique. He must not be allowed to get going in the House. F. W. Ward told me that it was a very clever and unscrupulous smothering of free speech by an apparently well-planned adoption of silence in Parliament. The trick had probably been played upon him before. When Sir George got up to speak on the second reading of the bill he was as full of high explosives on the tariff issue as a modern torpedo. But as a speaker he needed a detonator. Interruption, abuse, questions, were all good, and benches full of eager protectionists on the floor of the House, thirsting for his blood, would have given him all he needed if they had been allowed to set him going.

It was a new game of dirt in an Australian House of Representatives in which free speech and reasonable debate under ordinary Parliamentary conditions, were to become impossible. The tariff was cut and dried,

therefore a characteristic speech from Sir George Reid would be a nuisance. So he was put into cold storage. Not an interjection came and nothing like an interruption. There was no debate as far as he was concerned. His supporters on the Opposition benches could not help him. The Government majority did not want to hear him in any speech worthy of himself or his subject, and the sardonic silence was too much for him.

It was a tragedy suitable to the occasion; but the G. H. Reid who stumbled and finally subsided had really nothing to be ashamed of. The only thing was that the man who could meet a heckling with a counter-attack, and hold his audience with a firmer grip, was now unable to make a fighting speech. He could meet the virago who got to her feet in a passion during one of his speeches and cried out: "If you were my husband I'd give you poison!" and in an instant retort: "Madam, if I were your husband I'd take it."

F. W. Ward said that nothing could have altered the tariff, but the debate was being watched outside the House, and the reports were read with the keenest interest. In that way is the public educated; and it was the last thing the smotherers wanted.

My own experience of Sir George Reid long after he got his title, in which his presence of mind was well demonstrated, came in 1911 when I had been sent to London for the Coronation. Mr Harcourt, one of the members of the Cabinet had invited a large number of people to an afternoon at his beautiful home, "Nuneham" on the Thames, and many visiting Australians were present. In a knot of us, enjoying strawberries and cream, was Sir George Reid with his plate piled with strawberries and swimming in cream. But he wanted

to sit down to eat them. Looking round, the only thing he could see was a collapsible carpet chair, which I handed to him. Carefully letting himself into it, while he balanced his plateful of luscious fruit, he dropped his body into the last six inches. Then the chair did collapse and he sat among the ruins. He looked up at me, then at his plate, and said with a smile: "But I haven't lost a strawberry nor spilt a drop of cream."

CHAPTER XVIII

"MIND YOUR STEP"

Mr Alfred Deakin and irrigation—My visit to the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area—A strange lapse in administration—The mounting cost of irrigation—Politics and irrigation—Egypt and India as sources of labour for irrigation works—The United States and cheap labour—Mr W. M. Hughes's story of his visit to New York—Wentworth's opposition to any stoppage of convict labour.

My heading to this chapter is not intended as a gibe against anybody or any line of policy in particular. It has come to me in connexion with the writing of my first leading article when taking up duty on the *Herald* literary staff in April 1903. I had attended Alfred Deakin's meeting with the Australian Natives Association at the Sydney School of Arts. His brilliant address was, of course, listened to with rapt attention. Who knew as much as he did about irrigation? His writings and his speeches on the great irrigation works he had visited in other countries, and his position as a Minister of the Crown in Victoria in days past made his appeal for action irresistible.

But the people of Victoria had to pay heavily for irrigation when it came. Irrigation in Australia was found to be something of an experiment, and Australian conditions were discovered to contain problems of their own. As I listened in Sydney to this brilliant orator who was more philosopher and littérateur than politician

or practical irrigationist, I could not help thinking of my own ideas about the great works Mr Deakin has visited and how vastly different had been our own experience in building the necessary dams and headworks, and in preparing and settling the irrigation areas to receive the distributed water.

When I visited the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area which depends upon water from the Burrinjuck dam, the Griffith end of it had hardly been touched. This amazed me because in the report issued by the Works Department of New South Wales the engineers responsible for the laying out, the grading, and deciding upon the comparative value of the Griffith and Leeton areas, Griffith was placed first. On the ground one could see at once how fertile was the soil and how clearly Griffith should have been given the premier place when the settlers were allowed to choose their blocks.

Leeton was certainly second class. A clay band, comparatively close to the surface, had already caused much disappointment and loss. When I was at Leeton an enthusiastic Welshman had taken up a large block of land for fruit-growing, and had dug a hundred holes—like post holes—which were to hold the young trees. To make sure that they should not be crippled, if not killed, by the clay band he had a small charge of explosive put into each hole, and these all connected by wires and finally brought together to a small battery on the veranda of his cottage. Then he pressed the button and each of the holes was blown up. It did not take much spade work to prepare the ground for his orchard after that.

Naturally I was much interested. When a considerable interval had elapsed, inquiries were made about

his success with the growth of a fine lot of fruit-trees. All I could learn was that his enthusiasm had dropped to zero. The holes in the clay band had become water-logged and he was very much discouraged. This bore out the truth of the position taken up by the irrigation engineers—that Leeton was second grade land. This established it as far as I was concerned.

But how was it that Leeton was chosen by the Department as the place to spend so much money upon, with administrative buildings and the expensive additions thereto. It seemed a gigantic blunder. Then it turned out that a Labour Government was represented by a ministerial board at a time when Broken Hill was in convulsion with a big strike, and some Broken Hill miners were given jobs on the irrigation area. Apparently it was thought that the engineers did not know everything.

Mark Twain's woodpecker, looking for a hole to fill with nuts against a bitter winter took the first hole offering. He said: "It looks like a hole, it is located like a hole, blamed if it isn't a hole!" So he began to try to fill it in good time. But the more nuts he put in the emptier the hole seemed to become, and at last he began to scrutinize the surroundings of his hole, and found that he was on the roof of an empty log hut. Flying down and in through the open door he saw his nuts all over the floor. He had been trying to fill a house!

That is precisely what politics did for irrigation at Leeton in those early days. The money poured out went like the woodpecker's nuts into a hole, but unlike the woodpecker's nuts it could not be retrieved. When Alfred Deakin wrote the volumes and made the speeches

which moved Victoria like a great wind in the trees he was thinking of all he had seen in India, Egypt, and the United States forgetting that Australian conditions might present problems unknown to the countries of the world which had solved their irrigation problems in their own way.

Before Victoria laid down an irrigation system one unexpected obstacle after another arose and before it was complete and in running order the cost was mounting up until the estimates were far over-reached. Even to-day with the Murray River in harness for Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales, and the Hume dam completed, the question is being raised whether there will be enough water to meet all the claims that are likely to be made against it. Another problem Mr Deakin never had to face. Behind all his fervid eloquence was the assurance of plenty of water in Victorian rivers. Moreover, the Murray River was a Victorian boundary to be overleaped in time by the agreement which produced the Murray River Commission.

But what of droughts severe and prolonged and their corollary in tremendous evaporation? Water conservation on a vast scale must be faced if Australia is to have an adequate irrigation system. This means expenditure rising to dizzy heights which without largely increased population will be impossible.

Now Egypt and India had the cheapest of cheap labour for their great works, and Mesopotamia with the Tigris and Euphrates had vast water reserves which developed an irrigation system the ruins of which are still the amazement of engineers. To-day Britain's great engineers are beginning to give Iraq something of a return to the old days. But Mesopotamia and its

irrigation system maintained great Empires which followed one another into oblivion. Then the works themselves disappeared, and became ruins to precede the ruins of Greece and Rome. But slave labour made it all possible and eventually unmade it. Then what of the United States with its gigantic dams and ever growing irrigation systems? Well, there are 130,000,000 of people in that Union, and most of the world's gold in the Treasury at Washington; and yet without cheap labour American railways and American irrigation would have been restricted as to time and shortened as to content. Chinese and other Asiatics were allowed to swarm in, and polyglot labour from southern Europe made a reservoir to draw upon.

I shall not easily forget a story told by the Rt Hon. W. M. Hughes just after his arrival from Geneva not long ago. He had called at New York on his way home by way of America, and the late Mr Gompers called upon him, as a great Labour leader in trouble who wanted a word with an expert in Labour difficulties. He told Mr Hughes that they were on the verge of a big upset, and perhaps he might be willing to offer a little advice. Mr Hughes asked what was being done. Mr Gompers said that he was addressing a meeting of five thousand men that night if Mr Hughes cared to come. Mr Hughes agreed at once. But, said he, when it was over, that meeting seemed dead—"cold mutton wasn't deader"—and Mr Gomper's speech struck no sparks.

When that gentleman arrived to hear what Mr Hughes thought of it, he was asked whether he could not do better than that! "Well," was the reply, "you have a try Mr Hughes." An emphatic shake of the head

was Mr Hughes's rejoinder. But he asked Mr Gompers what was the catch. "Ah!" said Mr Gompers, "more than half that crowd doesn't understand a word of English!" And that about sums up the whole problem of cheap labour in America which is rapidly becoming dear labour.

It was this problem of cheap labour which moved William Charles Wentworth to oppose any cessation of the transportation of convicts to Australia. He could see the difficulties that would arise with the increasing cost of labour if the convict system were to cease. The extension of sheep-raising and the growth of settlement would mean competition for labour, and Wentworth was thinking of an Australia developing so fast that the markets on the other side of the world must be faced and with world prices. Wool was doing very well; but Australia had been able to market her own wool because she had been growing it by the aid of cheap labour.

And so of the sugar industry, it was a relation of Lord Hopetoun, our first Governor-General, whose family started near Brisbane when Queensland became a colony. The Hon. Louis Hope planted twenty acres of cane by the aid of black labour, and the result seemed so wonderful that he was given a Crown grant of land. The kanakas had been brought in by Captain Robert Towns, whose name is continued in Townsville, the city he founded in northern Queensland. He had a great idea of growing cotton, and had brought the natives in to help him. The project breaking down, he let Mr Hope have them, with the result noted. But the cost of growing sugar-cane by white labour has run in to many

millions for Australia, because the tariff prevents outside sugar from competing.

The housewife who has travelled knows something about the price of sugar abroad, and exclaims just as she does when seeing the price of Australian butter in English shops. When I was in Broadstairs in 1930 I saw in one of the shops in the main street our butter quoted at 1s. 1½d. while it was sixpence dearer here in Australia.

But that does not throw any light on our problem of irrigation and the cost of water conservation on any scale commensurable with our needs. What are we going to do with the million square miles north of the Tropic of Capricorn—a line running west from Rockhampton to the Western Australian coast? Sir Thomas McIlwraith once discussed this question with me on a basis new to me. He said that India sent every year a stream of indentured coolies and their families to work on the tea and other plantations along the southern coasts of that sub-continent. The steamers carrying them were met by a returning stream of coolies who were going home. They were not allowed to stay when their time was up. So, said Sir Thomas, why not protect ourselves in the Far North by developing the country with labour that would always be coming and going but never allowed to stay?

