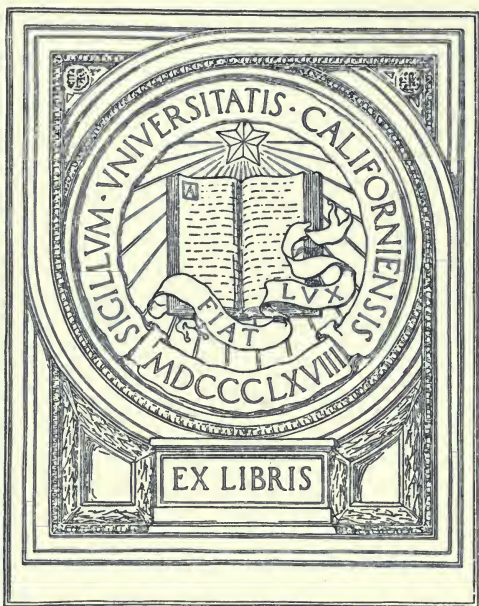


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THE LIFE OF  
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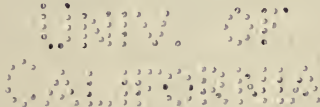
SIR GEORGE NEWNES, BART,

THE LIFE OF  
SIR GEORGE NEWNES  
BART.

BY  
HULDA FRIEDERICHS

AUTHOR OF

"MR. GLADSTONE IN THE EVENING OF HIS DAYS," "THE ROMANCE OF THE  
SALVATION ARMY," ETC., ETC.



HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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TO THE  
MEMBERS OF THE



## PREFACE

A FEW years before his death Sir George Newnes went one autumn for a holiday to the beautiful district in the Eastern States of North America which lies between the Hudson and the St. Lawrence rivers. One day, after lunching at Lake Placid Club, the largest and probably the most luxurious establishment of its kind in the length and breadth of the Adirondacks, he sat with a friend in the cool shade at the edge of the lake. A letter had reached him that morning from a man in England whom he had not seen for more than twenty years. It must have been a pleasant letter, for the memories it recalled induced in Sir George one of the rare moods when he put off his usual reserve and became an extraordinarily genial and fascinating talker.

Sitting there by the island-studded, forest-

fringed lake, he talked for an hour and a half, at the end of which, still under the spell of the quiet voice that had conjured up scene after scene, and episode upon episode, from a life crowded with the high adventure and romance so often hidden behind a seemingly uneventful business career, the listener exclaimed : “ Well, I do not think I have ever in all my days heard anything more interesting.”

On the way back to his hotel the thought came for the first time to Sir George Newnes that the things which had so interested this Englishman might interest others too, and gradually the idea took shape that some future day, when he would have more leisure, he would try to write the story of his life. When putting the idea into words, he said, with a merry twinkle : “ I do not say, like the Irishman, ‘ If you follow me you shall see some of the quarest things you have ever heard in your life,’ but I think I can promise that it shall not be dull.”

Presently, when rustivating at his Lynton home, he began to dictate the beginning of his autobiography. So cheerfully he began, so energetically, with such sure tact and quick understanding as to what would interest the

public, that there seemed every prospect of the story of his own career being added to the many romantic stories of real life which he has published. But before he had been able to do more than sketch the outline of the work, and to describe here and there an event or incident, the disease which had been stealing gradually upon him, and against which he had made such brave, heroic struggles, held him in its clutch. The exhausted brain could no longer obey the strong will; the crowded working day was over; the night had come.

When the gods give to a mortal the gift of seeing himself as he really is, a gift infinitely more rare and precious than that of seeing himself as others see him, the autobiography of that man, if he writes it with the sincere desire to present a true likeness of himself, should be as the best work of the portrait photographer. A biography, on the other hand, must needs remain a more or less successful impressionist picture, and more than this the present volume does not pretend to be. But my personal impressions, gathered in the course of many years, have been supplemented by those of others, and in this respect I am greatly indebted to members of Sir George

and Lady Newnes's families, especially to Sir George's brother, Mr. William Newnes, and his brother-in-law, Mr. James Hillyard; to Mr. W. T. Stead, Mr. L. R. S. Tomalin, Mr. Greenhough-Smith, Mr. W. Plank and Mr. T. Rees, to whom I offer my sincerest thanks.

H. F.

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## CHAPTER I

### PARENTS AND SON

IN the dining-room at Wildcroft, Sir George Newnes's home on Putney Heath, there hung for many years two family portraits which often attracted the notice of strangers. They represented an elderly couple, dressed in the fashion of the early Victorian era. The lady wore a gown of silk that looked as if it would "stand by itself," the usual long gold chain, fine lace collar and elaborate cap tied with wide silk ribbons under the chin, which together made up the attire of a gentlewoman of that day. The fact that in her picture she also wore glasses, good large old-fashioned spectacles, set in a gold frame, and that she wore them sufficiently low on her nose to enable her to look out upon the world from above them, suggested that probably she was a lady of strong and independent opinion, who was not going to allow the artist to present her other than she was in ordinary daily life. The gentleman sitting in front of an old carved gate-leg table, in an easy attitude and with a

## 2 LIFE OF SIR GEORGE NEWNES

book in his hand and more books and an ink-stand beside him, wore broadcloth and the particular white tie which betokened the Non-conformist minister.

You might not have looked twice at the clothes, except as one looks at something belonging to, and characteristic of, past years, or in order to make comparisons between the simple attire of those two representatives of the early Victorian era and the costumes worn by the men and women whose portraits hang every year from May till August on the walls of Burlington House. But the faces in both pictures were arresting, alive, unusually interesting. The limpidity of the lady's eyes contradicted her white hair, the lines which life had graven into her beautiful face, and the somewhat sad expression of the mouth. And out of her husband's face there laughed and danced eyes as young as hers, but far merrier, and with the merriment there mingled a something which, ever so faintly, suggested a firmness that might under adverse circumstances develop into a tenacity awkward for an opponent. The square, protruding chin confirmed this suggestion, while a frame of white hair, cut none too short, and brushed right back from the forehead, did its best to soften it. Keenly intelligent too he seemed, this young old gentleman, as he looked straight at you with those alert and eager eyes. And the

artist over and above indicating his sitters' temperament in face and attitude, had succeeded in enveloping both in an atmosphere of old-world calm and quiet which gave the portraits a value far above that of the comeliness of the faces.

If a Rembrandt or a Velasquez had painted them, and they had been hanging in a famous gallery where every one could see them, they might have been numbered among the portraits with which, according to an interesting plebiscite taken a few years ago, you could "live," without ever getting tired of them.

The portraits represented the Rev. Thomas Mold Newnes, a Shropshire man born when the nineteenth century was very young, and Mrs. Newnes, his wife, "as fine a Scotswoman as ever lived," in the opinion of her youngest son. Mr. Newnes as a boy was so distressfully fond of mere books and bookish things that his parents did not even attempt to make a business man of him, but destined him for the Congregational ministry, and sent him to be educated at what is now the Lancashire Independent College. In 1840 he married Miss Urquhart, a lady possessed of both beauty and a modest fortune. She had been brought up in England, and in her voice there was not a trace of the accent which her native town of Dundee should have bestowed upon her; but for all the lack of outward signs and tokens of her nationality



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she remained enthusiastically Scottish; and among her children's dearest recollections of their early days are the stories of Scotland and Dundee which she knew how to adorn with the charm and mystery of fairyland.

Mr. and Mrs. Newnes had six children, three sons and three daughters, and when their youngest son, George, was born, the minister was stationed at Glenorchy, Matlock Bath, where for thirteen years he laboured with enthusiasm and great success, the fervour of his faith burning so hot within him that, together with his work among his own flock, he often undertook pastoral duties in the neighbourhood. Then, as if the long morning and evening services at his own chapel were not enough to satisfy or tire any man, he walked over on Sunday afternoons to Matlock Green to preach in an "upper room" of a private house, thereby laying the foundations of the Congregational cause at Matlock Bank.

Mr. Newnes belonged to a generation of Free Church pastors who brought to their work a deep sense of responsibility, which is rarer today. To him the command of the Master whom he served so faithfully all the days of his life, "Feed My lambs," meant far more than the punctual fulfilment of the ordinary duties of his office. As he interpreted it, it meant whole-hearted, incessant devotion to the people given into his charge, and included,



besides a perfect passion for the saving of souls and the furthering of the Kingdom of God upon earth, a sincere interest in the temporal affairs of each individual member of his congregation. He helped and advised, he shared their joys and sorrows, and in turn was helped and (occasionally) advised by them. In fact, his was a case of—

“The law of Christ, and His Apostles twelve,  
He taught, but first he followed it himself.”

To brighten and lighten his deep piety, which in those days, and in the branch of the Church militant to which he belonged, was apt to be far more sternly Puritanical than it is to-day, he had an unquenchable sense of humour which now and then became so exuberant that his Scottish wife grew positively anxious concerning the state of his soul, and besought him, in the midst of his merriment, to remember his latter end. It was especially while playing with those six high-spirited sons and daughters of his, and with their playmates, that the Rev. T. M. Newnes was apt momentarily to forget how solemn an affair this life on earth is bound to be, and how ill it becomes a pastor to romp with those that romp. The sense of his iniquity would burst upon him suddenly even while the fun was at its highest, when he would check himself without delay in his mad career, and with the same absolute sincerity which even

## 6 LIFE OF SIR GEORGE NEWNES

now had caused him to lead in the games and gambols of a band of boys and girls, he would bid the gay tumult cease, that there and then they might engage in prayer. Nor did any children's party at the Manse ever break up without a closing prayer.

In politics Mr. Newnes was as staunch and ardent a Liberal as it behoved a Congregational minister to be, and in his easy eloquence as a platform speaker he showed himself to be as well informed an historian as in his sermons he was the profound and scholarly Bible student.

A curious little document, written thirty years ago, when the minister's son George had first entered Parliament, points to the fact that Mr. Newnes's learning was recognized even in his young days. It is a note written in April 1880 by Lady Crossley, the widow of Sir Francis Crossley, and addressed from Somerleyton, Lowestoft, to the new member for Newmarket. "Lady Crossley," it runs, "presents her kind regards to Mr. G. Newnes, and is so pleased to find that he is the son of her old friend at Warley, whose remarkable knowledge of European History and politics she so much appreciated—would very heartily congratulate his son on his parliamentary honours and hopeful future." The Warley mentioned is the place near Halifax where the Rev. T. M. Newnes was minister after leaving Matlock Bath.



Photo]

REV. T. M. NEWNES,

[Mason & Ferguson]

70 1941  
ANNALS

Mrs. Newnes found it the more easy to condone her husband's occasional whimsicalities because she herself by no means belonged to the average conventional type of woman; and if she was inclined to take life more seriously, and to concern herself more with her children's mental and spiritual welfare than with their games and pranks, she tolerated without impatience any peculiarities of taste and temperament they began to develop.

One reason for this broad tolerance was unquestionably the fact that she herself, in her very quiet and reserved way, was entirely independent of social conventions when they happened to interfere with her purposes. Thus, her great love of the sea, which two of her sons inherited, and which sent the eldest to an early grave, drew this exemplary wife and mother every now and then irresistibly away from home. No one but her husband knew where she had gone, and her own children learnt only later in life that on these occasions, when suddenly she disappeared for a few days, she was taking short sea voyages from which she returned refreshed and rejuvenated, to take up her busy family life again, the management of that healthy, boisterous young family, that keen-witted, eccentric, scholarly husband of hers, and to work among the poor to whom she was so good and kind a friend.

Every now and then the husband and wife



## 8 LIFE OF SIR GEORGE NEWNES

went away together for a short holiday, in the far-off days before an annual holiday away from home had come to be considered an absolute necessity of life. In 1851, for instance, a journey to London, to the Great Exhibition, was the event of the summer. Mr. Newnes, alert and public-spirited as he was, had taken much trouble in helping to make the Exhibition representative, and a framed certificate, with a medal in the centre, and bearing the following inscription was awarded to him—

“Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851. I hereby certify that Her Majesty’s Commissioners have awarded a medal to T. M. Newnes for services rendered to the Exhibition.”

The document is signed, “Albert, President of the Commission,” and is dated from the “Exhibition, Hyde Park, London, October 15, 1851.”

On this triumphal journey to London they took with them their three-months-old son George, and that is how the man who was to spend so important a part of his life in London, was first introduced to the Metropolis.

George Newnes was born in March 1851 at the old Manse of Matlock Bath, Glenorchy House, built by Lady Glenorchy in the eighteenth century. Set into an old and shady garden



sloping down to the rapid Derwent, and surrounded by the beautiful hill scenery of the Peak District Glenorchy House, large, dignified and ivy-mantled, was, and is, an ideal country residence, a place which was bound to give to the children the love of green places and the open air for which later on, during his apprenticeship in London, George Newnes hungered and thirsted so often and so passionately.