It seems hopeless to discuss the question in those terms and I am not supporting it. But are we to let Italians come in by their thousands and form a colony of their own with Italy asking questions? Well, the reply seems to be that there are Italians and Italians. In the northern parts of Italy I have seen as fine men, women, and children as the best we have in Australia; and that is a

fair reply all round. If we could really face our droughts in future with water and feed as the Canadians have to face their five months' winter, with food provided for man and beast and ample housing for both, then our great reservoirs would come, and water would be available in the driest of seasons.

CHAPTER XIX

FOR THE CORONATION

Visiting London for the Coronation in 1911—The *Otway* and its passengers—Andrew Fisher, Prime Minister—Batchelor and Pearce his companions—Coming events cast their shadow before—Our trip to Cairo on the way to London—News of the defeat of the referendum in Australia—Mr Fisher angry and threatens to resign.

NOTHING could have been less expected or more welcome than to be told to pack up and get away to the Coronation of King George and Queen Mary. It came without much time to make the necessary arrangements, for a family had to be left behind and my wife was to accompany me. Such a token of confidence was exciting, to say the least of it, and everybody in our family circle was on tiptoe. Moreover, I was told not to take the trip too seriously. I was to represent the *Sydney Morning Herald*, but the staff in London would still be in harness and make the ways plain and solve all the problems of publicity. My business was to absorb and not to get in the way. It would be more than half a century since I left England, but going back was to be part of the continuing of my graduation in journalism. It was to be a new mother country, and I was carrying home enough of Australia to give my friends old and new something to think about. But could Australia find room in any picture with the world filling London for the Coronation?

Our passages were taken on the *Otway*, the Orient steamer carrying the Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, born in Scotland, and his two colleagues Messrs Batchelor and Pearce, both natives of South Australia, though Mr Pearce had cast in his lot with Western Australia. These three representatives of the Labour Party in power had a great deal to think about, as I soon found out. Mr (now Sir George) Pearce and I stood together on the *Otway's* upper deck, watching Australia sinking below the horizon soon after we left Fremantle, when he shook his head. We had been talking of the referendum in Australia soon to be taken upon which Labour was pinning a good deal of faith and hope. Two amendments to the Constitution were involved. One concerned trade and commerce and other matters; the other, supported by the Labour Party, was to give power to nationalize any industry declared by Parliament to be under a monopoly. Mr Pearce was doubtful whether they had been wise to leave the Commonwealth at such a juncture, and said so.

But I fancy Mr Fisher was more sanguine, judging by his outburst to me when a cablegram was handed to him at Suez as we stood side by side on the tender which was taking sixty odd saloon passengers ashore to visit Cairo—a very special trip as will be explained. The cablegram simply reported that the two amendments submitted to a referendum on 26 April had been defeated. Mr Fisher used strong language, so strong that I realized how angry he was. He told me that he felt inclined to resign his job of Prime Minister and get back to Australia. But I think he was just letting off steam, for I heard nothing more about it. The referendum figures were not given to us.

Mr Pearce probably heard that Western Australia was the only State that voted in the affirmative. If that was any consolation, he did not show it. As a matter of fact the trip to Cairo, and later on the run across Europe took up all the spare time of the ministers, and let them loose like three schoolboys. We met the ministerial party ashore at Naples, chased them round the Seven Hills of Rome, and nearly collided with them in the ruins of the Forum. I am not sure whether we saw them on the run through France; but for nearly two months during the sitting of the Imperial Conference in London they were only seen at functions. Mr Fisher and I were in touch—but more of that anon.

The trip to Cairo is worth a word or two, because a section of the saloon passengers, of whom I was one, got the idea that with the Prime Minister on board it ought to be possible to see Cairo, during the *Otway's* passage through the Canal. Why should we not be able to get off at Suez, be taken by special train to Cairo, see the Pyramids and the rest, and catch the steamer at Port Said—all a matter of arrangement? So, when we reached Colombo, "Cook's" were interviewed; but its staff seemed born tired, or were unable to help us. Such an idea evidently had never entered their heads; and we were in too great a hurry to argue with them.

After leaving Colombo we interviewed Mr Fisher, and he rose like a bird to the thought of adventure. Sir George Reid, our High Commissioner in London, was sent a message by air, and he communicated with Cook's in Cairo. Before we got to Aden a plan was presented to us which met with large approval. We were to give the number of passengers ready to go ashore at Suez, and then came particulars. Each of us

was to find £6 10s. in gold, guaranteed for sixty-five persons. No one was to land until the money was paid down, and our purser and Cook's agent would receive the four hundred odd sovereigns on board when we reached Suez. We would find a special train waiting for us, with dining-car provided, and by midnight all of us would be put up at Shepheard's great hotel in Cairo. On the morrow taxi-cabs to hold four each, with a dragoman included, would take us round the sights.

We did the Pyramids, the Citadel, old Cairo, the Mosques in Cairo itself, as well as the Bazaar and the Museum. We had time for rest and meals. It was a great day, and after dinner we took train again for Port Said, which we reached to see the *Otway* waiting. She had been put back nine hours for our special convenience. It was a memorable excursion, because we had introduced a novelty. It had never been done before from Australia; it took root, and has since become a commonplace.

This visit to England seemed to be full of coincidence. In the first place, the Coronation itself was the overpowering attraction, and would have remained so if it had been held in some centre in South Africa. Then I was returning to my native land after an absence of nearly half a century and was naturally delighted. If there had been no Coronation it would have been a wonderful thing to be able to see my birthplace again and to travel through the south of England to Taunton, Bath, and Bristol. But in addition there was the *Otway* with Mr Fisher on board, whom I had known in Queensland when he was a Gympie miner, and whose political progress I had watched through the years from the time

when he was elected a member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The first Labour Party had been sent into Parliament fourteen strong, and the notable thing was the way it buried itself in the Parliamentary Library. We always knew where the Labour members, or most of them, could be found. I certainly felt that these men were worth watching; in the beginning of my journalistic career I went about to see, and if possible to talk to, them. Some of these came from northern Queensland and one of them became Speaker of the House of Representatives. He had won his vast electorate on a "push" bike and was a watchmaker by trade. There were many "hard cases" in the Far North in those days, as well as some of the finest men and women in Australia.

The story is told of a wharf strike in one of the northern ports where the men were a rough lot. Two of them, about the roughest, were bricklayers, and they decided to go inland during the strike and look for a job. In a western station they were given a chimney to build and the manager told them to go to the men's dining-room for a meal, where a girl would look after them. She was a bright, bonny lass as it happened, and one of the men thinking to break the ice, said: "I hear, miss, that the roosters out this way lay eggs?"

She replied, without hesitation: "I don't know about that. But the boss says two blokes have just blown in, and he tells me they are fair cows and lay bricks!"

That gives an idea of the capable women and wonderful men who have made northern Queensland. And Sir Robert Philp and his family stand for that part of Australia to show what the north can be and do.

Here then was Mr Fisher again. But Mr Batchelor and Mr Pearce were different propositions. Mr Batchelor was quite a stranger; I never got very close to him. He was an able man with a fine record in South Australia. But he was too much like the Scots lady who took every new minister out of winding when he walked down out of the pulpit. On one occasion a well-known preacher came to the kirk to fill a vacancy. After the sermon when he had greeted her, she dealt faithfully with him. He protested and began to argue. "Meenister," she said, "you no can argue wi' me, because I know I'm right." The emphasis on the last word was full of rolling "r's." Mr Batchelor gave me the impression that he would be just as emphatic; I fancy he was too full of his immediate job, except to let me know that he was right, whatever I might say, and I was wrong.

Mr Pearce however, was the student, and made an admirable balance to the other two. He was always reading reports or studying magazines. Then I realized that the coming Colonial Conference, which was to precede the Coronation, was going to be a very serious business for these untried men.

The next extraordinary coincidence greeted me when I reached London and found that the Conference was the first of a new series with Empire-searching possibilities in it. But let me finish first with our voyage. As coincidences were the order of the day, one was provided among the saloon passengers. This created a sensation in the feminine circle of our immediate acquaintance. My wife and I had left Sydney in some anxiety about our eldest son, who was a sailor lad from whom we had not heard a word for nearly twelve

months. He had left Newcastle in New South Wales an apprentice on board a large sailing ship carrying two thousand tons of coal to Iquique in South America with a "shanghaied" crew. There were twenty apprentices on board. The last letter had been received when the ship left Iquique loaded with nitrates for Europe round the Horn. A cable received by me just before the *Otway* left Sydney announced the lad's safe arrival in London and his leaving by a steamer, probably for Australia. It was disappointing to think that another twelve months might elapse before we saw him again. Moreover, he would have learnt from the *Sydney Morning Herald* office in London that his father and mother were coming to London by the *Otway*.

Just when we had entered the harbour at Colombo, my wife and myself were watching a smaller steamer outside the breakwater, as if she might not be coming in and was only calling for orders. Later in the morning, when getting ready to go ashore, we were overwhelmed by a visit from our son. The captain of the steamer had let him have a boat's crew to greet his parents on the *Otway* and he must get back without delay, as the captain had received his orders and was off again. It does not seem much to recount, but among the womenfolk the reunion made a great impression. The lad said his ship on the trip round the Horn had been posted "missing" at Lloyd's, and had a shocking voyage.

Later on a number of us were discussing coincidences. One curious incident was given, probably a variation of the original story which has been told often, but had never reached me. Our narrator said that on a stormy night a dozen passengers, all good sailors, were sitting together at a table in the saloon of one of the large

passenger steamers swapping yarns about art and artists. An evidently wealthy collector and connoisseur, among them, produced a beautiful medal which, he declared, was one of three, the work of the great Italian master artist and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini. It was claimed to be priceless. Another of the three was in the Vatican Museum. Nobody knew the whereabouts of the third. At that moment the great vessel gave a sudden lurch, and the half-dozen passengers at the table were thrown about. When they recovered, and were beginning to think of retiring to their cabins, the owner of the medal asked for its return. It could not be found. There was naturally a tense interval until somebody suggested that they turn their pockets out. All but one immediately responded. The dissentient passenger also resolutely refused to be searched.

The matter was reported to the captain, and the little party separated for the night with mixed feelings. The recalcitrant passenger was more than suspect. Next morning when the captain's early cup of coffee was taken to his cabin the steward handed him the missing medal. It had been found under a carpet runner in the saloon. At breakfast the captain handed it to its owner, and everybody then looked with astonishment at the suspected passenger, who produced the third medal! He was a rival collector.