Petted and adored by his elder sisters, to whom the child's fair, delicate prettiness and winning ways made strong appeal, and by the two brothers in whom the mischievous imp's baby pranks awakened all the protective love of the consciously strong and powerful, life opened pleasantly and happily enough for the youngest member of the Glenorchy Manse family; and there are no epoch-making events to be recorded in the life of George Newnes till the day came when, at the age of nine years, he started upon the real, solemn business of life, by being enrolled among the students of a boarding-school.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BOY

It is more than probable that the little boy who was sent at an unusually early age to a boarding-school for older boys, was somewhat of a "pickle" at home; probable also that his good Scottish mother, for all her apparent gravity and disapproval of indulgences, had let that youngest child of hers have his own way rather more than was altogether good for him. There was every excuse for her falling into this maternal error, for the boy had winning ways, his blue eyes flashed and laughed out of a little, delicately moulded face, the crop of fair curls round which he did his best to straighten out by a liberal application of water, as soon as he was old enough to be ashamed of curls.

It may also be that Mr. and Mrs. Newnes, having destined George for the ministry, considered that the training for his profession could not be begun too soon. At any rate, he was sent to Silcoates, the well-known boarding-school near Wakefield for the sons of Congre-



Photo]

MRS. T. URQUHART NEWNES.

Heaviside, Durham.

70 1981  
ANNALS

gational ministers, at an age when most boys of his class were still taught at the nursery table, if they were taught at all. The eldest of Mr. and Mrs. Newnes's three sons, Edward, who had been at the school for some time, would look after his brother, they thought; and the little one, nothing loath, went off in high spirits, eagerly looking forward to the fun and excitement of living with a houseful of big boys.

Ted, as the elder brother was called by everybody, was a sort of hero at school, a fine and restless spirit, who later on ran off to sea, and was drowned in a shipwreck off the Breton coast. In his small brother's eyes, during the Silcoates days, he was the model of all that a big boy should be, and long after Ted was sleeping the last sleep at the bottom of the sea, his brother, recalling his early school-days, wrote of him: "Ted belonged to the finest type of physically developed youths, not unlike Jan Ridd, in Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*. He required no parental injunction to look after me at school; and for his own love of me he was the greatest friend I ever had."

The Silcoates of the 'sixties of the nineteenth century was not outwardly the Silcoates of today. The house has been rebuilt after a fire which consumed the old premises, and with them the fine organ which Mr. Newnes later on gave to his school; all the modern conveniences have been introduced without which



no self-respecting boarding-school could exist to-day, but which at that time would have been considered luxuries and therefore undesirable. The mental and moral atmosphere of the older Silcoates, the spirit of broad liberalism in all things, have remained the same, and the school still takes the same honoured and honourable place among educational establishments of its kind.

It must have been an ideal school for boys at the time when George Newnes became a pupil. At its head was Dr. J. Bewglass, of Trinity College, Dublin, a man in whom all the most lovable and admirable qualities of the Irishman were united: a sort of Nonconformist Arnold of Rugby, adored, trusted and respected by the fifty lively lads over whom he was set to rule. Mr. W. T. Stead—who was Edward and George Newnes's contemporary, and who came from a singularly happy and united home-circle—owns without hesitation that the happiest years of his boyhood were those he spent at Silcoates, when Dr. Bewglass was head master, ruling by love, and not by the rod, although that instrument of drastic discipline was not altogether unknown, since some of the old boys can remember as one of the events of their school-life the single flogging administered in the course of several years.

The principal's wise method was to show the boys that he had absolute confidence in them;

that he believed they would do nothing dishonourable or discreditable either at school or at play; that he was their friend as well as their master, and that their interests, their troubles and difficulties were his, to be shared under all circumstances. The method answered, since the Silcoates boys, happy at all times at their school, were happiest when in the company of their head master.

In politics Dr. Bewglass was as staunch a Liberal as in religion he was a good, democratic Congregationalist, and as, in his profession, he was one of the wisest and most far-seeing educationalists of the time. When there was an election at Wakefield, masters and boys alike took part in the excitement; if they wished to do so, the pupils might attend the meetings. Coming from Nonconformist manses, and therefore good Liberals in the bud, the majority went gaily to the fray, cheering their candidate, howling down the Tories, and adding considerably to the hilarity of the meetings; but never discrediting their school or its principal, their love for the latter alone, if nothing else, restraining them.

They were fine cricketers too, in that famous cricketing district, and the great event of the summer term was always the match between the sons of ministers and the sons of laymen, a few of the latter, living in the neighbourhood, being admitted as day-boarders.



On the two weekly half-holidays, Wednesday and Saturday, all the boys were allowed to go into Wakefield, spending their time as they pleased, it being understood that no Silcoates boy would spend it in a manner not compatible with the tenets of the school. They might take whatever book they wanted from the school library; indeed, they might even read at meal times at this Liberty Hall of half a century ago, where a Spartan mode of living went merrily hand in hand with a thoroughly sound modern education. The contrast between the Silcoates routine at the time when George Newnes was the youngest of the boarders, and the average modern boarding-school for the sons of refined and educated parents is curiously suggestive and interesting, recalling some of the quaint and merry episodes in the lives of the immortal school-boys of the Dickens stories.

Year in, year out, the school-bell rang at six a.m., rousing the lads from sleep. No bathrooms then, into which to rush, except once a week, when everybody was scrubbed from top to toe. Instead, they were trotted off to the room where some twenty not too luxuriously appointed hand-washstands were at the disposal of the fifty who took their ablutions in turn. When the first batch had emptied the water-jugs, the remaining unwashed, ran down in the scantiest attire, to

replenish them outside at the pump. In the depth of winter this expedition was quite sufficient to banish the last vestige of sleep. At twenty minutes to seven prayers were read, and punctually at seven an hour's lesson in a branch of arithmetic, that most terrible of the exact sciences, was begun. Is it a wonder that now and then a pupil should under this régime develop, as George Newnes developed, into a lightning calculator; while others for the rest of their lives were so fully convinced of having done all that could be required of them by way of solution of arithmetical problems, that they left these things as far as possible to others?

Breakfast, which came at eight, must have had a particular savour at the end of that hour of figures. There was one feature connected with the rites of the early meal which, at this distance, seems delightful, but which possibly at the time added an occasional pang to a hungry scholar hankering after a larger portion of things good to eat than fell to his lawful share. The *pièces de resistance* were rounds of bread-and-butter, right substantial ones, to match the appetites of those who had worked at "slate things" of the arithmetical, mathematical, or algebraic kind, for an hour on end, and on an empty, hungry stomach. Now the sons of laymen paid twice as much per year in fees as the sons of ministers, for whose benefit

the school had been established, and who for the sum of £15 received a year's excellent education, board and lodging included. And because the young laymen paid £30 per annum, these spoiled darlings of the gods were allowed a second slice of bread-and-butter at breakfast. If even this was not sufficient to stay the pangs of hunger they might do as did their less privileged companions and eat dry bread till they were satisfied.

From eight-thirty to nine the boys played in the grounds around the unpretentious red brick school-house, and at nine a three-hours' course began with a Scripture lesson. Then came another hour's play, and after that the dinner, at which the pudding was served first and the meat course afterwards. And if there seemed to hang something indefinitely severe about the rice or "resurrection" puddings which were most frequently representative of the first course, there was, on the other hand, a something positively romantic, almost mediæval, about the roast beef of the Sabbath noon-day banquet, for it was done in the good old way, on the spit, suspended in front of the fire, and those who ate have never yet (in the opinion of at least one of them) eaten the like, for absolute perfection, unto the spit-baked Sunday roast of the Silcoates of fifty years ago.

The midday meal lasted thirty minutes, and

was followed immediately by cricket, football or some other seasonable game, till at three the school reassembled for two hours more, followed by tea at five. The half-hour's interval after tea, originally set apart for recreation, was at that time spent by many of the boys at the prayer-meetings instituted as the outcome of a great religious Revival that had lately swept over the country, and had touched a large number of schools, leaving a deep and lasting impression on the lives of a number of young people. As will be seen presently, George Newnes had a double reason for remembering those gatherings which the boys had organized entirely of their own accord, the masters taking no part in them. Mr. Stead, in his preface to a pamphlet entitled *The Revival in the West*, written in 1905, in connexion with the Welsh Revival of that date, gives a vivid sketch of these strange school-boy prayer-meetings. The following passage is taken from this pamphlet—

“ In July 1861 I was sent to a boarding-school for Congregational ministers' sons, to which some sons of laymen were also admitted, at Silcoates Hall, near Wakefield. There were about fifty of us boys, from ten years old to sixteen or seventeen. The tradition of the school in the 'fifties and in 1860 had not been distinctly religious. All of us came from



Christian homes, but as a school it was very much like other schools. About a month after I entered Silcoates some of the lads started a prayer-meeting of their own in a summer-house in the garden. They asked me to join, and I went more out of curiosity, and to oblige my chum, than for any other motive. There were about half-a-dozen of us, perhaps more, none of us over fourteen. We read a chapter in the Bible, and we prayed. No master was present, nor was there any attempt made on the part of the masters to encourage the prayer-meetings. One master, indeed, was frankly contemptuous. The majority of the boys had nothing to with 'the prayer-meeting fellows.' . . . Suddenly, one day, after the prayer-meeting had been going on for a week or two, there seemed to be a sudden change in the atmosphere. How it came about no one ever knew. All that we did know was that there seemed to have descended from the sky, with the suddenness of a drenching thunder-shower, a spirit of intense earnest seeking after God for the forgiveness of sins and the consecration to His service. The summer-house was crowded with boys. A deputation waited upon the principal, and told him what was happening. He was very sympathetic and helpful. Preparation class was dispensed with that night; all the evening the prayer-meeting was kept going. How well I remember the solemn hush

of that memorable day and night . . . Only half a dozen out of the whole school, and these exclusively of the oldest boys, held aloof from the movement.”

The boys who did not attend the meetings were free to play till at six o'clock they all assembled once more, to prepare their tasks for the next day. At half-past seven a frugal bread-and-milk supper and an interval for play concluded the programme, and at nine they were all in bed. It sounds rather dreary and monotonous on paper, but when you listen to a Silcoates boy of 1860 telling of these things, and watch his eyes catch light at the recollection of those early days, you may end by envying where you had begun to pity.

The task of looking after “little George” cannot have been a difficult or irksome one to brother Ted, for the young man showed very soon that he was quite able to take care of himself, even though he was the youngest boy at the school by three or four years, and that, in fact, there was as much of the true British fighting-spirit in him as in any other of the half-dozen heroes of Silcoates. Of the prowess of Edward Newnes and his stalwart contemporaries not even Silcoates itself, but the whole neighbourhood of the school, was proud at the time; and one event impressed itself so deeply upon George that, though he

was too young to take an active part in it, he remembered it all his life.

On Sunday the Silcoates boys went in a body to a chapel at Halifax, where the Rev. Enoch Miller was pastor. Something in their appearance seemed to arouse the wrath of the town lads, and as the school-boys tramped along in good "crocodile" fashion those of Halifax covertly jeered at and jostled them. For the time being there was no redress, no outlet for the burning indignation of the insulted; their masters' eyes were upon them, and it would have been the lowest depth of depravity, in the days when deportment was a very fine art at schools for young gentlemen as well as at those for young ladies, to descend to the level of the jostlers and jeerers on the pavement, and pay them back in their own coin.

After a time, however, these insults became more than Ted Newnes's proud spirit could bear, and as he and his school-mates were going home one Sunday evening after chapel, he found an opportunity for inquiring of one of the tormentors: "Will six of you fellows fight six of ours, when we get the chance of meeting you?" The challenge was accepted, and there and then it was arranged that six chosen men from Silcoates should meet six from Halifax at eleven o'clock the next night.

The excitement in the dormitories may be imagined—first when "our six" were selected,



and after that tremendous question was settled, as ways and means had to be found for getting the army out of the school-house when the great moment was at hand. Ted Newnes was, of course, the leader of the six, but though he burned for the fight, his excitement was as nothing compared to the wild enthusiasm of the baby of Silcoates School, whose quick brain promptly invented all manner of means for despatching the warriors to the battle-field down in the town. He and others of the younger boys promised to procure ropes and let them down from the upper windows after everybody had gone to bed, and haul them up again when they came home triumphant.

It goes without saying that the heads of the school were supposed to know nothing of this upheaval, but there was a rumour afterwards that they had learned what was going on, though, like the wise men they were, they said nothing, and let the boys work off their indignation at the unprovoked insults in the way that seemed most satisfactory to themselves. And when on the great day the pupils were one and all distressingly inattentive at school no punishments were dealt out.

To the intense annoyance of the conspirators, the moon shone brightly upon Silcoates as the hour for the departure of their army arrived, but by that time the excitement was such that nothing mattered. The ropes,

supplied by a gardener who had been caught up in the general enthusiasm, were ready, and ten lads were lowered into the garden, six to fight and four to see fairplay. They stole unseen, unheard through the plantation and down to the appointed place, chosen with a view of being away from the beat of the police. The Halifax lads fought fairly and pluckily, but those from Silcoates fought better, and remained victors. "You know what we have been fighting for," Ted Newnes said as he shook hands with the conquered; "in future you will have to leave us alone." And from that day forth no procession of Silcoates boys was molested in the streets of Halifax.

Meanwhile, there was far more excitement inside the school-house than on the actual field of glory, and George Newnes was the most wildly happy member of the little band waiting silently, breathlessly, through the moonlit night, up in the dormitories with the empty beds. In order to do the thing quite correctly, they sent out scouts to meet the returning force, and when the victors came in sight the watchers lost self-control and cheered and shouted, and answering cheers proclaimed that all was well. And only next morning the boys began to wonder how it was that the midnight jubiliations had not disturbed the slumbers of a single master.

George Newnes had not been long at school

before he had the chance of showing that the family share of pluck and tenacity had not all been vested in big brother Ted. The chance came in a curious way. The prayer-meetings in the garden-house were approaching the revival stage to which reference has been made, and it is not surprising that George Newnes was attracted, since he came from a home pervaded by the simple spirit of Christianity that knows nor doubt nor fear, and into which no higher criticism had ever entered to trouble its perfect faith and peace. It may also be that he was prompted by the curiosity which draws younger children irresistibly towards the doings of those older than themselves, but not old enough to belong to the incomprehensible and uninteresting class of grown-ups. But there is no doubt that before long the impressionable child's heart was moved and stirred by the mystery of the things lying dim and awe-inspiring far beyond the easy, regular matter-of-fact life of the healthy school-boy.

For a time he became a regular attendant at the meetings, sitting quietly in his corner, content to listen unobserved. But soon there came an evening when suddenly he was roused from his inactivity, and in answer to the request of the leader that some one should offer up a prayer, the child rose, to his own bewilderment, as if at some stern command, and began to pray as never boy had prayed in that place,

pouring out the fire and the passion, the longing and the aspiration, the hopes and fears and terrors of a little child before the throne of the God to whom he had been taught from his earliest days to look up as to a Father who knew and understood and heard and answered the prayers of all His children. For some reason, to be looked for in his own temperament, the boy never felt altogether at home and at ease at Silcoates or any other school, though he made no complaint and was popular alike with his masters and school-fellows. This sense of loneliness may have given wings to his words, at the end of a day when he longed more than usual for home, and felt that no comforter was near. After the meeting the boys crowded round him, thanking him for the prayer, which obviously had expressed their feelings as well as his own.

The sequel is in striking contrast to the episode. Some of the school-boys, contemptuous of the religious meetings, often attempted to interrupt or disturb. With the bitter hostility of the aggressively irreligious, which causes them to regard the most innocent and simple act of devotion with active malevolence, and blinds them to the fact that by persecution their kind has strengthened and purified the cause of Christ all down the ages, these boys were trying with might and main to prevent the gatherings in the garden-house. And now



here was this small boy, this lively imp, who by rights ought still to have been tied to his nurse's apron-strings, not only joining the hated groups but actually stirring them to fresh fervour by the resistless eloquence of his prayer. It was not to be endured, and when the boy, after the meeting, wandered off alone into the plantation, the leader of the gang went after him, touched him on the shoulder, and, pointing to a side path, said abruptly: "Will you walk down there with me?" "What do you mean by taking part in this nonsense?" he went on when the two had walked a few steps.

The rest of the story is quoted in Sir George Newnes's own words as he recorded it towards the end of his life—

"If ever the Spirit of God was imparted to a little boy, it was in me then, and I said, 'I have done it, and I am going to do it again.' 'Oh yes,' he said, 'you'll go to Ted.' I felt that this was a slur upon my courage. I said, 'I will not go to Ted; I will tell him nothing about it.' And then he said, 'I will give you the soundest thrashing you have ever had in your life.' I replied, 'Well, I suppose as there is no one about you can kill me if you like, because you are twice as big as I am, but I will fight you,' and I took off my coat. The coward went for me. I had more than my

physical strength, and was able to get in some blows which he never expected. But of course the contest was too unequal. He knocked me down three times. I got up again, full of the fury of impotent passion, but his strength was too great, and he knocked me down again and left me lying unconscious on the path.

“Frightened, I suppose, at what he had done he slunk away to the school-house. After a while I came to, got up, and staggered rather than walked to the house. Some one helped me kindly to my dormitory and there one of the servant-maids came to me. The blood was streaming down my face. She bathed my wounds, and then I knew no more. For twenty-four hours I slept, and for some time they did not know whether I was alive or dead, so I was told afterwards. The doctor, who was called and came repeatedly, advised that I should be allowed to sleep as long as I could. They also told me that Ted had walked the corridor nearly the whole time. He perhaps better than any one knew what must have happened. When I awoke I felt all right, and asked for Ted. He came to my bedside and I do not think any human being has ever since the world began rejoiced more than I did when I took his hand. But when he asked me what it was all about, I could, of course, tell him nothing, and when I said I had promised not

to tell, he said no more. And so I gradually got better."

In the ordinary sense of the word George Newnes was never a "prize boy" at school, and the orthodox forms of instruction were apt to weary him very soon except where, as in arithmetic, he had special gifts, or in Bible or secular history, where he was attracted by "stories." But even while a child he was drawn to certain philosophers as if by magic, and at the age of ten was observed by his astonished friends to stand listening with absorbed interest when passages from Locke's *Logic* or from Stuart Mill were read and discussed.

From Silcoates George Newnes was sent to Shireland Hall School, near Birmingham, where a new experience awaited him. Here the boys were all younger than he, and soon he had the novel satisfaction of finding himself at the head of the school. Assuch he did his appointed tasks, since such was the will of the inscrutable authorities, who seemed to think proficiency in the three R's and other bookish things so important, while they took but a slender interest in games and sports, and none whatever in the thrilling prize-fights held immediately outside the gates, to the wild delight of the boys. The effect of these tussles on George Newnes was only momentary, for though he soon became a fine



cricketer, whose batting secured for him the nickname of "Not-out Newnes," he turned with something like loathing from every form of sport entailing suffering to man or beast.

The next change of scene brought the boy, at the age of nearly fifteen, to London, where, at the City of London School, Mr. Asquith, the present Prime Minister, was one of his contemporaries, preparing for the brilliant Oxford career of a few years later. Without the student's love for books or enthusiasm for learning, young Newnes rose to no eminence at his last school: his gifts, dormant as yet, lying in quite another direction. But one occurrence, unimportant in itself, seems in retrospect almost like the shadow which events are said to cast before them. A prize was offered for the telling of the best story, and both the future Prime Minister and the future founder of one of the largest London publishing firms of the end of the nineteenth century were competitors. The prize was a book, and George Newnes carried off that prize on the eve of his first steps in the world of workers, where in due course he was to take a prominent and distinguished place.

## CHAPTER III

### THE YOUTH

THE Rev. T. M. Newnes, as has been said, was a minister of the old school, a man whose scholarly tastes and habits were not allowed to interfere in any way with the conscientious discharge of his duties to the congregation committed to his care. But gifted though he was with many admirable qualities, he lacked those of the practical man of affairs, except in the raising of funds for a new chapel, or for other good works connected with his pastorate. In ordinary daily life, surrounded by his flock of quiet country-people who had neither the imagination to expect great things of life, nor the energy to reach out for them, this want of business capacity was of little consequence. But when it came to choosing careers for his sons, the case was different, and with the best will in the world he made grievous mistakes. Being himself without worldly ambitions, he had no thought of placing his sons, or of urging them to go, where they would be most likely to make their way to positions which practical, matter-of-fact people deem advantageous and

desirable. His sons, he argued, would have to make their own way to a modest position, and it was his duty to place them where they could earn an honourable livelihood—earn it cheerfully, industriously and in the fear of God.

Hence, when he began to consider where it would be best to place his youngest son, George, and when he and his wife had sadly and reluctantly given up the idea of his being trained for the ministry, the religious fervour of the Revival meetings at Silcoates having spent itself long ago, it seemed that the boy was best fitted for a mercantile career. He was shrewd, practical, quick, extraordinarily tenacious and industrious, and eager for work: wherefore, argued the good, unworldly father, it would be wisest to give him the training of a practical business man. This training, the argument proceeded, could nowhere be better than in London. The City, from the point of view of the Manse on the green hill-slope above Matlock, was the place where a youth had the best imaginable chance of learning all that could be taught of the business ways of which the Rev. T. M. Newnes was consciously so sadly ignorant, and which to the mere student appeared so complicated, so difficult to acquire and to understand.

When, therefore, he heard of an opening in the City which he thought would be suitable,

he journeyed up to town, called on the heads of the firm, and there and then made what he considered a splendid arrangement, though his son afterwards regarded it as "a very bad bargain." The arrangement was an apprenticeship for five years, with no other payment than free board and lodging. In the 'sixties this form of apprenticeship was still quite usual, and not unpopular, and had doubtless some advantages over the present-day system of introducing a lad to the business life of a large town.

George Newnes himself, eager to win his spurs in the busy world of affairs, went into harness with the high hopes with which youths of his type have always put their foot on the first rung of the ladder leading, for a few, up to rare heights of fortune, and threw himself with characteristic energy into his work. Not that it was inspiring work, on the face of it, to the lad accustomed to the freedom of wide, breezy spaces, and passionately fond of open-air pursuits. One imagines that sometimes in the underground basement Entering Room of the firm of fancy goods merchants, into which no ray of sunlight ever entered, and where he sat from early morning till often late at night, he must have felt like a bird trapped and taken from boundless liberty into a narrow cage. His task was to assist in recording all the sales which took place in the large building



overhead. Next to him sat another lad, making out invoices. Many years later, when Sir George Newnes was often present at Court functions, he discovered that this invoice-making companion of the City basement had blossomed out into an important Court functionary, stationed close to the throne, and attracting all eyes by the splendour of his clothes.

Whether the sun shone, or the fog crept in, or the rain dashed down the basement windows, the room was always equally dark, and on the brightest summer day it was all day long artificially lighted. There the young apprentice sat, taking down dictation from the head of the department, who was seated at a desk above him, or recording figures in a large ledger, while the future Court official made out the bills which were to be sent out to customers. In this manner the record of every one of the firm's transactions passed day by day through the lads' hands. On the face of it, the work was unmitigated drudgery, but there is little doubt that as discipline it was invaluable, and that the habits of neatness, method and accuracy, which enabled the adult man to accomplish an altogether gigantic amount of work, were acquired during the days of his apprenticeship, while he was toiling over the Entering Books.

He had not been long at work before it

was discovered that he possessed an unusual talent. There is no record of a member of either the Newnes or Urquhart family ever before having been distinguished for arithmetical prowess, but this youngster, who had so far been supremely indifferent to figures, unless they were connected with cricket scores or pocket-money, began to handle figures with astonishing ease. The talent soon attracted the attention of those in authority. To add up three columns of £ *s. d.* figures at a time, and to add them with the certainty of absolute correctness, took him less time than it takes the average toiler to sum up a single column. Well may those who have no endowment of this kind be excused a gasp of admiration at the contemplation of this feat, the leaping up, as it were, of a steep stairway, taking three steps at a bound, while others are working their way laboriously upward, carefully taking step by step, and doubtful when they reach the top whether they have not dropped half their figures on the way.

This facility for handling figures was one of the first outward and visible signs of the clear-headedness which was to give George Newnes a distinguished place among chess-players, and which, it goes without saying, stood him in splendid stead during the whole of his business career when often, at a moment's notice, he had to think and calculate in scores of thousands,



if not in the proverbial millions. When recalling these acrobatic feats in arithmetic, he never looked upon them as in any way remarkable. They were just an instance of the truth that practice makes perfect, he would say.

He was a cheerful, genial youth to work with, his companions thought, and before he had been among them many weeks he had become the most popular member of the basement staff. Perhaps it was the rare mingling of youthful spirit and energy with a sort of underlying gentleness of disposition, and eager appreciation of the good qualities in others, which helped him to his popularity and made friends for him of the boys of his own age as well as of the aspirants just above him, who felt themselves grave and experienced men as compared with the new apprentice; and of the heads of the department, old enough, on the wrong side of thirty, to begin to feel young again.