Our own denouement was interesting. My wife and I had lost our umbrellas, both valuable presents, before we reached London. One was taken by a thief at Colombo when we landed after seeing our son, and the other was lost by misadventure at Venice before we left for Switzerland. When we reached London a friend

who had looked after the nearly shipwrecked son, gave me a parcel left by him. It contained an umbrella for each of us! He only knew that his parents were coming to London; it never struck him that he might be overloading us. The coincidence of our need and his desire to give us something must have moved the family Puck to get busy.

CHAPTER XX

THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE

A new departure and a large hope—Previous Colonial Conferences now called Imperial—Mr Fisher's anxiety about the Far East—His pleasure when the treaty with Japan was renewed—Mr Alfred Deakin and Lord Salisbury in previous Colonial Conferences—My meeting with Richard Jebb—The Australian Constitution and Mr Chamberlain—Struggle before reaching House of Commons.

With history in the making it is just as well to be able to compare places of historical interest before and after any great event. Take Naples, for instance, in 1911 and twenty years after—almost. The Naples of 1930 was full of Mussolini's tracks, and the contrast was extraordinary. When we landed there from the *Otway* with Andrew Fisher and his colleagues, Naples was a filthy place. It reminded me, again, of *Punch's* joke of the reporter who found "seven and twenty stenches, all well defined, and several stinks" in one of the London slums.

Beggars were everywhere; predatory guides were a nuisance, and the streets were hopelessly unclean. We went to Pompeii and Herculaneum by carriage along a cobbled road with blankets of macaroni drying from innumerable lines like twelve months' washing, catching the dust, attracting the flies, and advertising a southern Italian way of living that was very repellant. Australia at the time consumed a good deal of Italian macaroni, and when I asked our driver, who could speak good

enough English, if what we saw was the macaroni of commerce he was emphatic: "No, no, no!" He had been listening to our comments and realized the pitfall in front of him. But it was quite enough, as far as Naples was concerned. It was all of a piece.

Naples in 1930 was much better. The hand of Mussolini was to be seen in cleaner streets; the beggars had gone, and the charge was reasonable for a carriage drive, round the attractive hill San Martino with its old palace on top, which revealed Naples in a marvellous series of views, always to be remembered. But as a visiting journalist I could not forget all that had happened since the war of 1914—the editors brutally treated who had dared to speak the truth or to protest against outrages upon liberty. In 1911 we had been through Rome and Florence to Venice, and back through northern Italy to Milan, on our way to Switzerland and France. Mussolini's name was hidden in a dark future, and our impressions of Lombardy were more favourable than of Naples and the south. Yet it was of Milan in, or just after, 1930, that I heard a story from a well-known Australian public man who had been there through events which startled him. He told me that he and his wife had visited the wonderful Milan Cathedral, which makes the city notable when cathedrals throughout Europe are compared. On coming out they found a great deal of excitement in the streets. Something had evidently happened, and next day he got a newspaper in which the facts emerged.

My friend found that a member of the Chamber of Deputies—the Italian Parliament—had been advertised to speak in the principal hall. He was known to be a critic of Mussolini. When he arrived by train the police of

Milan were replaced by a special body of guards. They took charge, and the would-be speaker was stripped and maltreated, given an impossible dose of castor oil, trussed like a fowl for the oven, and indeed suffered as if he were an abandoned criminal. Then he was packed in a bag for delivery at the Chamber of Deputies in Rome as if he were offal. A warning ticket was attached with the legend: "This is the first—see that it be the last."

One had heard so much of this in the years of peace, of Italy in the new order, and yet one's experience was full of surprise at the improvements made and the progress achieved. The ways of German and Russian brutality had been demonstrated so vividly and so fast that not so long ago Italy seemed to have made up her mind. Communist and Nazi excesses to terrify smaller neutral States should find no part or lot in her future. A better day appeared to be dawning. But now the Mussolini of the dagger and the whip has become one with Hitler and Goering in brutality unashamed. Murder and treachery and every form of merciless assault are their weapons of warfare, and Italy is Germany's partner in a giant raid on civilization.

But 1911 was our year of jubilee, as we enjoyed Lucerne and a Switzerland waking in the spring. On through France to Paris, still carrying the season with us, we went, but now we had lost the Australian Prime Minister and his companions. The Imperial Conference was meeting in London, and the Coronation loomed so large that we could think of nothing else at the moment. It was not essential of course that I should keep close to London, but I had a special interest in Andrew Fisher,

now Prime Minister of Australia and someone in particular in London.

He must have been thankful that George Pearce was at his right hand, the student of the trio of ministers. On the *Otway* Mr Pearce seemed always to have Blue Books or magazines by him and had little or no time for ordinary conversation. Games were anathema, except that the Prime Minister indulged in chess, and lifted most of the prizes in competitions.

I never saw Mr Fisher spend time in public on heavy literature, nerve-racking reports, or magazines. If he was concerned about anything it was whether the treaty between Britain and Japan would be renewed. I got advance news from him about it during the sitting of the Imperial Conference, for when he came out from an important discussion he told me with a sigh of relief that the treaty with Japan was to be renewed. He was full of the subject and said to me: "Now we're safe for another ten years." This was certainly interesting. But during the war of 1914 we knew how to appreciate the value of that treaty.

Mr Fisher's attitude was full of significance. He was learning the meaning of Empire. The man who could rejoice to know that Japan was to be a friend for another ten years was the same, when war broke out, who could offer the mother country the "last man and the last shilling." When the A.I.F. transports were being sent to Gallipoli and France, Japanese cruisers bore their share of the burden of keeping our troops safe. It was part of the treaty renewed in 1911.

Messrs Pearce and Batchelor returned to Australia from the Coronation by way of China and Japan, and so added a practical experience of Asia to the rest. The

multi-millions of people so near to Australia had to be seen to be believed.

Sometimes I have thought of Andrew Fisher in those days when the Imperial Conference was sitting in London with everything to learn, and leaving it with very little left to learn. Scottish stories are often illuminating in this relation, and it must be remembered that they come from the people who are supposed to be laughed at. The one I have in mind is of an Aberdeen lad who decided to go to London, much to the dismay of his relatives and friends, who told him that he would be skinned alive there. But he ventured, and to his horror the first thing he picked up was a sixpence on the London pavements. Afraid that something might happen he pawned it for fivepence. And afraid again lest he be found with the pawn-ticket on him, he sold it for fourpence. Needless to say the end of that lad was not to be skinned alive.

When the Imperial Conference was over, it was not Andrew Fisher who lost anything by his experience. Indeed the Australian delegation proved to be unusually capable. The great thing which came out of Conference experience was a vision of the Empire worth all the rest put together. Andrew Fisher was still Prime Minister when in the war of 1914 he promised Australia's help to the mother country, and he did so from a full heart. He was not forced into it. The declaration was spontaneous.

The Imperial Conference of 1911 was the first of the name. The preceding conferences were called "Colonial," and the first of that series began in 1887. It was a notable conference, for Alfred Deakin gave Lord Salisbury something for which he had not bar-

gained in the plainest of plain speech. The idea of the first Colonial Conference was to teach the visiting colonial delegates a few preparatory lessons. They were there to learn, and to speak when they were spoken to. There were one hundred and twenty of them altogether, and the general atmosphere was that of the school-room until Mr Deakin startled Lord Salisbury by his denunciation of the proposal to hand over British interests in the New Hebrides to France. Australia was to acquiesce as a matter of course.

In a secret session never reported, Mr Deakin met the British Prime Minister with a strong straightforward repudiation of the whole proposal. Lord Salisbury, however, was not offended, but seemed to have been profoundly impressed. The New Hebrides surrender was abandoned, and to-day the group is still shared with France by Great Britain, as it has been from the beginning of the compact. Any one who cares to read the report of a very interesting episode should look up the speech in Walter Murdoch's *Life of Alfred Deakin.*

Further developments took place in succeeding Colonial Conferences, and Mr Deakin again stirred the dovecots of British administration in 1907. In 1911 the result of it all appeared in the Conference which happened fortunately to chime in with the Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary. And it was my good fortune to be in London to study its new status and learn something of its proceedings. It was called for the first time "The Imperial Conference," but the name was carried back to 1887, and all the conferences are now called "Imperial."

The Conference of 1911, however, was confined to the Dominions; and their representatives were treated as

equals, responsible with the mother country. They were told the secrets of administration, and made to realize all that Great Britain was doing in naval defence and in military preparation. There had never been a conference like it, and there was not another until after the war of 1914. During the war the Prime Ministers were drawn together. The Australian Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, was not only taken into full confidence but became a member of an enlarged War Cabinet.

It was my good fortune to have met Richard Jebb during those weeks in which the Imperial Conference was sitting, and it was an education to talk to him. He had just published his valuable book, entitled *The Imperial Conference* in March 1911. Again I would refer to Walter Murdoch's *Life of Alfred Deakin*, which did not appear till 1923. He has used Richard Jebb's work to some purpose. He tells a whole story from Alfred Deakin's notes, of which Jebb hardly gives the bones.

Federation in Australia depended at last upon the British Parliament. The Constitution which had been hammered together with so much care in Australia must become a bill to pass the House of Commons like any other legislation. To see it through, an Australian delegation, three of whom were prominent lawyers, Messrs Barton, Deakin, and Turner, with Sir James Dickson from Queensland, went to London. The various Australian Premiers expected the constitution to be passed without amendment. But at the outset their representatives in London were met by Joseph Chamberlain, who was Minister of State for the Colonies, with a demand for the omission of clause 74. This clause had cut out all appeals to the Privy Council. Professor Murdoch

gives the fight which ensued; but he says very little about Sir Samuel Griffith behind the scenes.

I am particularly interested in this because as editor of the *Brisbane Courier* I was in close touch with Sir Samuel. My belief is that Mr Chamberlain was so determined at the outset that clause 74 must go, or that an amendment must be proposed, because he believed that a substantial section of Australian opinion wished the right of appeal to the Privy Council to remain. The *Brisbane Courier* certainly fought for it, and its readers substantially agreed. Sir James Dickson, who put a spoke into the wheel of the three lawyers, made them disgusted and at last very angry. C. C. Kingston of South Australia would not stay in the room with Sir James.

At last the amendment to the Constitution, which is part of it to-day, was agreed to, and Sir James Dickson went back to Queensland to give Sir Samuel Griffith the details. That episode stands out in my memory, and I could see, through the whole of the battle, how much Sir Samuel's mind and interest were engaged. I got nothing for publication except what the Queensland Premier and the southern Premiers let go. But naturally I was able to obtain light enough from Sir Samuel to see how the fight was going. As Chief Justice of Queensland, he had to keep free of politics; but retaining the Privy Council as a court of appeal was to him of paramount importance.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SOUTH TRIFORIUM

Westminster Abbey and a fine view of the Coronation—A great assemblage of Empire journalists in the South Triforium—My plea to leave the Abbey before the King and Queen—A successful exit—London like a city waiting the Resurrection—Westminster Abbey again in 1940—Delegates to the Imperial Press Conference invited by the Dean—Preacher Dr Charles D'Arcy, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland.