This friendly, collegiate spirit lightened the burden of existence in the grim and ugly surroundings, and though he longed with all his heart and soul, and sometimes with angry despair, for the open air, for sunlight and wide skies, he did his task promptly and satisfactorily, working on with now and then a groan and a grumble, but mostly with laughter in his eyes and, when he was seized by a talkative

mood, with quick-witted chaff on his lips, and jokes which amused but did not offend.

In later years he would tell amusing stories of his experiences in London during these days of his youth. Thrown, largely on his own resources and guidance, into the vortex of City life, he soon became familiar with many of its more strange and less generally known features. Little odd debating-societies and lecture-halls, open-air preachers and spouters—all attracted his amused attention. At times he would take part in argument with some voluble would-be instructor of his fellow-men, and the lad's keen wit and humour would often secure the suffrage of the crowd, to the discomfiture of his opponent. This practice in ready repartee and impromptu was of much service to him in after-days on political platforms, where no heckler could succeed in disconcerting him.

During the years of his apprenticeship, George Newnes had two favourite recreations. One was to stroll about the London streets during the few hours when he was free to amuse himself, and to stand at the newsvendors' stalls or the booksellers' windows, eagerly scanning their wares. Of this occupation more will have to be said later on, when the story takes the reader to where fate brought the young man to a sudden turning-point in his career.

The other recreation was cricket. The found-

ations to this favourite pastime had been laid at Silcoates, where cricket was held in high esteem; and on the Saturday afternoons spent in London cricket-fields he forgot the drudgery of indoor work, the dust-laden atmosphere of the underground room, with its artificial light, and its hopeless lack of sun and good air. In time he gathered local fame and honours as a cricketer, and especially as a batsman, and long before he left London for more congenial surroundings he was captain of a dashing team which measured strength with some of the crack elevens of London.

So the years of his apprenticeship went by, but he was still a long way off the end of the fifth year, when a day came which gave him the chance of putting his accountant's talent to the test, and at the same time of shortening the term of bondage imposed upon him by his unworldly father with such touching faith that he was doing the best for his boy.

The yearly stock-taking, that terrible and necessary upheaval, was over, and there remained only the checking of the mountain of figures accumulated in the process. Young Newnes's fame as an arithmetician had by this time been recognized in every department of the firm, and out of a houseful of capable clerks he was selected to check the figures. No wonder he was delighted, and probably more than a little flattered, for it was no mean

compliment that the boy in his teens should be entrusted with so important a task.

It had taken the united *personnel* of the firm ten days to collect and range the accounts, and when the managers of the various departments had the endless rows of figures before their eyes, they wondered greatly how the young man in the Entering Room would acquit himself, how long it would take him to check the stubborn things. Whereupon one of them, perhaps the first of all the City men who later on were quite ready to stake a good deal on the business capacity of the founder of George Newnes Limited, made a wager with a colleague for five pounds that twelve hours would suffice George Newnes to check and prove all the stock-taking figures.

The dull and solemn warehouse hummed with a new excitement on the day when the temporary accountant was told of the wager and asked whether he thought he could do the work in twelve hours. His answer, given coolly and confidently, was that he thought he could do it in six hours and a half. At nine, next morning, he set to work among those reams of foolscap covered with rows of figures. As usual, he added up the £ *s. d.* in his three-columns-at-a-time manner; but, in order to make assurance doubly sure, he also went carefully over them afterwards in the ordinary manner of taking each column separately,



pence first, shillings next, pounds last. Six hours later the lad of eighteen looked up and announced that he had finished, and that there was no flaw in the figures. The ovation following that early and thrice well-deserved triumph provided him with at least one crowded hour of glorious life at the unlovely City warehouse. It also gave him a new, rather exhilarating sense of his own value, which added a fresh sting to the reflection that he was bound hand and foot for such long years, earning never a penny over and above what it cost the firm to house and feed him not too luxuriously in the apprentice quarters. But his chance was at hand.

The morning after the feat and the wager the principal proprietor of the firm descended into the basement and came straight to where George Newnes was busy among his papers. He came with the pleasurable consciousness of being about to bestow a favour, and after graciously alluding to the work accomplished on the day before, he went on: "Now I am going to make you Entering man, and give you charge over all this department"—the interpretation of which noble speech was that upon the lad's young shoulders would be laid the sole responsibility for from twenty to twenty-five men, packers, clerks and others, working under him. But if the great man of the firm had imagined that this sudden



promotion would overwhelm the apprentice with delight he must have experienced a painful disappointment, for the latter only looked up with amused, if friendly, eyes and pointed out, with absolute composure, that though he was deeply conscious of the compliment implied by the offered change in his position, he felt that he was not very greatly the gainer by it, since it would mean nothing more substantial to him than an increase of responsibilities.

This unexpected—and from the principal's point of view, quite uncalled-for—argument drew nothing but the dry observation that the Rev. T. M. Newnes had bound his son to the firm for five years, without salary; and it must be owned that, looking at the matter from the dry business point of view, and from that of the strangely vague and elastic so-called City conscience, there is nothing to blame in the principal's attitude. At the same time, who will blame the apprentice if he also had a business point of view, and had realized the fact that as his gift was exceptional, and made him of more than 'prentice value to the firm, so the conditions of his, or rather his father's, agreement with the firm should be modified?

The next move was the young man's, who the day before had begun to feel his feet, and was now standing quite firmly upon them as he shot another awkward question at the head

of the firm. Might he ask what was to become of the Entering man whose place he was to take? The reluctant answer being, that man was going, George Newnes went on to inquire, with utmost friendliness and cordiality, whether it was quite fair that he should, without salary, do the work of a man who had received £100 a year. And once more the answer was that the apprentice had been bound by his father for five years. There seemed nothing more to be done but for the said apprentice to express his sincere gratitude for the confidence the firm was showing him by the offer of a place worth £100 a year, but that he could not see his way to accepting the position unless the salary went with it. He also ventured to mention, in passing, that he could not, in any case, take much pleasure in supplanting a man discharged under the present circumstances. But the head of the firm remained unmoved, and explained that the other man was going anyhow, and that George Newnes must take his place without salary, since "you are bound, legally bound, for five years."

There was a moment's pause, during which young Newnes thought fast and furiously; then he said, still in that rather slow and quiet way of his, which was far more impressive than a tumultuous outburst could have been: "The agreement with my father was made in

such a way that it has now become absolutely unfair; if you insist on adhering to it you will find one morning that I am here no longer." This was bewildering and unexpected news to the chief. "But what will you do?" he gasped in breathless consternation. He would go away, said the young man, with a guilelessness which surely must have been begotten by the unexpected turn the conversation had taken; and when pressed for further details of his prospective disappearance, the longing in his heart burst forth for a moment, and his voice gave utterance to the hungering of his soul for green fields, sunlight and open air, while he spent his days from eight in the morning till eight or even ten at night, in the oppressive atmosphere of the artificially lighted underground room.

Perhaps a spark of understanding for, and sympathy with, the cravings of a country-bred youth for the kind of sweetness and light not to be found in cities, and least of all in City warehouses, was kindled—or re-kindled—in the business man's heart. Or perhaps his sense of fairplay was returning under the youngster's quiet insistence of treatment on the principle of a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. At any rate, it was arranged that George Newnes should remain in the City for another year, at a salary of one hundred pounds, and that at the end of that term he

should be sent into the country to open up business for the firm. The programme was carried out to the letter. George Newnes had won his spurs as a man of affairs. The prospect was brightening, the perspective widening. Henceforth he would no longer be what he called a prisoner of business; and though he paid for the ceaseless strain on his too active brain with a severe attack of brain-fever, he was soon at his post again, and all went well.

The firm which in so far "pandered" to the young man's longing for work among country scenes as to send him into the provinces to start new branches of their business, found that they were not the losers by this act of indulgence. Before long the new venture proved so successful that other London firms began to watch Mr. Newnes's movements with intelligent and appreciative eyes, and presently one of these rival firms approached him, with a view to his going into their service at the termination of his agreement with his present employers.

By this time his apprenticeship was over, and he was free to make what engagement he liked, should he be inclined to change his position. He was doing well where he was. But he might be doing better still, he thought, and he must not throw away his chances. Therefore, when he was asked to go and see



the City firm who desired his services, he consented to spend a free Saturday afternoon in calling on them. He was still very young—hardly of age; and though wilful enough, and shrewd with the shrewdness of the keen-eyed man of affairs, he was at heart as simple as a child, with no sterling innate quality blunted by contact with a world where money-making is the first and almost only object. Therefore his sense of honour and loyalty to his own firm made him squirm, and feel almost guilty, as he walked along the London streets on his way to present himself to another firm without the knowledge of his employers. What would happen, he wondered, if any one who knew him saw him in the City on a day when he was supposed to be hundreds of miles away? Was his action quite as straightforward as he wished to be? mused this unsophisticated youth, as the example and precepts of those good parents of his with their high, if somewhat narrow, standard of conduct came to mind. But his common sense came to the aid of his ambition and he went on.

Over and above this rightful ambition to forge ahead, and so put what talents he had into the open market to be used by those who were willing to pay the best price for them, Mr. Newnes had at that time a new and very special reason for desiring to get on in the world. When he was a little lad of seven he was



occasionally taken to the house of a friend of his father's, the Rev. J. Hillyard, of Leicester, where he made friends with a tiny girl, fair-haired, with the bluest of blue eyes, and merry and playful as a kitten. Later on, the two lost sight of one another, and only when George Newnes was eighteen years old did they meet again, renewed the friendship of their infant days, and before long became engaged to be married. Not just yet though, for over and above the extreme youth of both there was the other sound and solid reason for delaying the marriage that the prospective husband was not able to make a home for his bride such as he wished to give her when they should start together on the road of life.

Then came the offer from the London firm of a position which would enable Mr. Newnes to marry at once. The Saturday afternoon interview proved in every way satisfactory, and it was arranged that, on the expiration of his engagement with his present employers, he should take a position with the new firm, representing it at Manchester and Liverpool, and "pushing" the business in the surrounding districts.

One feature of the work upon which Mr. Newnes then entered, as seen from the present-day point of view, seems to belong to very olden times, though it is less than forty years when it constituted part of his ordinary duties.

The great trunk railways had been running for years across the length and breadth of England. But of branch lines there were as yet not many, and the traveller who had to visit small towns and villages in outlying districts was obliged to go in his own gig. To many a man this would have been an irksome duty; to Mr. Newnes it was one of the delights of his days. His love of the open road, and his still greater love of horses, made the longest drives short, and gave him, moreover, time for thinking quietly of things which later on were turned to good account. In this manner he drove thousands of miles in the Midlands and the North of England, and became one of the best whips on the road, while he knew certain districts better than most men know them, his quick eye noting every feature, every peculiarity of the country through which he passed.

The evening of the day when he had entered into the new business engagement probably gave Mr. Newnes a few of the rare moments of pure and unalloyed happiness which fall to the share of mortal man. The future had never looked so hopeful, so sunny. At last, after years spent among strangers, a home of his own was in sight, a place to which he, the home-lover, might return at the end of every day; where he might throw off the cares and frets of work in the cheerful presence of his

family and friends, and where he might indulge without let or hindrance in the harmless pastimes which can only be fully enjoyed at home.

The vision of this home was realized as soon as Mr. Newnes had his new work well in hand, and in 1875, when he was twenty-five, Miss Priscilla J. Hillyard became Mrs. George Newnes, and the two settled happily and merrily into the pretty home. They were both satisfied with small things; both energetic, resourceful, practical, and endowed with the priceless gifts of imperturbable hopefulness and courage; their young eyes saw the laughter rather than the tears which both lie hidden at the heart of things; they envied no one, and made their home a pleasant place not only for themselves but also for the friends readily made and steadily kept. They were hospitable with the fine northern hospitality, sharing their small means as generously as in later years they always shared with their friends the good things which fortune poured so lavishly upon them; and so life in the small Manchester house was a good and pleasant thing.

One of the visitors made welcome there was Mr. Newnes's new chief, the head of the London firm who had invited him to enter into his employment. He came to Manchester to see how the new branch of the business was flourishing, and Mr. Newnes asked him

to spend an evening with him at his home. Now this City man was an enthusiastic chess-player, agreeably conscious of being no mean hand at the game. Mr. Newnes, as if he had not enough irons in the fire, had also managed to find time for mastering the chess-board problems with the thoroughness he brought to all his undertakings, whether they were work or play, indoors or in the open. When pressed by the chief, who was as genial a man as his young traveller, and who often afterwards told the story as a good joke against himself, Mr. Newnes owned that he did play a little, and in the course of the evening the two indulged in a quiet game of chess. To the guest's astonishment he, the careful and experienced player, was "beaten, hopelessly beaten, and by that young whipper-snapper who said so little, kept so perfectly cool, and played so devilishly good a game!"



## CHAPTER IV

### “ TIT-BITS ” : THE INCEPTION

IT would be interesting to know how often, and with how many variations, the story of the inception of *Tit-Bits* has been told in magazines and newspapers all over the world. As a rule, it makes an anecdote in a nutshell, a tit-bit, in fact, of half a dozen lines, which can be conveniently expanded or contracted so as to fit neatly into the space required for what newspaper people call a “ fill.” The true history of the paper which was destined to have so phenomenal a success, and to become the pioneer of an enormous new branch of periodical literature, is, however, not told quite as quickly, nor did its inception and realization follow each other in quite as pleasingly rapid a succession as in the popular paragraph. But it is a story well worth telling, and I am going to tell it once again, since, after all, even in its skeleton or lightning form, it is only hackneyed for the same reason which makes the best of the good old stories hackneyed: the reason that it is interesting to those who have not heard it, and worth being



recalled to mind by those who have heard it before and have forgotten it. Perhaps the present version may also claim a little special interest because the main facts are taken from notes written in Sir George Newnes's own clear hand, to form part of the autobiography he contemplated writing in those more leisured days to which he began to look forward, but which he was not destined to see.

When did the idea of publishing *Tit-Bits* first occur to him? Not suddenly, as the old story has it, when shortly after his marriage he read an amusing anecdote to Mrs. Newnes, and pronounced it a tit-bit. That was only the moment when, as it were, “the bird began to sing.” The germ which developed into the first of the popular penny weeklies began to show the first timid signs of life many years before, when George Newnes heard the first nursery stories, and began to hunger and thirst for the things which big people read out of books—the things that make children laugh and cry in turn, the best being those that make them laugh and wonder and admire, although the others that send a delicious shiver down their backs are also well worth hearing, or reading when they are big enough to spell.

He loved good stories right from the beginning. At Silcoates he was the *raconteur* of his time, who swayed the hearts of a crowd of little boys at will; who made them laugh

and cry and tremble as he chose, and who was himself as thrilled by the creatures of his imagination as was the audience hanging upon his lips. Later on he became as great a reader as he had been an inventor of good stories, and when he left the City of London School, taking away with him the prize for the best-told story, he had a very definite idea as to the sort of literature he should like to be able to buy, if he had the means for indulging his taste.

One of his amusements during the rare free moments of his apprenticeship in London had been to haunt the newsagents' shops, and to wander from one bookstall to the other, looking out for the kind of literary ware which appeals to young readers of his type who are, almost instinctively, longing for amusement and instruction which is pleasantly imparted, and can be quickly and easily assimilated. They desire to follow the events and happenings of the day, but unless these are put before them in compressed and simple form they have neither the time nor the taste to acquaint themselves with what is going on in the world. They also crave for things that cheer and make them laugh, and lead them momentarily away from their own more or less drab lives, into an atmosphere of fun and merriment.

In the late 'sixties and the early 'seventies of last century, when George Newnes was

drawn to the bookstalls, there was not much upon them to excite or fascinate the class of readers he represented, and the extraordinary number and variety of papers offered to-day was not yet thought of. There was one widely popular weekly, a so-called family paper, in its own way excellently conducted, with a view to attracting the enormous class of women and young people with an unquenchable thirst for the harmless, simpering sentimentalities of the mid-Victorian era. This class is always with us, and probably will be while the world stands, even though women, obtaining political rights and powers, “ emancipate themselves ” from nearly every conventionality with the idea of making themselves mentally the exact copies of men, and of specializing on equal terms with them in every field of work. For this kind of literature appeals to a something innate in human—and especially in feminine—nature. It may be modified, or obscured, in accordance with the tendencies of the time, but it will no more be eradicated than the elemental cravings for food and finery, for activity and rest, for shade in summer and warmth in cold weather. It is the outcome of the irresistible desire to mingle high romance of some kind with the dull prose of everyday life. If it cannot be obtained at first hand—and, fortunately or unfortunately, it cannot as a rule, in the average workaday existence—it must be obtained at

second hand, that is to say through books and papers. Hence the popularity of sentimental and highly coloured fiction with the large section of the public which has neither the wealth to buy luxuries, pomps, pageants and excitements, nor the artistic or poetic temperament which creates them out of shadows, and plays with them as if they were realities.

A good deal may be said in criticism of the namby-pamby stories upon which a vast public fed with such satisfaction thirty or forty years ago, but in one respect at all events they were superior to much of the same class of reading offered to the public to-day. At that time, there were stories pandering to low and vicious instincts, but they were rare, and circulated secretly and rather shamefacedly, instead of being brazenly flaunted before the public. The mass of readers were ignorant of their existence, browsing with great content upon the sugary sentimentalities provided for them mainly by the one family paper which would have had every right to boast of the largest circulation had that form of advertisement then been in fashion.

But a danger was looming ahead. There was no corresponding paper catering for the entertainment of men, and so it happened that quick brains set to work to supply the want. They were unscrupulous as well as clever, and by making their appeal to the gambling



instincts which lie dormant in the majority of men, these keen-eyed purveyors of news and amusement sought only too successfully to attract a clientèle. Their columns were filled with turf news and racing tips, and everywhere in odd corners were interspersed anecdotes and stories with a *double entendre* which perhaps might raise a blush here and there, but which were certain to be warmly welcomed and appreciated in many quarters.

The demand for cheap, light literature was at that time steadily and rapidly increasing. The Compulsory Education Act of 1870 had been in force some ten years. There were no illiterates among the growing generation; a whole nation of young men and women were clamouring for things good to read. They had been well grounded in the subjects taught at elementary schools, and they had, moreover, been trained to take an interest in far more subjects than their parents had even heard of. At the same time the standard of the comparatively few thoughtfully written and carefully edited magazines then in existence was too high to meet their requirements. Nor had they the means to pay for these periodicals. Thus their choice lay between the mawkish serial story “for the home circle” and the sporting publications with their pernicious influence. The young woman chose the former, the young man the latter.



Such was the state of things when the young man from the Peak District, with his inquisitive brain, his clean mind, and his voracious appetite for reading, stood gazing into the newsvendors' windows, first in London, and later on in the busy, densely populated northern towns, where the passion for reading was then, as it is now, even greater than in the more flippant south.

Heaven knows when the thought first struck George Newnes that this was not as it should be. He himself, though he never forgot the moment when the thought first took definite shape, could not tell how long the idea had been simmering in his mind that something should be done to counteract on the one hand the temptation to gambling and the sort of "smartness" which caused the prurient to laugh, and on the other hand the vapid nonsense of the "family" paper. But in the end he worked it out, this idea of a paper "as clean as a new pin, with stories as witty and humorous and brilliant as those the unclean minds could invent," which were even then blighting the morals of the people.

A few years after his marriage Mr. Newnes came home one day from work, and settled with his young wife to a quiet evening. As usual, he had brought with him a Manchester evening paper, from which every now and then he read out a paragraph or article. That day's issue struck him as unusually dull and devoid

of news, except for one paragraph, describing how the two children of a station-master had climbed into a wagon to which a locomotive was attached. By some mistake the engine was started and ran down the line uncontrolled. Discovering that his children were in the runaway train the frantic station-master made all kinds of desperate efforts to prevent an accident, and somebody jumping on the foot-plate and stopping the engine, presently brought the adventure to a happy ending.

The story was told vividly and dramatically, and when Mr. Newnes had come to the end of it he said: “Now this is what I call a tit-bit. Why does not somebody bring out a paper containing nothing but tit-bits like this?” Before he fell asleep that night, the suggestion had taken root: since no one else had done this thing, why not attempt it himself?

It was the thought of a man possessed not only of more than an average share of shrewdness and business capacity, but also of an amazing amount of courage and perseverance; and, of course, of the intuition, amounting to genius, which knows without a doubt what thing is wanted at a given moment, and knows also how to give form and shape to this thing.

At the age of thirty Mr. Newnes was a man with a wealth of ideas, but with hardly any capital. The sum for financing the little paper

which he hoped to give to the public would have to be found, but the first thing of all to be done was to make a collection of what he considered tit-bits from books, periodicals and newspapers, working away day after day till there were sufficient paragraphs and short articles to make up a specimen paper—a dummy by means of which an enterprising capitalist might be won over to the conviction that whatever money he put into the venture would not be lost. So he set to work assiduously, unweariedly, after he came home from his office or his country rounds, reading, marking, snipping out, and neatly pasting into his dummy paper the material collected. Professor Henry Drummond spoke of the *Review of Reviews*, as “boiled magazine”: here was a *pot-pourri* of boiled book, magazine and paper, years before Mr. Newnes helped his friend and former school-fellow, Mr. W. T. Stead, to bring out the first number of the “boiled” monthly. Had it not been that Mr. Newnes, perhaps during the years in the City, had acquired the habit of method and order in all things, it would hardly have been possible for him to add the preliminary work connected with the publication of his paper to all his other activities. As it was he did it all easily, and remained as good a cricketer and as keen a chess-player as before.

At last the dummy paper was ready, and

behind it there was already a mass of material for second and third and fourth numbers, should all go well with the first.

The time had now come when he must look for a capitalist to help him in the venture. There was then living at Manchester an opulent, successful merchant, who knew something of Mr. Newnes, and had shown that he had confidence in him. He lived in a beautiful house in the suburbs, and there the would-be publisher called upon him one day, and unfolded this scheme of his with an enthusiasm which the event showed to have been more than justified. If the rich man would find the necessary capital, half the profits which might ensue were to flow into his pocket. But the cautious man of business, walking to and fro in his fine library, only shook his head and declined.

That was a bitter hour to George Newnes, and as he walked back in the dark, towards the little home from which he had set out full of such high hopes and expectations, he felt as if everything were lost. His eye had been on the bookstalls, and he had mingled with the people for whom there was no reading of the kind they wanted to fill the few leisure hours of their monotonous lives ; he knew by intuition what they were waiting for, even though they themselves were only vaguely conscious of their want in this connection ; he also knew



that he could supply it, if only some one would give him the small capital required at the outset. The castle he had built so grandly and so high up into the sky lay at his feet in ruins; and now, as he walked home in the dark, a thicker darkness than that of the night fell upon his spirit, as he remembered his dreams, and recognized how passionately he had hoped to realize them.

He had looked forward to work so hard and so well, to put all his heart and mind into this thing, to succeed by sheer perseverance, energy and enterprise, and to work on and on, till he himself should be a rich man, giving employment to crowds of workers to whom he would be a friend as well as an employer. And then his wealth should not only procure ease and pleasure for himself and his own, but he would help those who needed help, and the sight of whose wants had often caused his heart to ache and burn. He did all this, and more, in time, but on that night of failure there seemed nothing more to be hoped for.

Lost in deep, gloomy thought, he stumbled over a stone on the way home, fell and lay there, half-unconscious and unable to rise. It did not matter; since all was lost, let the world slip from him, he dimly thought, before he fainted with the pain of the fall. After a while a policeman passing with his bull's-eye lantern, stooped down, shook him, and told



him he was drunk. “ No,” said a tired voice, “ I am not drunk. Help me to my feet ; I have had a fall.” The constable seeing that he had made a mistake, helped him up and guided him to a cottage close by, where an old man and his wife took him in, nursed him kindly and gently, and only let him go when he had been rested and restored. They did not think of any reward when they took in the stranger ; they only thought of alleviating suffering by whatever means they possessed, these simple-hearted old people ; but when, not long after, their guest had put his project into action, and was beginning to reap his golden harvest, he showed them that the gratitude he had expressed on leaving them had been real enough, and it was his delight to make their old age happy with more than the necessaries of life.

After a night’s rest had restored him, the mood of the previous night which had cast him into such abysmal gloom, had gone. He faced the situation. The rebuff was disappointing, there was no doubt of that. But because one shrewd man of affairs did not see his way to financing it, this beautiful scheme was not to be abandoned ; its originator, no longer under the effect of the sudden disappointment, believed in it as much as ever. There were no other men to whom he could or would turn for help ; the first experience had been depressing

and humiliating enough. Now, what was to be done next ?