WHAT a vantage-point in Westminster Abbey was the South Triforium where the journalists of the Empire were gathered to witness the Coronation of 1911! We were placed high up, above the great arches, with plenty of room so that while the multitude of distinguished men and women below who were to make a marvellous pageantry had to keep their seats, once they were settled, we could move about in the Triforium if we wished. At any rate I took leave, when my natural restlessness became a burden, to take a mild walk behind the assembled folk of the pen—it could not have been less than a mile altogether. We were a selected crowd of men and women writers, most of us on benches, but my perch was well up where others hesitated to go because it was high and dirty on an iron bar spanning an arch which commanded the line of gorgeous processions up to the thrones, and the assembled bishops and archbishops.

No one was prepared to "jump" my claim, so that I was able to walk half of my mile with one of Mr Fisher's

staff in the clear space behind the benches, from which something could be seen but behind which was room to spread a wing or stretch a leg. It was an illuminating talk with a civil servant while it lasted. The hosts below were not more than assembling; and the Prime Minister's helper from Labour ranks was not satisfied with his chief. Mr Fisher was not inclined to move fast enough, and the Labour Party was grumbling for something more than the mild socialism with which we were associated in Brisbane under the Labour paper edited by W. G. Higgs, who was now Senator and by no means an extremist.

Indeed compared with the communistic developments of later years, Mr Fisher's programme of making haste slowly was undoubtedly irritating to men of the type of his staff attendant who was unburdening his soul to me in Westminster Abbey. Why I should have been given such a treat is impossible to say. By the time our half-mile was finished the great show below was beginning, so I went back to my perch and never saw my informant again in London—or in Sydney for that matter for many a day. But I have never forgotten our talk. It gave me a better idea of Mr Fisher's steadfastness of character, and his difficulties with galloping supporters.

From my perch I watched the processions and saw both crowns put on. From there, too, I listened to Dr Lang's charge to the King and Queen, delivered from the pulpit below but opposite to me. Another rising Scotsman taking the limelight! He was then Archbishop of York, and was to be Archbishop of Canterbury. His brother was also to reach a pinnacle of fame as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

These sons of the North when they are good they are very good, like *Punch's* little girl, who was "horrid" when she was bad, she said. The revolutionary or restless Scot is just as thorough as the steady, able, and strong ones, who have taken possession of British finance and politics, or the one who has seated himself on the Archbishop's throne. More power to the Archbishop, and a clap also for the Scot's ability to make better jokes than the best of other folk.

When I had seen everything that was possible I got off my perch. My *Sydney Morning Herald* associate, Mr Townend, who was a London fixture in our office at Cheapside, was now as anxious as I was to get away. Australia was on the other side of the world, and if we could only slip out of the Abbey it would be possible to put a good message through for cabling without loss of time. Otherwise the tail of the hunt would be a poor simile for our dilemma. So I went hunting by getting alongside the officer in charge of the Triforium.

We were literally locked up. No one could get down except by a winding stair with a door at the top, and a key to lock it which was on a bunch in charge of the officer in uniform who belonged to one of the great regiments I imagine. But he was delightfully approachable. When he discovered who I was and how far I had travelled to see the Coronation he was so interested that my second half-mile was walked before I realized it. Then very cautiously I put the proposition that perhaps Australia deserved a little help, and that the story of the Coronation should be read so far away at the earliest possible moment. Could not Mr Townend and I just slip out and get away to Cheapside without metaphori-

cally waking the baby—otherwise the censor—who might burst if he heard of it.

The reply was as I expected—no one could leave the Abbey before the King and Queen. So our walk slowed down as we approached the door above the winding stair, and my officer friend began absently to finger his keys. Then just as absentmindedly he put a key in the lock, turning it so as to show the door ajar. Finally and resolutely he walked away with the reminder again that "no one could leave the Abbey before the King and Queen." It is impossible at this distance of time to plead guilty to anything. Nothing but sheer absence of mind could have taken us through that door and down that winding stair.

So we found ourselves in London streets under conditions extraordinary beyond description. It was a city of the dead—unknown and undreamed of. Sunday in London has its own quiet and unexpectedness; but this London was like a place haunted rather than occupied. Perhaps it was because one felt guilty of some sort of misdemeanour in marching from the Abbey without leave, and taking our way through crowded streets which were so absurdly silent. It seemed to us, of course, as if everybody wanted to know what we two prowlers were after, and where we came from.

The crowds were getting "worked up" because the time for the King and Queen to pass with their wonderful entourage was so near. One thing we did notice was that some of the galleries were not full, as they should have been. There was plenty of room for another multitude, if the people were ready to come. Later we learned that people had been ready, but had been afraid of a

possible over-crowding that might keep them in, when they wanted to get out.

However, our business was to reach our destination in Cheapside, and see that the *Sydney Morning Herald* in Australia got as clear and moving a picture of the Coronation as possible, and in good time. It had certainly been made easy by the kindly absent-mindedness of a sympathetic guardsman, and after all these years I return thanks and cherish much gratitude still. That picture of a London hushed and waiting for Westminster Abbey to empty itself will never be forgotten.

Curiously enough my wife was in one of the galleries, because it had been impossible to obtain admission for her to the Abbey itself, and she gave me the other side of the show. She was as much impressed from her point of view, as I was from mine. She often recalled my misdemeanour—lese-majesty she called it—with many twinges of feminine conscience. All I could ask was whether any confession, and to whom, would save my soul? And there it remained.

It may be added, before leaving the South Triforium as a subject of interest, that the ladies who made a significant section of the Empire journalists there, were full of life and comment. My seat and perch were near enough for me to hear some of the things they said or indicated, for speech sometimes failed. For instance at the most important moment in the Coronation ceremonial, when the Queen was crowned, the peeresses who were seated just below the dais of the two thrones had to rise and don their coronets. It was a very imposing sight.

But the women behind me were much concerned because one peeress could not get her coronet to "sit."

It wobbled and slipped in spite of help from the neighbours with pins and pattings who had each a hand free with their coronets well planted. "Oh, poor dear! Oh dear! Oh dear!" were the ejaculations from our benches. And they continued until the trouble was over—quite a long time.

There was no end to the feminine comments upon the dignity and grace of Queen Mary, and the marvellous variety of light and colour in the robes and orders of the assembled multitude. Kings and royalties from nations beyond the British Empire were gathered. Many of them had disappeared when the wheel came round again, and Westminster Abbey had witnessed other coronations. Europe after the war of 1914-18—only seven years since we watched it all from the South Triforium—was altered almost out of recognition. Thrones were empty, the Russian Revolution had begun, and the idea of disarmament was to gather force.

But there was nobody with the calibre of Canning and Wellington to recall the lessons taught by those statesmen after Waterloo. France was then down in the dust with Bonaparte's defeat, and her victors in Europe wanted to trample on her. She was to pay to the limit of her strength—and beyond; just as Germany in 1918 was to be strangled with an impossible burden of indemnities. Canning and Wellington were able to give France a fighting chance of recovery. Germany has taken her revenge in ways manufactured in Hades.

One thought of it all came in 1930 when the delegates to the Imperial Press Conference were invited by the Dean of Westminster Abbey to morning service at the close of their deliberations. The preacher was Dr Charles D'Arcy, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate

of All Ireland, in whom I was specially interested. His books had always attracted me—some I had read carefully—and his personality I very much admired and respected. It did not matter that I could not hear a word of his sermon, and he could not tell me anything about it when I explained that I had been a member of his congregation on that Sunday morning in London.

It had been my great good fortune to sit beside His Grace at dinner on the evening he landed in Sydney not so long ago. My friend Dr Mowll, the Archbishop of Sydney knew how much I admired Dr D'Arcy as writer and preacher and gave me this opportunity. We discussed many things; but his last book *The Adventures of a Bishop* had interested me exceedingly for its revelations of a life of extraordinary activity in Ireland. The Archbishop of Armagh was born in Dublin near St Patrick's Cathedral, and before he had finished he had been enthroned twelve times till he finished as Primate of All Ireland. He tells only one story in his book. That is about Dean Swift who was so prominently identified with St Patrick's.

Alongside the Cathedral was a high-smelling alley in the Dean's time which was called St Patrick's Market. One morning the Dean was walking down it, and coming towards him was an old Irish dame on an ass, leading a string of asses with her wares. The Dean gave her greeting: "Good morning, mother of asses," he said. Like a flash with true Irish wit, she replied "Good morning, my son." I thanked the Archbishop for that story. Not only was it new to me, but Dean Swift's reaction to the dame's retort can be better imagined than formulated.

CHAPTER XXII

MY WAR BOOKS

Great war of 1914 pushed me into authorship—Interest in the Pacific made it a life-long study—Sir Samuel Griffith and the "Black Labour" traffic—Robert Louis Stevenson and Germany in Samoa—My first book *The New Pacific* a forced product—Sir William MacGregor comes into the picture—Stories about him and his fearlessness—He helped me to place in London two other war books—William Heinemann's message.

In the middle of the great war of 1914 my collection of material in connexion with Germany's intrigues in the Pacific groups and islands, and in Australia too, was becoming too big for comfort. It was imperative to condense it, and put many vital conclusions into shape. Fortunately a great deal of my information was, or had been, personal and had breath and being. For instance, in the *Herald* office were men who knew the Pacific better than I did. One of our senior reporters was Stanley Hall, whose daughter had made a name and place for herself in the musical world. Her father had been in Fiji in the days of King Thakombau and had been on the staff of the *Fiji Times* when the days of our scandals over black labour were dark and dreary.

In Queensland, Sir Samuel Griffith had brought from London an able journalist named Kinnaird Rose (who had done some valuable work for W. E. Gladstone over the Bulgarian atrocities) to report upon the black labour traffic and the allegations that were being made by

reputable people conversant with the facts. Kinnaird Rose stayed in Brisbane when the work was done and became one of my predecessors in the chair of the *Brisbane Courier*.

Stanley Hall told me some terrible stories current in Levuka at the time, and was a mine of information on other matters. But Percy Allen and Farmer Whyte were able from personal contacts and acquired knowledge to supplement a good deal that I had acquired myself from men like Sir William MacGregor, Dr George Brown, Dr Lorimer Fison, and others who had been resident in the South Seas. Both Dr Fison and Dr Brown had been correspondents and writers for the *Sydney Morning Herald* in trying times when nobody dared to deal faithfully with Germany, for her practices and policy in Samoa, Tonga, New Britain and the various islands that could be used for German trade.