For the sake of the idea, of the value of which he was so firmly convinced, he made one other effort. He was a man of a proud and independent spirit, to whom it was no easy thing to go, cap in hand, begging humbly for a favour. He would have preferred to break stones by the roadside, if thereby he could put to the test his theory that a vast public was waiting for a paper such as he was prepared to bring out. But breaking stones is not the sort of occupation by which sufficient capital can speedily be raised for bringing out even a small and inexpensive paper. Therefore, the capitalist having failed him, Mr. Newnes approached a Manchester publishing firm, endeavouring to persuade them to trust him to the extent of £500, and publish the first few numbers of his paper. Not they ! But six weeks after the first number of *Tit-Bits* took Manchester by storm the same firm offered Mr. Newnes £16,000 for the publication, which offer, it need hardly be said, was politely refused. In six months' time a London publisher declared his willingness to purchase the paper for the trifling sum of £30,000. But the proprietor of *Tit-Bits* knew better, even though the day had not yet come when a large firm of advertising agents offered him many thousands a year for the use of the front page

of this same paper for which he had not been able to find a publisher, and which was so soon to become one of the most valuable newspaper properties in the country.

The day after the second rebuff Mr. Newnes went to his daily work as usual, once more with hopes laid low, as again and again at odd moments the thought rushed back into his mind that he had now tried all he knew, to obtain outside help, and that in this direction nothing more was to be done. But again he braced himself for the fight, squared his shoulders and looked ahead, determining that he would succeed even yet, and that somehow, by his own efforts alone, he would obtain the capital required for the start.

There were at that time in Manchester a number of popular vegetarian restaurants, at one of which Mr. Newnes occasionally took his midday meal. As he sat at this restaurant, on the day when he had come to the conclusion that, since no one else would help him to carry out his project, he must now find means to help himself, he noticed that crowds of hungry people came into the place, and that everything around declared its prosperity, notwithstanding certain defects, which, if remedied, would probably draw even larger crowds. And suddenly the idea rose in his mind: “Why not start a vegetarian restaurant myself, make it more attractive than any other establishment

of the kind in Manchester, and in this manner raise the capital required for bringing out the paper ? ”

The story of what followed is best told in the autobiographical notes written nearly thirty years later—

“ I set to work and found a disused cellar, close to the most important street in Manchester, transformed it from a mere receptacle of *débris* into an attractive room, and made arrangements for perfectly lighting it. The landlord was only too delighted to see his disused cellar made into a rent-earning property ; in a month I had started there what I called ‘ The Vegetarian Company’s Saloon.’ I advertised it as if it were some new institution coming out in Manchester, and amongst other things announced that there would be ‘ No opening ceremony on Tuesday at 12 o’clock.’ It became the talk of the town, and at 12 o’clock on the Tuesday the ‘ Vegetarian Company’s Saloon ’ was opened. At 12.30 it was closed, and I sent a wire to my wife : ‘ Eaten up in half-an-hour.’ Some people may remember this opening day. The next day, although we had a much larger supply, we had many more customers, and were eaten up in an hour.”

So attractive had the place been made by



this new-fledged vegetarian restaurant-keeper, who, without a vestige of professional knowledge, had that which is far better, since he possessed the imagination which enabled him to put himself into the place of all the hungry folk who, after toiling all the morning, crave not only for food but also for the cheerful surroundings which give a savour to the simplest fare, and without which the daintiest food is but poor stuff.

The dishes were made to look inviting and appetizing; they were prepared with care and skill; the room was airy, light and pretty; all the appurtenances were spotlessly clean, and twenty bright and pretty waitresses, dressed in neat uniforms, were in attendance. Infected by the spirit of the head of this “ company ” the employees did their level best to help it to success, and to make the disused cellar the most cheerful and least expensive eating-house in Manchester.

Mr. Newnes’s brother-in-law, Mr. J. Hillyard, keenly interested in all his restless relative’s early undertakings, tells a delightful story in connection with this experiment. One day, when the restaurant was in full swing, he came to it in search of its owner. No, Mr. Newnes was not there—he had gone out a short time ago. The matter on which Mr. Hillyard wished to consult Mr. Newnes being urgent, he went to this place and that, where the truant

was likely to be found, but there was not a trace of him anywhere. At last he went into an hotel which had nothing to do with vegetarianism in any shape or form, to order his own luncheon. And who should be sitting there, doing justice to a large beefsteak, but the owner of the Vegetarian Company's Saloon, who chuckled as he encountered the astonished eye of his brother-in-law, and said quietly, and with the ghost of a wink, "Every one to his fancy"!

In a few weeks' time the flourishing business in the cellar was sold for a sufficient sum to enable Mr. Newnes to realize the one object he had in view when he entered upon this venture. Without putting himself under obligations to any one, and without the possibility of losing money not belonging to him, he was now in a position to go full steam ahead, and to put to the test his theory that a large public was waiting for an inexpensive periodical such as he would be able to supply.

That he had made other attempts at earning some extra money, and that he was not without aspirations to literary honours even during that period of extraordinary activity, is shown in a high-spirited letter which Mr. Newnes wrote to his parents on a memorandum sheet from "The Vegetarian Company's Saloon, 2 Pall Mall and Warren Street, Manchester," on March 13, 1881. He tells them merrily about

the success of his “saloon,” and goes on to say—

“ With regard to the doggerel which you seem to insist shall be fathered on me—it was simply done with the idea that if I could get five guineas for an hour’s work, why should not I? It did not get the prize, but I received a letter asking permission to publish it. I wrote back that I had no wish to have my verses in the paper, but if he liked to pay me for them they were his; and by return there came a cheque which I am keeping as a memento of the first payment I ever received for literary (?) work. I thought if I sneaked behind an alias I should be safe. So for a time it proved. It was reserved for you to drag the culprit from his lair and mercilessly hold him up to scorn and—— (Dinner’s ready, so this last sentence must come to an untimely end.)

“ Love to all. We are glad you seem to keep pretty well. Bairns are well. I am your undutiful son—

“GEO. NEWNES.”

The writing of *vers d’occasion* was at that time a form in which Mr. Newnes’s ebullient spirits not unfrequently sought and found an outlet, and there is an “Odious Ode to an Odd Object” in “very short metre” which

he wrote in the joy of his heart after the birth of his niece Jessie Hillyard (Mrs. Neville Foster), and which, together with the music from the lute of other poets of the family, has been preserved in printed form. The metre may be short, but the Ode is long, and tells the story of the day when—

“The rain came on, the wind blew high,  
 No sun was overhead;  
 But though no sun came on that day,  
 A daughter came instead”;

and ends with an exhortation to “bacheloric cousins”—

“In matrimonial joys enlist,  
 Your single life have done;  
 Think of the joys that now exist  
 At Number Fifty-one!”



## CHAPTER V

### “ TIT-BITS ” : THE START

Two hours after the first number of *Tit-Bits* came from the printing press, on October 30, 1881, five thousand copies had been sold in Manchester alone, and this notwithstanding what threatened to be a very serious drawback to the success of the paper. This drawback was its name. The Manchester newsboys were not the only representatives of the public who had pricked up their ears on hearing that a new penny paper would appear at the end of the month, and that the name of *Tit-Bits* had been chosen for it. To Mr. Newnes, unacquainted with the slang then in fashion among the class of men and boys who are for ever on the look-out for indecencies and obscenities, the term tit-bit suggested nothing that was not “ as clean as a new pin ”; and he never dreamed that it might be taken in the perverted sense as indicating a story more or less subtly seasoned with the very things he was most anxious to avoid; the things, namely, which would “ cause the prurient to laugh.”

It was one of the ironies of fate in little

things, that he should have been confronted with this difficulty, for the name had seemed to him so admirably suitable to, and expressive of, the character of the paper which was to bring harmless entertainment, useful information, and wholesome food for the mind to the enormous public ready and eager for this branch of literature.

And now, in view of the sinister rumours that numbers of people would not "touch" the new paper, because they thought its title indicated what they considered evil things, it seemed almost ridiculous that he should have been so anxious to keep the name a secret, and to register it at the first possible opportunity, lest it should fall into the hands of others and be adopted before he had been able to raise the small initial capital required. Verily the rumour came as a bolt from the blue!

But it depressed him only for a moment. After all, he thought, as he squared his shoulders once again for battle, five thousand copies had taken wing easily and immediately. Wherever they had gone, they would tell their own tale, and even if half of them had fallen into the hands of those to whom the term *tit-bit* stood for an anecdote of doubtful character, the other two thousand five hundred had gone to the public for whom he had intended *Tit-Bits*, and they would see to it that the paper was recommended to others with tastes like

theirs. And meanwhile the jubilant newsboys, having sold out the first edition, came back in battalions to the doors of the publishing office, clamouring for a fresh supply; and the editor in his room forgot all else in the delight of the first success. He was working day and night, inspiring every one around him with his own enthusiasm and happy, tireless industry. Those were the happiest days of all, the laborious days when, after long and patient waiting, there came the first great triumph, immediate, complete, and well deserved.

One day, many years later, on a summer afternoon, up in a cool shady corner of the Wildcroft grounds, when the conversation happened to turn to the publication of the first few numbers of *Tit-Bits*—or *T.-B.*, as the paper was generally spoken of—Sir George Newnes gave a sketch of the tumult and the stress of the Manchester days. He began in his usual, deliberate manner of speaking, but as he went on there came a sudden note of excitement into his voice: “Man alive,” he said, “what days those were, and how we worked! Looking back it seems as if we had never left off for days and weeks together. But though life was almost too full, and we had to face any number of difficulties and obstacles, and to invent and launch something fresh almost every week, I do not remember any other time of my life that has been quite

as interesting and enjoyable as when *T.-B.* first was started. And this went on for years." Then he fell into a silent mood, and presently walked thoughtfully away, as if even in the midst of his full life, at the height of his success and prosperity, looking backward he was beginning to "pine for what is not."

For a few weeks the sale of *T.-B.* was almost entirely confined to Manchester and the surrounding districts, but this was not to Mr. Newnes's fancy; having justified the existence of the paper, and his conception of it, it now devolved upon him to put further into practice some of his theories with regard to judicious advertising. At the very outset, on the day of publication, he had already startled Manchester into curiosity and smiles by the manner in which, heralding his paper, he enlivened the streets. The members of the Boys' Brigade, instead of following the daily round of taking messages about, were seen marching up and down Market Street, a hundred of them—fifty on this side of the street, fifty on that. Round their caps they wore wide bands with *Tit-Bits* bursting from them in fat type, and under their arms they bore bundles of the paper itself. The editor was there to direct the march, and when the top of the street was reached he commanded that the forces should join, and the talk of the town was the *Tit-Bits* brigade.



There was nothing connected with his paper that Mr. Newnes did not think worth his own attention. The night before this parade in the streets, after he had seen the paper through the press—a task the strain and labours of which only those can fully realize to whose lot it has fallen to bring out the first number of any paper—he had chartered a four-wheeled cab, and taken a supply of *T.-B.* round to the various wholesale agents who had agreed to distribute it. He had also sent a parcel of forty dozen copies to an important London firm of newspaper distributors, together with a letter requesting that the new weekly might be sent out to the firm's bookstalls, on the sale or return principle.

Having seen that the Boys' Brigade was satisfactorily patronized by Manchester lovers of light reading, Mr. Newnes returned to headquarters to find that the London parcel had been returned with the message that the firm in question had a sufficient supply of papers on their stalls, and could not take the new weekly. In the mail train that night the editor of the rejected paper travelled up to town with a copy of *Tit-Bits* in his pocket, and next morning he had an interview with the managing director of the unwilling firm, the result of which was that the week following the new paper was on the firm's stalls, and has remained there ever since, together with

a number of other publications from the same source.

There were the usual endless number and variety of petty troubles and difficulties which are associated with the launching of a paper, but they were as nothing when considered together with the phenomenal success of the undertaking. Only once or twice Mr. Newnes had to face really serious difficulties, and though they served mainly to show what sort of stuff the young man was made of who had lived so quietly and contentedly behind the scenes, and had now so suddenly come to the front and into public notice, these early anxieties brought with them an occasional very bad quarter of an hour.

There was, for instance, the day when an attempt was made to seize the paper. The dramatic way in which this was dealt with was remembered by the chief actor with keen appreciation. It happened while *T.-B.* was still printed at Manchester, and is recorded in the autobiographical notes as follows—

“*Tit-Bits* was going up in circulation by leaps and bounds, and the printer saw that a valuable property was being created. One night I went down to the printing-house as usual to get my papers. The place was closed to me. I said: ‘What does this mean?’ and they said: ‘We have received instructions from our

proprietor that inasmuch as last week's bill has not been paid no papers must be sent out from this office.' They were all printed, all ready to be sent out, but they were withheld; and I myself was locked out. 'Where is the proprietor?' I asked. 'Is he here?' No, he had gone away. 'Well, where is he? I must find him.' I was told he had either gone home or to a certain club in Manchester. I went to his club, was told he was there, but would not see me. I sent him up a letter, saying I would bring an action for damages against him if he kept my papers back that night, as it would be the most serious injury to my property. With the letter I sent him a cheque for his last week's bill, the amount of which was under dispute, and demanded an order to his staff to let me have possession of the week's issue. He came down to see me, and he saw a man who had gone through enormous effort, and even emotion, to carry out a project which apparently was now going to be ruined. If one week's paper were to be kept back, all the success which was being achieved would be, if not destroyed, at any rate mutilated, and possibly the copyright might have been lost. He gave me the order. And if I were to be asked what was the most exciting evening in my life this would be the one I should choose. I got the papers and superintended the distribution. But the man who

had given me that experience never printed another copy of *Tit-Bits*."