Robert Louis Stevenson said on one occasion that it was lese-majesty to speak of bugs on German vessels. Everything German was sacrosanct, and even the British Government would listen to Bismarck before Sir Thomas McIlwraith. Germany was a great Power straddling the Pacific. If that be too strong a phrase, one might say that her agents were everywhere and her claims continuous, brazen, and belligerent.

So my first war book *The New Pacific* was put into shape. Macmillan in London greeted it with an acceptance which reached me by cable when I was prepared to wait some time even for a possible criticism and regretful refusal. Sir William MacGregor was my principal figure, and then not half could be told about him. I had met him first in Brisbane when I was vice-president of the Queensland branch of the Royal

Geographical Society, and in the middle of my association with F. W. Ward on the *Brisbane Courier*.

It was at one of our evening meetings; Sir William as a member came in without any fuss and took a seat at the back of the room until the formal business was completed. He looked like a quiet country doctor, and had no great physique to impress those who knew something of his record as an administrator, an explorer in the wilds of Papua, and a man of science. When I was introduced to him he talked with a quiet confidence and courtesy that impressed me, for there was no assumption of knowledge and experience. Later on when we got to know one another I found him the warmest of friends. It was pleasant to realize that he was very pleased with my story of him, and the prominence given to him in *The New Pacific*.

It is in times like the present that one thinks of an experience told by Sir William MacGregor himself when Governor of Queensland, and a lady visiting Government House had asked him whether the natives of Papua were really dangerous. It illustrates the death grip in which the Allies find themselves with Hitler in the Second Great War. Sir William said that he had been in his official steam yacht, the *Merrie England*, and decided to visit a village, on the coast of Papua, whose chief was known for his blood-thirsty character. So far it had not been thought advisable to try to make friends with him. But Sir William had been successful with other hard cases among the natives. Even in the mountain fastnesses his name was known and the power of "Government" realized. In one case where a native had been arrested and handcuffed, but had escaped into

the mountains, the handcuffs were returned—they were "Government" and were treated with due respect.

Now when the *Merrie England* reached the point for landing at the village of this fierce and blood-thirsty chief, Sir William went ashore with one native constable, unarmed. The captain of the yacht was told to go along the coast on a job but to be back at the same time on the following day. It was evening. No opposition was made to Sir William's landing. His hammock was slung between two trees and his mosquito-net put over it, for Sir William MacGregor anticipated Dr James Bancroft and his nephew in suspecting the mosquito as a disease carrier. The native constable made his bed beneath the hammock. During the night there was nothing to cause anxiety, except that the natives seemed to be moving about.

Next morning, however, Sir William found that everything movable had been taken—a bright new tomahawk, the cooking-pots, and the rest of the camp-gear. He sent word to the chief that the lot must be returned at once. First one thing and then another was brought back and the chief himself brought up the rear with the tomahawk. As he approached, Sir William saw murder in his eyes, and when the tomahawk was raised as if to be given back, it was clear to him that the next move would be to bury it in his head. Before the blow could descend, however, Sir William grasped the chief's wrist. He was a very strong man himself and the question was who would give in first.

It was a deadly, silent, almost moveless wrestle. Indeed, Sir William said that it was a matter of life and death for him. The *Merrie England* was far away and his native constable was unarmed. When

he felt that he was near the end of his strength the chief suddenly collapsed, and the tomahawk fell between them. He ordered the subdued savage to give it to him handle first. There was nothing left but to gather the gear together and get down to the water, facing the natives who had collected and evidently meant mischief. At the critical moment the whistle of the *Merrie England* was heard and she came round the point some hours ahead of time. The captain had been afraid, and decided to get back as soon as possible. But it was just Sir William MacGregor's fearlessness in dozens of such situations that had enabled him to make friends with the chiefs and the people of Papua.

One story of the captain of the *Merrie England* may be given here to help my readers to understand something of this wonderful man's power, resource, and personal influence. It was when the yacht had been surrounded by a number of war canoes filled with fighting savages armed with spears which they could throw with the skill of our own aboriginals. The captain had issued a rifle to each member of the crew, when Sir William MacGregor came on deck and ordered every man to go below. This so astonished the captain that he began to protest. But Sir William said that it would be better to kill half a dozen chiefs rather than to slaughter a hundred of their followers. So very reluctantly the captain followed his crew below. Half a dozen shots brought the captain on deck again. Sir William was on the bridge, which was stuck with spears like a cushion with pins, and the canoes were in flight. He had picked out a chief in each of the principal canoes and shot him dead—so great a marksman was he—and the savages, with their leaders gone had fled in panic.

After *The New Pacific* appeared my correspondence with Sir William continued till he died. The last letters make pathetic reading. He had retired after his life's labours to his small estate, Chapel-on-Leader, in Scotland. But his men had all gone to the front, and he had to do many jobs himself to keep things going. Then came the note of tragedy. His favourite grandson, a midshipman on board one of the battleships, had been killed; and soon after he reported that his eldest daughter, Lady Paget, had died. The heartbreak in this news was evident. Like himself she had kept a diary in three languages, and he was dependent upon her to translate and edit his own account of a wonderful life of activity. It would have become an historic document—and still may be written, for the material must be available.

In this period of retirement Sir William was indefatigable in my interests. At his request I had sent him the manuscript of my second book, *The Problem of the Pacific*, and he went to London to offer it to John Murray with a view to publication. His own introduction to it had been written at my request. John Murray, however, had accepted Dr Scholfield's book on the Pacific and naturally was satisfied with one at a time. Dr Scholfield, indeed, had hoped to get Sir William MacGregor to write an introduction for him but was too late.

Sir William then took my manuscript to William Heinemann who accepted it, and very astutely brought it out a fortnight ahead of the Murray book! Happening to meet Sir William in London the day after that event, Dr Scholfield told him that John Murray was not very good company that morning, with his nose so put out of joint. But it did not really matter. The two books were

reviewed together by most of the papers, and the *Times Literary Supplement* was as kind to *The Problem of the Pacific* as it had been to *The New Pacific*.

Once again Sir William MacGregor exerted himself valiantly on my behalf. I had heard confidentially that Woodrow Wilson was insisting that so far as written matter was concerned, there was nothing to show that Germany had been anything but a good employer and capable commercial power in the Pacific. Why should she be impugned when it came to decide the question of restoring Samoa to her and giving back New Guinea and the Solomons. So I got my material together again and wrote *Stevenson's Germany*. This Sir William MacGregor again took to William Heinemann who read the manuscript himself and sent me a message of commendation. I have prized this more than anything in my experience with publishers, and put it beside the encouragement which our own George Robertson gave me, even in the smaller books which Angus and Robertson have published for me.

The title "Stevenson's Germany" proved a drawback which we realized when too late. Some people bought it thinking that it had to do with "R. L. S." as a traveller in Germany. Apparently, they never thought of him, or imagined him, as one of Germany's bitterest and most consistent critics in the Pacific. The Samoa Stevenson loved so well was being bludgeoned and harried by Germany, and the Highlander in him rallied to the call of the clans. Sir William MacGregor's strength appealed to him in his dire distress. Dr MacGregor (as Sir William was then) had set his mark on Fiji in Sir Arthur Gordon's governorship, when he had

helped to subdue an outbreak of the hill tribes and had become a great man with the Fijian chiefs.

How Stevenson yearned for "MacGregor and his schooner" to help him send a fire throughout the lands where Germany was playing her dirty tricks and taking advantage of native simplicity!

And yet it was the Samoan sense of humanity, which saved the lives of so many German sailors in that terrible hurricane which drove German war vessels on the reefs at Apia Harbour. The Samoans had entrenched themselves on the hills above the harbour and were fighting the Germans with astonishing success, but when nature with her hurricane had put the German war vessels on the scrap heap, and was drowning German sailors by the hundred, the Samoans threw down their arms and hurried to save them. No wonder that men like Robert Louis Stevenson, Dr George Brown, and many other men who knew the Samoans loved them. No wonder either that the Germans, knowing them as we do now, should despise them and take advantage of them.

CHAPTER XXIII

SIR ARTHUR GORDON

Sir Walter Davidson and *The New Pacific*—His chief Sir Arthur Gordon was Governor of Ceylon in the early days—Sir Walter's humour in public speeches—Sir Arthur Gordon, Governor of Fiji, nearly annexed Samoa—Dr George Brown's story of the incident—Tonga and Shirley Baker's deportation—Sir Hubert Murray's death and his methods of administration.

One of my problems in discussing the Pacific Ocean and Germany's game in it was Sir Arthur Gordon, the first Governor of Fiji. He took up duty in 1875 (the group was ceded to Britain, by the paramount chiefs, in 1874) with Dr William MacGregor as Resident Medical Officer.

What kind of a man was Sir Arthur, who later became Lord Stanmore? One light upon his character came many years after when I was assistant editor of the *Herald* in Sydney. I received a message from our State Governor, Sir Walter Davidson, that he would like to see me. When I reached Government House and was greeted cordially by Sir Walter, I saw that His Excellency had a copy of *The New Pacific*. And I was naturally pleased with his kind words about it.

But Sir Walter had something to tell me. He said that he had been on the staff of Sir Arthur Gordon when he was Governor of Ceylon. Evidently Sir Arthur was a martinet, though that was not the burden of my infor-

mant's conversation. Sir Walter, with a fine sense of humour, told me of an experience he had with the Governor who was somewhat difficult to understand on occasion, when some rule or regulation was not observed or carried out to the letter. One breach in particular had made the Governor angry, and Sir Walter received instant promotion. He was sent to a post at the back of the island with an increased salary, but where the conditions were almost intolerable. The cost of living had increased so much that the promotion really amounted to a fine, and the work itself was like "six months hard labour"—though Sir Walter did not use those words. Rather did he treat the whole thing as a joke. And in this case Sir Arthur Gordon, the Highland chief who must be obeyed, became as mild as a sucking dove when the penance was over.

I recall one instance of Sir Walter's humour when a scheme for replanning the city of Sydney was very prominent in the public mind. A number of experts—architects, surveyors, and prominent business men in the city—had got together in a "Regional Plan Association." Money had been subscribed until a good sum had been accumulated, and a programme for contour surveys as a preliminary was set forth. But first was an inaugural luncheon, and the Governor had consented to take the chair and propose the toast of the Association.

Sir Walter began, I remember, with the remark that he had been searching the records to see if any of his predecessors had ever taken an interest in town planning, with a great and growing city under their hands like a lusty boy outgrowing his suits so fast that his parents were in despair. All that His Excellency could find, he said, was some indication that Governor Phillip had

an idea of a great highway, a hundred feet wide, to connect Botany Bay with Port Jackson. Sir Walter continued that he had puzzled over that idea and wondered what could have been behind it. The only thing he could think of was that probably Governor Phillip felt that when the prevailing north-easters blew the State papers out of the Government offices in Sydney along this great highway, the inevitable southerlies would blow them back again in good style. Then Sir Walter got to business.

Sir Arthur Gordon attracted me because he did some good work in Fiji and showed his ability in the first place in the choice of a man like Dr MacGregor to help him, one who became in time his right-hand man and at last relieving Governor. Indeed Dr MacGregor was a kind of Pooh Bah, but Sir Arthur was the leader and a great clansman. He turned the leading Fijians into civil servants, and made the chiefs superior officials if not the equivalent of under secretaries. But they had to be trained, even dragooned, and Dr MacGregor was the instrument in many ways. When I heard a story told of a Gordon of high degree, who was taken out of winding by Joseph Choate, American Ambassador at the Court of St James in London, I could not help thinking of Sir Arthur Gordon.

A Gordon of the Gordons was the central figure in a great banquet given to him as the Governor-General of Canada. He came in the kilt, a little man of less than average stature, and he attracted immediate attention because he was the only one present in the kilt. Every one else was in orthodox evening-clothes—a fine body of Englishmen with no doubt many notable Scotsmen among them. Mr Choate sat beside the guest of honour

and a speech was expected of him, for his fame as an after-dinner speaker was high and his wit much appreciated. (He it was who was asked on one occasion what he would choose if he could have the one thing on earth that he cared to mention. He said at once: "To be Mrs Choate's second husband.")

In this instance when he rose to speak he said: "I have sat cheek by jowl with the Governor-General of Canada, Lord Aberdeen, a Gordon of the Gordons, and I take great shame to myself that I did not leave my trousers at home."

Sir Arthur Gordon was evidently built on the same lines, and with a like temperament, as Lord Aberdeen. But he was a statesman who just lacked the vision of the greatest of them. For instance, he knew quite well what Germany was doing and was conspiring to do in the Pacific. At any rate he knew it all before he left Fiji and had settled down in England.

Germany conspired to get Tonga into her net, and the Premier of Tonga, the Rev. Shirley Baker, was evidently more than willing to help. A harbour, Vavau, which Tonga possessed made it very desirable to secure an innocent agreement. This seemed the easiest first approach. Then would come the final grip as with Samoa; and the rest would be easy against the rest of the world. The British Government however was watching, and to Shirley Baker's surprise and final chagrin, a cruiser came to Tonga and invited him, the Premier, to come on board. He could not understand the reason and declined, until he was told that he must accept the invitation. There could be no refusal. On board he went—never to return to Tonga, which remained free and independent as far as self-government

was concerned, but not free to play any game with Britain's rivals or enemies which could do her harm.

Sir Arthur Gordon knew all that was brewing in the great cauldron of Pacific affairs where the islands and groups about him were concerned. On one occasion he very nearly took action which would have saved unhappy Samoa from civil war and from German ruthlessness, when it came to appoint a chief amenable to her schemes and world plans.

Dr George Brown told me the whole story. He knew Sir Arthur Gordon well; and as he had been a missionary in Samoa for fifteen years he knew all that was happening there. But he knew Fiji as well. And no one knew better than he how fortunate Sir Samuel Griffith was when he picked out Dr MacGregor as the first Administrator in Papua.

Sir Arthur Gordon, then Lord Stanmore, had retired from his labours, and Dr Brown went to see him in his home when on a visit to England. The two old warriors covered much of the well-known ground again—the great war of 1914 was still far away. Then they got to Samoa and discussed the pother of Germany's demands and bluster. Lord Stanmore went to his shelves and picked out a volume, an unpublished book, which he had written. There were no cables or fast steamers in those days. He was thoroughly trusted by the British Government when Governor of Fiji.

If he had decided that Samoa should be ceded to Great Britain, and the flag hoisted, the group would have been saved from years of suffering and dislocation. The Samoan chiefs had wanted to do as the Fijian chiefs, Thakombau and Maafu, had done when Fiji was ceded by them to Great Britain in 1874; and Sir Arthur

Gordon three or four years after could have followed the precedent. But the Gladstone Government hated native embroilments after what the Maori wars had cost. The Treaty of Waitangi with these wars had been a heavy burden. Sir Arthur Gordon hesitated and was lost. Dr George Brown knew the Samoans thoroughly after living for fifteen years among them and assured Lord Stanmore that they would not have given trouble.

Germany must have been immensely pleased over the failure, and poor Samoa suffered shockingly through the years.

To show, however, what kind of man Sir Arthur Gordon was it may be explained that the Fijian chief, Maafu, just mentioned, was a Tongan who had made Fiji his home and had nearly as much power and influence as Thakombau himself. So, when Fiji was ceded and the British flag was flying Maafu became quite a figure of importance. Sir Arthur Gordon, a great clansman himself, treated Maafu as an equal, inviting him to his table and there was wine to drink which became a snare. Maafu at last began to drink heavily and continuously.

The Governor remonstrated with him, and at last made a bond with him that if he stopped drinking and lived a sober life Sir Arthur would banish wine and spirits from his table and drink neither of them himself while Maafu kept his pledge. Sir Arthur felt that Maafu was too good a man to be sacrificed to something which caught him where he was unarmed. It may be said that Maafu played the game. Sir Arthur Gordon, when discussing the matter with Dr Brown, protested that he only did as he did for Maafu's sake. And that he was

not to be unfairly judged because he again drank wine and spirits.

Dr MacGregor did precisely the same thing, because he noticed that the Fijian chiefs were assuming that they could do as the white man did, and were following Maafu's example. Dr MacGregor was in intimate relations with them; continually visiting the villages, insisting that they be kept clean, and giving lessons in sanitation. Damp was the foe he fought specially, and then he had trouble. He could not order the floors of the ordinary folk to be raised twelve inches from the ground because that would have been disrespectful to their chiefs. He solved the problem by getting the chiefs to raise their floors to eighteen inches.

In the matter of drinking, the kava root gave the Fijian chief all he had needed until European liquor came, and the kava bowl was a ceremonious thing. Dr MacGregor, then, set the example of strict abstemiousness from wine and spirits and put the same pressure on the Fijians as a whole that the Governor was putting on Maafu.

The news of the death of Sir Hubert Murray gives fresh point to it all. He followed Sir William MacGregor in Papua, and was commended by him as one who could be trusted to carry on a great work. I saw a good deal of Sir Hubert from time to time when he came to Sydney, and sometimes he would write to me. The extraordinary thing was that, until he took up duty at Port Moresby, and set out to understand the people over whom he was to exercise authority, Sir Hubert seems to have been at a loose end; lethargic perhaps because nothing really made full demand upon his great abilities.

Among the Papuans he found something that called for all his powers, because every day had its puzzle. The natives were children, no doubt; but they were men and women, too, tied up in all kinds of fears and bothered with traditions. Sir Hubert was alarmed at a possible outbreak of smallpox on one occasion, and ordered general vaccination. But the native mind rebelled. It was too much like sorcery, and of that they were dreadfully afraid. So Sir Hubert caught them with guile. He captured one native who at last submitted to be vaccinated, and then Sir Hubert made the marks honourable. The native had been given an O.B.E., in effect, and then another and another submitted until at last the barriers disappeared, and the rest was easy.

Sometimes it was by sheer opposition, as in the story of the two Cornish captains, one old and stubborn and the other young and progressive, when tin was being mined in Cornwall. The men wanted a changing house at the top of the pit, because the heat below in a deep mine brought the men up wet with sweat to change in the cold of winter. But they knew that the old captain would not listen to them. What was good enough for their fathers was good enough for them. So they went to the young captain and put their case, and he said he thought he could manage it. Then he went to the old captain and said he had told the men a changing-house was impossible when they asked him about it.

There was a roar. "You said that? Dommit I say they shall have it." And so the trick was won.

But Sir Hubert went deeper than that. He had to see that coco-nuts were planted, so that the supply of copra could be kept up and the taxes paid. He knew that

coercion would fail, and he had full sympathy with any effort at persuasion.

Excuses had been made that there were no ripe nuts, but a little arithmetic settled that. Then it was found that the natives hid their nuts because the chiefs might ask for them. And the chiefs hid their nuts lest they should be stolen. Clearly there were plenty of nuts for plantation purposes. Then it had to be shown to them why the Government wanted nuts planted. It was to help the natives store food for themselves and so prevent famine. When this idea was grasped the trouble was over. The task became a pleasure with plenty of personal profit in it. This all came out in a special case reported by the officer responsible for the Trobriands—a group of islands—in his report to the Lieutenant-Governor. Sir Hubert Murray's own report quotes it all with relish. It indeed gives his attitude to the natives of Papua and illuminates his whole career. Sir Hubert showed himself shrewd, but careful of the natives to whom he had to be father and governor—and schoolmaster. What Sir Arthur Gordon, and Sir William MacGregor made their first duty, he accepted all through as his best business.

CHAPTER XXIV

"KING CHARLES'S HEAD"

My experience with cranky folk—A lawyer who came to stay in my room—Am charged with crankiness because Queensland was constantly in mind—A cranky writer of articles on Wagner—*Herald* front windows broken with blue metal—Window-breaker identified by the police and quoted Wagner—Blamed the editor of the *Herald* for the outrage.

It has been my lot to meet some cranky folk and to suffer at their hands. One instance has already been given in the Sydney identity who put his own death notice into the *Herald* and got an obituary which was deserved but which only accentuated his lack of sanity when the fraud was discovered. He had been asked by the chief librarian to put a price on his father's field-books and he said in reply that he wanted £15,000. His father was a surveyor of the far-off days, and his field-books had a certain historical value. But only a man going fast down the hill of senile decay could have asked such a price.

When I told the story to one of our leading solicitors he capped it with another in real life of an old gentleman whose family realized that he was wasting his substance and his estate in a perilous fashion. The matter was taken to court, and the judge very carefully and in a kindly way began to question him to see how far his mind would reach. The first question was:

"How many legs has a sheep?" The old man

promptly asked "alive or dead?" When told, "dead" he replied "two." This seemed to justify the appeal of the family. But when the judge asked for a little more light the witness said: "Well, every dead sheep has two legs and two shoulders has it not?" This was sane enough, in all conscience, and the judge began to reconsider the case.

At that moment counsel for the family sent up a note: "Ask him if he knows anything about the prophet Elijah." Whereupon the judge again took up the inquiry with the question to the witness: "You are, I understand, a student of the Bible?" To this there was a hearty, indeed fervid, assent. "Can you tell us anything about the prophet Elijah?" asked the judge. This brought the thunderclap: "I am the prophet Elijah!"

One afternoon during my time in the chair of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a lusty person was shown in and demanded publicity on a question which I refused to consider. There was neither heat nor argument. The request was not presented like a pistol at my head, but the petitioner would not go out. When I insisted upon his leaving, he definitely refused to go. He said he was a solicitor and had certain rights. As it was not a matter for argument, and he was about twice my weight and size, I rang the bell. It was late in the afternoon and most of the staff on the business side had gone. My own night staff was only coming on. It was at the time when there seemed to be a fairly empty office, and in any case it was inadvisable to try force. If my visitor was a solicitor he was possibly waiting for a chance to prosecute us for assault.