On the whole, however, the trials and tribulations of the start were of a kind the overcoming of which supplied the editorial staff with a good deal of entertainment. For instance, the paper was gaining ground very rapidly in all directions, especially in the northern towns. But, strange to say, Newcastle-on-Tyne, which had a reputation as a centre of much reading, and should have welcomed the merry little weekly with open arms, stood aloof and would not buy *Tit-Bits*. After watching and waiting patiently for some months, Mr. Newnes and his brother-in-law, Mr. J. Hillyard, travelled up to see what a little attractive advertising would do. They went to a newsagent, who showed them bundle upon bundle of back numbers. No, the man said, it was no use sending the paper. It would not go. People objected to the title. Looking at the thousands of waste copies, a plan of campaign suggested itself by which these very copies, despised and scorned as they had been, should be used for the successful introduction of *T.-B.* into Newcastle.

An army of sandwichmen was engaged, the first of whom displayed the name *Tit-Bits* in gigantic letters on the board towering high



above him. The name and nothing more. The second, in the same manner, paraded the phrase “ I like it ”; the third “ My wife likes it ”; the fourth “ My daughter likes it ”; the fifth “ My mother likes it,” and so on, through the whole of what must have appeared a family numerically blessed beyond the average. On the last board was blazoned forth the assertion “ So do I.” As long as the men walked in the sequence which gave continuity to the tale of *Tit-Bits* admirers, all was well, but one of the comic incidents happened when the man who went about advertising “ So do I ” fell behind, and was seen solemnly marching along with this device on his board. A rumour became current in the parts of Newcastle which had not been privileged to see the advertisement in its entirety, that a lunatic had escaped from Bedlam and was now at large, indulging in the curious occupation of carrying a sandwich board with a mad inscription.

But the procession was only part of the plan. Bringing up the rear there was to be a van, packed with back numbers, and decorated with banners and scrolls displaying devices in loud and enthusiastic praise of *Tit-Bits*. Then an unexpected difficulty was sprung upon the high-spirited advertisers. The date was the last day of April, and on May 1 every self-

respecting cart-horse and donkey was going in the May Day Procession, then newly instituted by some pitying friend of the army of "dumb things" who toil and labour so patiently, and are, or were then, so often over-worked and underfed, driven to work when lame, or wounded or sick, more often probably from thoughtlessness than from brutality. Now prizes were offered to the best kept working horse or donkey, and the May Day procession was so gay and popular an event at Newcastle-on-Tyne that it looked as if there was neither van nor cart-horse to be had for love or money. But seeing that on this gala-day the streets would be crowded, and the crowd in holiday spirits, it was all the more important that *Tit-Bits* should add to the gaiety of the occasion; and after hunting high and low and half the night, the van and horse were found, and the *T.-B.* procession was as cordially welcomed as the legitimate May Day one. The back numbers from the van were distributed to right and left, and the Tyneside success of the paper was assured.

But still one news vendor stood out, the most important of all. She was an old woman who had in the course of years accumulated a large connexion. Her customers read what she recommended, they rejected what she did not approve. No, she was not going to stock a paper

with such a name. It was not decent. She had never countenanced that sort of thing, and she was not going to do so now. She seemed a lady of character. Therefore Mr. Hillyard, carrying a copy of *Tit-Bits*, called upon her. She looked him up and down, and grew friendly enough, after a while, but would not be persuaded, and explained that she could not think the man who published a paper with such a name could be a nice man. “ His wife is my sister,” the amateur advertiser explained. “ Do you think my sister would have let him bring out a paper of the sort you seem to think *Tit-Bits*? No, she wouldn’t.” And raising his voice, and shaking a threatening finger before the old dame’s face, he ended with a grand finale “ *She’d* give it him! *She’d* give it him, I can tell you!” She must have been a humorist, or on incipient suffragette, that old Tyneside woman; or her visitor must have ingratiated himself greatly with her, for she capitulated with a laugh, and the last hostile stronghold in Newcastle was won for *Tit-Bits*.

“ I thought I was a good advertiser,” said Mr. Newnes when his brother-in-law rejoined him, “ but in this case you’ve beaten my head off.”

Meanwhile, he was not often “ beaten ” in this branch of his profession, and he scored a

success in the south at that time, as great as that which in the north had crowned the labours of the two master-advertisers. It was the time for that great annual festivity, the Brighton Review, which in the early 'eighties still drew enormous crowds to London-super-Mare. They spent their short spring holiday there, ending up with the great Volunteer review on the Downs, or they came down on purpose on Bank Holiday, to gather what enjoyment and inspiration they could from the sight of the uniforms and the crash of regimental music. It was one of the most popular entertainments of the year, with the first picnic of the spring in the open, with side-shows manifold and with the sparkling sea for a background.

Mr. Newnes was staying at Brighton on a short holiday, and as he watched the incoming multitude to which every day added thousands, and every train a fresh contingent, he wondered what advertisement he could devise, on the spur of the moment, to bring his *Tit-Bits* to the notice of all this happy, merry-making humanity. A very large percentage of the crowd of mostly small people were just of the class to appreciate the paper; they came down, young fathers and mothers with their bairns, elderly people with their stalwart sons and fair young daughters; lovers with their lasses, and all the rest, to fill an idle day with



innocent gaiety, and go home well satisfied with all they had seen. If he could only think of some way of giving them all a good laugh, of adding another to the pleasurable impressions, to the things of which they would talk afterwards, and which they would like to remember. But whatever was done must be done at once, without delay.

The usual bands of patient donkeys, gaily decorated and ready to take holiday makers for “tuppenny” rides at a moment’s notice, stood here and there on the edge of the crowd. To the naked eye of the average person, they are not an inspiring sight, looked at from any and every point of view. But the inspiration for one of the best advertisements by which the young *Tits-Bits* had as yet increased its popularity came from them. Two of the best and prettiest of the cavalcade were engaged for the day; in an incredibly short time gorgeous cloaks had been prepared for them, hiding the little grey coats which Nature had bestowed upon them and which much hard labour had long made threadbare and shabby in places; and now here they were parading to and fro, up and down, wherever the crowd was thickest. And nowhere did they go but shouts of laughter and delight received and followed them, for down their sides there streamed the long gay cloaks, and the inscription upon them, in

gigantic letters, told all the world “*We don’t read Tit-Bits.*” Rejected by asses, was this little paper that was offered so politely in the neighbourhood of the two richly caparisoned beasties? Well, then let us see that we are not counted in with them, and let us buy *Tit-Bits* and learn what it is the donkeys refuse to read! The sale that week was phenomenal, and when it remained at its height the week following, and rose even higher as the weeks went on, it became clear that advertising by asses had not been a bad idea.

In this wise, by dint of inexhaustible energy and resourcefulness in advertising, and by constant care that each successive number of the paper should be at least as good as the best that had gone before, and if possible still better, the little paper conquered first the provinces, and then London, while Scotland and Ireland were also gradually becoming increasingly strong adherents.

The world of printers and publishers stood and gazed on with amazement as *Tit-Bits* forged ahead, running its race towards fame and fortune so lightly and merrily; and presently the first imitator was in the field. In six months there were twelve; within a year there were twenty-two. The earthly pilgrimage of most of these was short and far from glorious, and none of the survivors interfered

with the continued success of the paper on which they had modelled themselves more or less, though never one of them all could catch the elusive something which drew the masses to *T.-B.* and made them loyal followers, notwithstanding the allurements of all the other would-be charmers.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GENTLE ART OF ADVERTISING

VERY soon after *Tit-Bits* was launched it became clear that its editor and proprietor could not continue his work as the representative of a London mercantile firm, together with superintending and editing his paper. He therefore freed himself from his former duties and cast in his lot with the professional journalist, being fortunately able to combine with his work the very lucrative position of proprietor of a paper which had positively rushed to an unprecedented circulation and, consequently, had become a great financial success.

For three years Manchester, the scene of its first remarkable appearance, remained the home of the paper; then its headquarters were moved to London, first to Farringdon Street, then to much larger premises in Bury Street, and finally to the group of buildings in Southampton Street, the dignified front of which gives no idea of the hum and buzz of concentrated energy and activity within, on



every floor, and in all the labyrinthine passages ; or of the marvels of the underground rooms where, with rhythmic click and whir, monstrous machines which seem like sentient beings—so marvellous is the work they do, and so unlike the usual automatic action of machinery—receive endless rolls of white paper and give up at the other end the green *Tit-Bits*, stitched in its cover, and ready to be put on the bookstalls.

You may watch them scores of times, and you may have all the intricacies explained to you by the most matter-of-fact keeper of these giants, but unless yours is the engineering mind, you will never turn away from them without the impression that somewhere about their iron frames they have eyes to see, and brains to understand the tasks they are performing, and that in their innermost being there is an insatiable greed for blank paper, leagues upon leagues of it, which they must swallow and presently disgorge again, all decorated with the tiny hieroglyphics whereby the race of pigmies called mankind is amused.

Besides making the paper itself its own best advertiser, and by inventing advertisements which were effective for a day or an hour, and designed to impress crowds, Mr. Newnes was always bent on the discovery of fresh methods of advertisement which should occupy the public for longer periods of time ; and the slightest incidents and occurrences often suggested new

means to this end. Thus, he had inaugurated a system by which every person who took in *T.-B.*, for a certain period, received £100. This period was necessarily long, and the scheme was for this reason less attractive than it might have been. Then one morning there was in the almost bottomless editorial post-bag a letter from a poor woman who explained that her husband had regularly taken the paper for a long time, though not long enough to entitle him to the £100. Now he had been killed in a railway accident, and when his body was extricated from under the ruined train a copy of *Tit-Bits* was found upon him. She was left penniless; might she, under the circumstances, not be privileged to receive part of the £100?

The poor woman did not plead in vain, but the matter did not end when she had been relieved. For as he thought the incident over, it flashed upon the editor that here was a chance of improving on the first insurance scheme. The idea was carefully worked out, and henceforth each number of *Tit-Bits* carried (and still carries) a valuable policy of insurance against railway accidents, securing for the friends of any one killed in such an accident the sum of £100. This was the feature which more than any other at the time sent up the circulation of the paper. Between twenty and thirty sums of £100 have so far been paid

out to the public as the result of this insurance scheme.

It was thoroughly well advertised; a great many papers made fun of it, and every joke, whether it raised the laugh for or against the scheme, was highly appreciated and approved by the editor, who by this time had learnt the great lesson which every journalist knows, that in his profession it matters little whether criticism is favourable or, on occasion, adverse; the only thing to be guarded against at all costs being the silence of the dear public and the still dearer contemporaries.

When this system of insurance by newspaper became once fully understood and appreciated by the public, the circulation of *Tit-Bits* went up to the great height of seven hundred thousand. In the autobiographical notes the following paragraph is added to an outline of the insurance scheme and its effect on the circulation: "One's ambition naturally set up the standard of a million. So I offered to give £10,000 to the hospitals of this country if the readers of *Tit-Bits* would send its circulation up to a million. This had some influence, but we only got up to eight hundred and fifty thousand per week. However, something like £5000 was paid to the hospitals." Only 850,000! Think of it, all ye who boast of a largest circulation!

But prizes to which no such gruesome

conditions attach as death by railway disaster, have done much in spreading the popularity of *Tit-Bits*, giving at the same time ever-fresh entertainment to a large public.

Two years after its first appearance the paper had a steady weekly circulation of two hundred thousand. So far there had never been a week when more copies had not been sold than the week before. The editor, from feeling some natural elation, had become accustomed to the increase, and, indeed, had begun to expect it. Why should the circulation stop short of a million? Why even there? since the world was full of people, and most of them obviously approved of *Tit-Bits*, once they had become acquainted with it.

And then, at two hundred thousand, the increase suddenly stopped. It was large enough, in all conscience; large enough to satisfy ambition. But the editor wondered what was the reason. Had the moment come when all had been done that could be done? Had they exhausted their resources for attracting a still wider public? To think such a thought was to reject it. Something else must be invented; something to attract the enterprising, and to give cause for mirth to those who prefer to be onlookers only, when bolder spirits step into the arena. What was it to be?