I sent for a constable who, to my astonishment, would do nothing. He seemed to be in just as much a quandary

as we were. It would have taken some fighting in any case to get the intruder down our stairs and into the street—but the Police Department would have to see to that. In the end my threat to lock the visitor up for the night while I took my work elsewhere decided him to go. My books and papers would have to be taken out, but that was a detail. One could not help noting that the man was behaving himself and appeared quite sane. What could a constable do? Still, as one of my staff said, the man certainly "had a tick."

Now all this may seem a curious introduction to something more serious and yet it has a place. I found myself charged with crankiness! One of the things that I had most at heart was a better understanding of Queensland by the people of New South Wales when I took up my position on the editorial staff of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Having been brought down from Queensland it seemed reasonable to suppose that my new directors would expect me to be an authority on a neighbouring State which extended into the tropics and guarded the approaches to Asia.

Already reports by military experts had disclosed the dangers of our proximity to populations reaching to hundreds of millions. China alone represented nearly five hundred millions of people, and Japan was a rising Power whose potentialities for good or ill were enormous. But my new chief was not disposed to discuss problems which in his opinion could be left for the future.

I may say in passing that for fifteen years, until the editor retired in the middle of 1918, with the war still on, we had never quarrelled. We were temperamentally in sympathy and practised the art of harmony amid

discords. In this matter of a better understanding about Queensland there was no argument. All I got when a subject came up for a leading article of the informative kind on Queensland, was a laughing: "King Charles's head!" I had evidently become obsessed about Queensland!

When Charles Dickens wrote *David Copperfield* which was his favourite among all the children of his genius, he made Betsy Trotwood and "Mr Dick" immortal, and "King Charles's head" has been used ever since to mark the fixed idea that cannot be kept out of life and literature. Some people are obsessed about Dickens himself. When I was in Broadstairs not so long ago, on my second visit to England, it was strange how often the notice appeared on buildings in the main street, "Dickens lived here." Consequently it was a relief to go into another street farther back to find a sarcastic placard which read: "Dickens did not live here."

But the eternal humour of Mr Dick and his Memorial has often reminded me that enthusiasm may be misinterpreted. My own shock came when I made Queensland a missionary enterprise in the editorial council of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. I joined in April 1903, and perhaps I could not help it. At any rate I was gently reminded of King Charles's head, because nobody wanted to know too much about Queensland, now a State in the Commonwealth, with potentialities of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. Might I not have claimed an obsession of ignorance in my critics themselves?

But all this feeling about King Charles's head went long ago. For the best part of forty years my life on the *Sydney Morning Herald* was concentrated upon

Commonwealth and State affairs all round the great circle. Nevertheless the East has come appreciably nearer. Since the war of 1914 Japan has come south two thousand miles into the Marshall and Caroline Islands. And now that we have the second war upon us, values have altered in all directions. As I write the immense mass of Asian population still presses upon the imagination.

Not so long ago one of Irvin S. Cobb's humorous stories reached me from America and caught like a burr. When my third war book, *Stevenson's Germany*, was ready for publication Mr Cobb gave me some invaluable help, and his stories naturally attracted my attention. This one was of an American citizen in Main Street somewhere in the United States who bought an encyclopaedia on the time-payment system, and to make sure that he got his money's worth he began to read it from the beginning. By the time he had reached the word "Population" he woke up with a start. The census collector was calling and he had forgotten to fill in his forms.

To save time the collector sat down and began to go through them. The questions followed one another fast—was he married and had he got any children. On the latter point the reply was: "There are three children, but never a fourth." To this the collector said: "Nonsense—don't be foolish." In reply the good American citizen said: "I have just read an article on population which says that there are nearly two thousand millions of people in the world, of which nearly five hundred millions are Chinamen. Every fourth child born is a Chinaman—and I am not taking any risk."

This chapter was begun to tell of my experience with

cranky folk who came to see me or who sent regularly voluminous epistles upon nothing in particular. The multitude that never got near me need not be included, though one of them made my acquaintance in the office of the Commissioner of Police under extraordinary circumstances. Over many weeks I received, regularly, type-written articles on Wagner by some one with "a shingle short." So I put them aside in expectation of a visit. They became a pile at last; and because a signed *nom de plume* was all that I had for identification with no address, the pile lay unclaimed. But the fountain of inspiration had then run dry, so what was to happen? While I knew nothing of the writer he knew my name and always sent the periodical screed to me personally. It was properly addressed. He seemed to be a cultured man and a gentleman; even if he was a crazy one. Why did he not call?

Just at this time the *Herald* front windows on the ground floor in Hunter Street began to be broken with lumps of blue metal. When one window was mended another stone would be thrown and a fresh window smashed. And so the game went on. The police could not help us, although all particulars as far as we knew them, were given. Then came an unusually large piece of blue metal to do the usual damage; but round it was wrapped a letter addressed to me, and I recognized the handwriting at once. It was that of my writer of the articles on Wagner. This time the police were put on their mettle—forgive the pun—and in due course Mr Conley heard from the Commissioner of Police. We were to call on him. There we met a harmless looking old gentlemen not at all ashamed of himself—quite the reverse.

The Superintendent of Police who was handling the case took us into his room, and there gave the old chap plenty of room. Meanwhile we had been told that he was a University man whose brother in England gave him an income sufficient to keep him, and that he was harmless! In addition to smashing our windows, we had explained to the Superintendent that he had pasted up grossly libellous placards at the side door of the *Herald* office in Pitt Street calling me a liar, a rogue, and a thief. Well, we agreed to talk to this harmless scholar and see for ourselves how far he justified the tenderness of the police officials. But was there not such a thing as homicidal mania in such cases?

I was charged by the Wagnerian with callous coldness. It was claimed, in effect, that even if I could not see my way to publish a mountain of manuscripts on the great German master, it should have been possible to let the world know that at last a mighty exponent had arisen and that a book was in preparation—or words to that effect. But we could not move the Superintendent of Police, so we threw the responsibility on him. In the end, he persuaded the harmless blue-metal critic and earnest user of blackguardly English, to a modification. When he felt the urge to smite me again he was to write it all to the Superintendent first. This settled the case out of hand, for I never heard from the harmless madman again. The safety valve really did work.

POSTSCRIPT

Past and present—Two great wars in review—France betrayed—1914 escape of Paris—War Notes re-written—*Punch* cartoon of Kaiser—Another peak of memory—Australians and Amiens—A critical Scot—Our Pacific outlook—A diagram.

THESE reminiscences were started before the Second Great War began and Great Britain had not actually declared herself. During the months of marking time, with the German and Allied armies face to face, the chapters were put into shape. Now the terrible clash has come and France has been betrayed—a tragedy indeed. It all brings back that eventful night early in 1914 when I happened to be editing the *Sydney Morning Herald* though not yet editor-in-chief. C. E. W. Bean was writing our War Notes and the cable had come announcing that the German armies had broken through and that the fall of Paris seemed inevitable.

Quite reasonably Mr Bean (his honours still in bud) had discussed the apparently approaching disaster as inevitable, and it was a question whether it should be accepted as a fact that the worst had happened. I decided, however, that until Paris had actually been reached and invested it would be unfair to our readers to assume the very worst, and the War Notes for the night had to be re-written. In the discussion upon facts it seemed to me that there was still a door of hope open.

Always I have believed, and still believe, in a providential order; and in this case, from a close study of all the available information, there appeared to be something happening upon which we had only broken lights.

The retreat from Mons, for instance, did seem like disaster, and yet there was evidence of wonderful valour and a great fight. I shall never forget the cartoon which appeared subsequently in London *Punch* of the Kaiser on his throne with scowling face and lowering brow. It was a brutal, angry face—quite a new departure for *Punch*, which heretofore had treated the German Emperor with a humorous courtesy. Approaching the throne was the German eagle with a tail in tatters. The Kaiser is saying: "My poor bird! What has happened to your tail-feathers?" In reply the eagle asks: "Sire, can you bear the truth?" The Kaiser says: "Yes, but not for publication." Then the bird puts a cap on the colloquy with: "It is like this—you said the British army was contemptible. Well, *it isn't*." This cartoon, of course, came some time after to my hand, and I give it as I remember it; but the "miracle of the Marne" was our following days' comfort. The retreat from Mons has taken its place in history as a remarkable piece of fighting and indeed as an important check at a critical moment in the onward rush of the German armies.

But it was Von Kluck and his army who made a swerve at the supreme moment, and he exposed his flank to a great French counter-attack. We gave the news of the omnibuses from Paris filled with soldiers rushing to the front. The battle of the Marne began and our War Notes swung with the tide, but with a certain confidence.

Now as I write, France is under the heel of Germany

but her people are not lost, though cruelly broken. It will only prolong the war, and we are fighting against increasing odds with Italy in the fray. Surely, though, that wonderful rescue of our army through Dunkirk may be taken as a promise of ultimate victory? A high unbroken courage still continues. The great mother land is ready for the worst, as she has been before, and will fight to the end.

Looking back again my next peak of memory, high above the rest, is in the middle of 1918 when the pendulum appeared to be swinging far against us. The British lines were so thinly held and the German armies seemed to be massing so heavily for an attack that must prevail. I was in the chair at the end of June 1918, not to leave it for twenty years. Sir James Fairfax and Mr T. W. Heney had left for London on invitations to see the battlefields and get a better idea of the desperate struggle at close quarters. Mr Bean had become Commonwealth War Correspondent; and my principal leader-writer, Mr H. S. Nicholas, now Mr Justice Nicholas, did some wonderful work. Some of our best articles on the war came from his pen, and we went through the rest of the year together with peace proclaimed. Then there came a much needed breathing-space before the Conference at Versailles began.

But it was the news of the fighting of the Australian Army that made my peak of renewed hope and strengthened courage. Villers-Bretonneux and the saving of Amiens, followed by the capture of St Quentin, led on to the larger victories until the end was reached. When Mr F. M. Cutlack joined the editorial staff as leader-writer, we fought those battles all over again, for he had been through them. Sir John Monash's

own book, too, is a mine of information, and makes one prouder than ever of our men at the front.

But perhaps one of the most illuminating comments upon the general position in front of Amiens, at the time, came to me recently from my friend of far-off school days, Sir David Ferguson. We had been discussing those trying months in France—June, July and August, 1918. The Australian Army had been given a job of work in a critical section of the front where Villers-Bretonneux represented the key position. A Scottish liaison officer had been sent over to see how the Australians were doing, and said of certain British troops, to some one he met, that "their tails were doon." But to his surprise the Australian general was not at headquarters. He was visiting advanced posts, seeing for himself, instead of waiting in the usual British way for the reports to come in. This seemed strange enough; but it was stranger still when the news and results of the fighting at Villers-Bretonneux was given by an Australian subaltern. He said laconically to the Scot: "All objectives taken, German morale rotten."

Let any one read F. M. Cutlack's inspiring account of that three month's fighting, in the *Australian Encyclopaedia*, which Messrs Angus and Robertson have made such a monument of research. They will understand something of the enthusiasm with which the Australian Army responded to the leadership and genius of their General, Sir John Monash.

Now the war is making one feel as if these terrible losses and that magnificent fighting were but an interlude. Out of it, too, is coming the wider field of conflict and we are anxious about the Pacific and the future. It may interest my readers to look at the accompanying


CHINA SEA
SINGAPORE
PEN.
SUMATRA
BORNEO
BATAVIA
DARWIN
NEW GUINEA
Rabaul
SOLOMON IS
PORT MORESBY
SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN
Suva
Noumea
INDIAN OCEAN
AUSTRALIA
BRISBANE
Newcastle
SYDNEY
TASMAN SEA
PERTH
ADELAIDE
Geelong
MELBOURNE
Launceston
HOBART
Auckland
NEW ZEALAND
WELLINGTON
Christchurch
Dunedin
SOUTHERN OCEAN
HECR

map which emphasizes our weakness and strength at the outposts of Empire. In lectures on the Pacific I have shown this map to point a moral. The smaller circle on it is drawn round the Tasman Sea with a radius of eight hundred miles, and within its circumference lie all the principal cities of Australia and New Zealand. That is to say the greater part of our Australasian population is clotted round a circle almost wholly occupied by—fish. But within the circumference of that circle lie three harbours so fine and commodious that half a dozen navies could find room in them. Sydney Harbour at last is to be given a graving dock large enough to take a battleship, but the Derwent estuary is better for certain naval requirements than Port Jackson. The Waitemata with Auckland, a great and growing city, is another gift of nature for naval and harbourage purposes. But what a paradox it is that so vast and empty a land as Australia should be given a neighbour like New Zealand, and both should be so defenceless in spite of nature's largess.

The larger circle on the diagram has been given a radius of nine hundred miles to bring Singapore into the picture, with Darwin our coming northern base two thousand miles away from it. But consider our distances. As the crow flies, Perth to the west and Darwin to the north are each about two thousand miles from Sydney. Darwin in the same way is two thousand miles from Singapore and Sydney as noted is an equal distance. Then too, Japan has come within two thousand miles of Australia by taking possession of the Marshall Islands.

Sydney and Port Jackson are twelve hundred miles from Auckland and the Waitemata. But it is around the great northern circle that our fate may be decided.

The diagram is worth studying when one thinks of the future. Singapore and Darwin keeping guard on the north, and the three harbours in the south equipped to defy possible enemies, will be all we need. Can we hope to secure the necessary population, adequate capital, and a better hope in the days to come? There is the rub.

APPENDIX

(From the *Brisbane Courier*, Friday, 10 February, 1893)

THE FLOOD FROM UPPER MILTON

A RESIDENT kindly supplies the following graphically written "bird's-eye view" of the flood as seen from the heights at the back of Torwood:

"A bird's-eye view of the flood has been possible for some people from its commencement. On the heights of Upper Paddington an observer at the principal points may sweep from Toowong and Indooroopilly onward to Ipswich on the south-west, thence round the compass southward through east and north-east to the Enoggera Valley on the west. In ordinary times the river peeps out from the Toowong, Milton, and city reaches like a threaded band of grey or blue, according to the shadows. The suburbs of South Brisbane are laid out beyond, from Hill End on one side to River-terrace on the other, with Coorparoo and the country districts behind. In the foreground lie Toowong, Rosalie, Bayswater, Milton and Paddington. The city, Petrie-terrace, and Red Hill fill spaces to the east and south-east. To the right of Eildon Hill is a clear stretch as far as the Bay and Moreton Island, with Enoggera Creek hardly showing in fair weather through a strong binocular. The progress of the flood has been watched from

windows that thus command one of the finest views outside the city. As the water encroached, the first suburb to show signs of discomfort was Rosalie, just below. The Redjacket Swamp began to fill up fast, and then the river widened at the visible stretches in its course.

"As it rose, the blank spaces filled out one by one into a continuous stream. The main road across the swamp grew narrower till it became a thread, with the Milton Fire Station fastened upon it like a red block. Soon the thread vanished, leaving the station more like a buoy to mark some channel. Then the flood came in earnest and wrung its wet hands till West End was one with Paddington. The red buoy was slowly drowned, and its watch-tower stood sentinel alone. The roofs of the Bayswater Public School and the Milton Congregational Church were all that marked their whereabouts. The Milton Railway Bridge was then covered, and the Bayswater and Baroona roads, from just below Fernberg to the high land on M'Dougall-terrace, became things of the past. One sea of water stretched from the public school at West End, where the water was creeping up the walls, to Glenallan House at the foot of Latrobe-terrace. This waste was dotted here and there with tree-tops and the roofs of houses, some of which were very much askew. On Sunday morning, just before six o'clock, sounds like a battery of cannon discharging were distinctly heard and the question was asked with a tremor, 'What was that?' Before the day was out it was said that the railway bridge at Indooroopilly had gone, and just at the time when the reports were heard.

"On looking over the city and down upon the flood one felt utterly sick at heart. Dozens of houses could now be counted that had either collapsed or were aslant.

The rate of the river's race to the sea could be easily gauged as house after house was seen to float down. Through a powerful glass one after another was watched as it struck the bridge, the roofs being crumpled up like paper in a strong man's hand. Away to the south-west a great lake appeared that indicated as never before where the river ran. From Indooroopilly direction behind Toowong, down to the Domain, was one great stretch of water that interested while it appalled the onlooker. Three days before the river had been a harmless servant, now it was a devouring monster.

"The rain fiend would blot out the city every now and again with great drenching mists, as if it would drown above what it could not push below. One of the South Brisbane gasometers was seen to topple, and soon it appeared like a signal set askew to mark an opening. A line of omnibuses in Rosalie that were safe on Saturday night had vanished at daybreak on Sunday, and houses that were above water then were a quarter under by noon. Over at Bishopsbourne boats could be seen landing people and furniture, and the Bishop's residence looked like an island. The inland sea at our feet was dotted with pyramids, so strangely did the comparatively small number of roofs appear beside the scores of houses that could be counted in ordinary times.

"At midday on Sunday the rain was pouring down in a blinding torrent that completely shut out the view in all directions, and we sat feeling that a second Deluge was in progress. Through a rift at last we could see gleaming for a moment a great sheet of water beyond Given-terrace that evidently covered the Paddington flats. Enoggera Creek, away over towards Kelvin Grove, showed sullenly now and again like a great river,

while the low-lying spaces between were miniature lakes. On Sunday afternoon we went to see for ourselves. The reality was so terrible that what we had seen from afar compared with the scene now so near was the difference between a tiger seen through a telescope and the same animal ten feet off and ready to spring. To see the flood at close grips with the city and to realize the wreck it was making was to also realize the impotence of language. The horrors of Sunday the 5th of February, 1893, will lie on the mind like a horrible dream on first waking—it may not be true for some, but it is for others."

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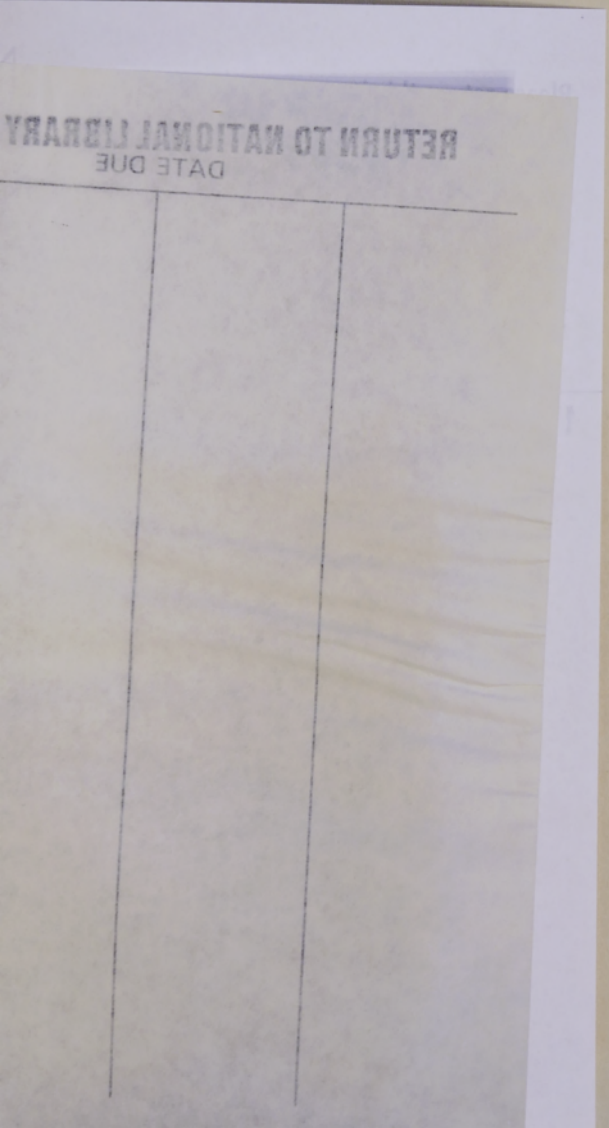

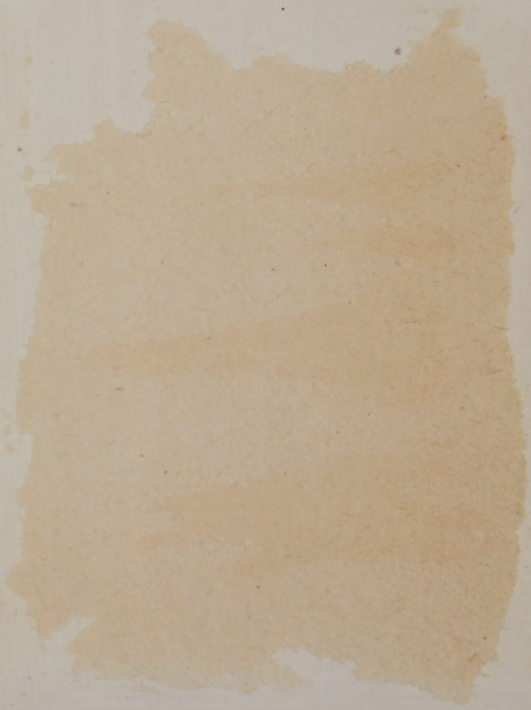

THE GREAT WHEEL

B.B. FLETCHER