One Bank Holiday morning Mr Newnes, the lover of the open road, had so far put aside his



work as to indulge in a country walk with a friend. As they strolled along the talk turned, as usual, quite naturally to the paper, and the editor's thoughts to the fillip which might be given by means of an interesting competition. He had often of late turned the matter over in his mind, but as yet he had not found what he wanted. Looking up, his eye fell upon a house close by, which was "To be let or sold." A man, who turned out to be the owner, stood at the door. A minute later Mr. Newnes asked him: "What is the price of this house?" "£400," was the answer. "I'll buy it," said Mr. Newnes, and the bargain was made. Then they resumed their placid walk, and nothing was said till Mr. Newnes turned to his friend. "I've got it!" he announced. "Well," said the other, with a laugh. "What have you got?"

Next week the details of a new competition were printed in *T.-B.*; a seven-roomed freehold house was offered for the best short story, the only condition being that the winner should call it "Tit-Bits Villa." For one half of the population of the British Islands the competition formed the event not of the day and the week, but of many weeks, and again the circulation rose like a balloon coming into a fresh air current.

There was a sequel to the venture. The winner was a soldier who had sent in a story

which he thought the best, an opinion shared by the judges of the competition, who awarded the prize to him. Then it appeared that he had copied it, in all good faith, not understanding that the competition was for original work only. The story happened to be non-copyrighted. When the true state of things appeared the editor wrote to the author suggesting that, since the story had originally been his, he also should receive some sort of payment. This suggestion brought the reply that as the man who had sent in what was only a copy had received a villa, at least a street was due to the author. He did not, however, wish to be unreasonable and would be perfectly satisfied with Pall Mall or Piccadilly! These little cabbage patches not happening to be in the market just then, the point was settled in some other way agreeable to all concerned.

It was shortly after the competition for the seven-roomed house that the Manchester premises became too narrow to hold *Tit-Bits*, and the move to London was made. In its new home the paper became even more sprightly, more frolicsome, than before. The prize of house property, for a short story, had brought to it so large a stream of new readers, so great a mass of MSS., that another and a greater effort in the same direction seemed advisable. This time the more serious,

professional writers of fiction were to have a chance, although the competition was open to all aspirants to literary honours. A prize of £1000 was offered for the best serial story. *Tit-Bits*, having begun with "snippets" and "boiled" copy in its lowly and exuberant youth, was growing up, adding new dignities and graces to its charms; it was now feeling its way along a road as yet almost untrodden in this country by purveyors of popular literature; it was for the first time putting to the test its readers' willingness to accept a story running from week to week.

The mid-Victorian family paper had succeeded well enough with this feature, but, then, it was a meek and gentle publication, read week after week by a docile generation that found no difficulty in curbing its curiosity as to the romantic heroes' and heroines' next move, to be set forth in a week's time. But it was more than questionable whether this new reading public which Mr. Newnes himself had taught and trained to expect good stories galore in a concentrated form, and in a paper which every week should be complete in itself so far as its reading matter was concerned, would accept stories dealt out at the rate of a chapter or two week by week; in spoonfuls, so to speak. It was all very well to have the weeks linked together by prize competitions—that was unavoidable; but would the restless and eager

public of the day patiently suffer the cutting in half of a blood-curdling adventure or an episode of high romance, the first slice being served up this week, the second a week hence ?

Apart, therefore, from any consideration of immediate gain or loss, it was an interesting experiment, that of the £1000 prize story, and its reception, as a serial, by the public. The first of the many curious facts the competition brought to light was, that there was an enormous crowd of literary aspirants who had obviously only been waiting for the moment when a wise man should present such an offer as that now made by *T.-B.*, to send forth the works of art they had prepared with such skill and talent, and many of which had already suffered such undeserved rejection by purblind publishers. For no sooner had the terms of the competition been made known than the MSS. began to pour in, in hundreds, in thousands, in tens of thousands, till the multitude thereof, which at first had been welcomed with such pleasure, began to pall; and those whose duty it was to read and judge these outpourings of the full heart of men and women inspired with the craving for communicating their lyric and epic emotions, had nightmares, and walked about with frowning brows and something worse than groans in their throats. Over twenty thousand MSS. volumes lay stacked at the office of *T.-B.* on the date when the com-



petition closed; and if a fire had broken out and made a holocaust of them, one can imagine that with the tears of the bereaved authors, most of whom had probably not been wise enough to keep a copy of their work, there might have mingled at least a few sighs of relief, coming from the depths of wicked hearts in the secret places of the editorial department. Such a calamity, however, did not befall.

The editor of *T.-B.* was a little scornful as to the merits of the bulk of these works, when remembering them afterwards. "They were a poor lot, on the whole," he said, and judging by the way he spoke, he pitied himself in retrospect for having been obliged to wade through the section from which he was obliged to make a choice, after the absolutely impossible had been weeded out. The final choice, however, was not very difficult, for among the writers of real skill and talent who had competed was Mr. Grant Allen, and his story "What's Bred in the Bone" had that in it which made it an easy first. It was successful in every way, for it pleased the public from beginning to end; it made the serial story acceptable; it sent up the circulation, and had a magnificent sale when afterwards it appeared in volume form.

There were not wanting superior persons who scoffed and sneered because a man of

Grant Allen's position in the world of letters should "mix with that crowd," but he himself never regretted it, quite apart from the fact that the fee of £1000 came as a godsend in his struggle against a disease which obliged him to spend the winter in Egypt. Brave, patient spirit! I see him now, sitting in the tiny waiting-room of the old *Pall Mall Gazette* in Northumberland Street, looking very frail and thin in his rough tweed clothes, and with the sad smile on his face; and I hear the pleasant, cultured voice that came rather as a surprise to those who saw him for the first time and noted that his bronzed face looked more like that of a farmer than a literary and scientific man. "Why not?" he said. "What is the matter with *Tit-Bits*, that I should be ashamed of having gained a prize in its literary competitions? I wish all the papers for which I have written pot-boilers were as interesting, and if some had paid me half as well I should not be where I am."

The sensation, however, which the £1000 prize story had created paled and faded before another of which it is no exaggeration to say that it threw half the nation into a fever of excitement, and gave the other half the material for any amount of amusement and animated conversation. The form of this competition was suggested by Mr. Greenhough-Smith at one of the luncheons at the Hotel Cecil, where

many a new idea connected with Mr. Newnes's papers first saw the light.

Most people well remember the autumn when suddenly all other events of the day were momentarily obscured by the rumour that the editor of *Tit-Bits* had caused tubes containing five hundred sovereigns to be buried in the earth; that in a story about to be published in *Tit-Bits* the place where the gold was hidden would be indicated, and that whoever, in reading the story, could discover the clue to the place and find the money, was free to dig up the treasure and keep it.

At first it was proposed to hide the money somewhere in the heart of London, where the stream of humanity is strongest, most turbulent, and unintermittent, except for an hour or two in the dead of night. Charing Cross seemed an ideal spot; and could heart of author, dealing with the hiding-place, conceive a more perfect keeper of the precious coin than say, the Landseer lions, grimly grand and indomitably strong? One would have liked to sit among the plotters as the scheme was being worked out, for those who were present cannot even now speak of that time without a ring of remembered rapture stealing into the voice, a gleam of fun into the eye. But the idea of making Charing Cross the region of buried treasure was found impracticable, and it was finally decided that it was best to drive

the sovereigns actually into the earth in some place to which the public could always easily gain access.

To work this competition satisfactorily was by no means an easy matter. On the one hand, it was necessary that the money should be discovered; on the other it was absolutely essential to make a very careful choice of the hiding-place, in order that the prize should not be found too easily, and thereby cause the whole affair to degenerate into a farce.

The task of writing the story fell to Mr. Arthur Morrison, and he, together with Mr. Newnes's son, set out one day to find the place which should at the same time be easy and difficult to describe and to discover. The excursion is thus described in the autobiographical notes—

“ They went by motor-car a few miles out of London, and there they found a spot where there was a good chance. You know how many places there are in country roads which you have passed over and over again, with perhaps a sort of grass island where four roads meet. A man who was driving a flock of sheep came along, and out of curiosity, or laziness, or for some other reason, sat down just as my son was about to drive in the five tubes of a hundred sovereigns each. It was a very lonely spot, and if it had not been for that man, the business could have been done in ten minutes. But he was in



no hurry. The slowness with which he filled his pipe, the carefulness with which he put in the little tobacco leaves were absolutely exasperating. If he would only move away. . . . But there he sat for a long time, enjoying the scenery, and watching the operations under the motor car, which were only undertaken to allay any suspicion that might be aroused. At last he got tired; either his pipe had gone out, or his keenness for further mechanical knowledge had subsided; in any case, to the great relief of the money-hiders, he moved away. In a few minutes the tubes were driven into the earth, and Mr. Morrison took his measurements from a certain tree to which attention had been drawn in the story. So we had done our part to fulfil the conditions. The day after the next issue a cyclist came over from Birmingham all the way to Hatfield, walked straight to the place, and dug up £500."

The very reading of such doings awakens a thrill, even after the years that have passed since the episode of the hidden gold. It is not difficult to imagine how every sportsman's and detective's instinct of those immediately concerned must have been strained while they watched and waited from week to week, giving one clue after the other.

Afterwards £2500 were hidden in a similar manner in different places. It was Mr.

Newnes's particular wish that one hiding-place should be in the supposed centre of England, which happens to be his native place. In the story it was called Meridian, and it is curious that the readers of *Tit-Bits*—who were by that time trained to almost detective-like keenness of perception—took longer in finding this spot than any other. Not one of them seemed to connect the term Meridian with the heights of Matlock, although, without making use of the actual word *middle* or *centre*, attention was again and again drawn to the meaning which might be given to the term Meridian. Yet the money must be found, or the competition would fall flat. In order to prevent this, the public had in this and one other case practically to be told where to walk straight to the £500 and dig them out of the ground.

At Glasgow the author of the story, in giving the clues, had guided the public to within a hundred yards of the hiding-place, and the crowd which invaded the street was so great that the like of it has never since been seen. They turned out a builder's yard until the builder threatened all manner of things if he were further inconvenienced; and though he was invited to join in the search and secure the £500 if no one else could, it was not he who secured that prize.

There have been, and still are, many other competitions in *Tit-Bits* which stirred and stir the public, but nothing has ever occasioned

such passionate endeavour as this search for gold, perhaps because it appeals to one of the most deep-seated elemental cravings in the human heart.

One other incident connected with this scheme is interesting. There was at the time a terrible slump on the Stock Exchange. Everything was going wrong. Shares were going down "like sticks." At the entrance hall of a West End mansion where an important political reception was being held, one guest met another, the latter a well-known member of the Stock Exchange. "How are things going?" said the politician. "Pretty bad all round, I hear." "I should think they are," said the pessimist financier. "There is only £500 of good money left in the world, and *Tit-Bits* has gone and buried it." The only comment which the originator of this exhilarating sport allowed himself on the subject was this: "Oh, you may call it cheap journalism; you may say it combined lottery with literature, but I will tell you this, that it has guided an enormous class of superficial readers, who craved for light reading, and would have read so-called sporting papers if they had not read *Tit-Bits*, into a wholesome vein which may have led them to higher forms of literature."

Nor was this the empty talk of an interested editor, for, although he was a keen and practical

man of business, Mr. Newnes never allowed his publications to sink, by a hair's-breadth, below the standard of perfectly pure and wholesome reading; and when the occasion arose he was ready and willing to make greater financial sacrifices for the cause he had taken up than many men would have cared to make.

There are romantic and adventurous episodes in the history of every modern newspaper. Probably the more modern it is, the more sensational is its career. But was there ever one with quite as thrilling and exciting a record as this little pioneer ancestor of all the penny periodicals now jostling one another on the bookstalls? So frolicsome it was, so pugnacious and daring, in its golden youth, that even as you read of its high-spirited capers, in your arm-chair by the fire, you participate in the *joie de vivre* which sent it careering along, for ever on the onward path, and you reflect with a doubled sense of pleasure that though it was so gay, so reckless and adventurous, it remained spotlessly clean.

The prize competitions were for years the only form of advertisement the editor would tolerate in the paper itself. It had been one of Mr. Newnes's first principles that the reader must not be distracted from the enjoyment of the letterpress, nor have his pleasure curtailed, by any space being given to other than editorial matter. But as the circulation went from



four figures into five, from five into six, the advertising agent, who so far had vainly tried to lure the editor of *Tit-Bits* into his snare, could no longer be resisted. It was more than human flesh and blood could stand, to continue the refusal of offers which became more and more tempting; and when a firm offered a yearly sum which can only be described as a large fortune, Mr. Newnes "fell," to use his own expression, and agreed that a four-page cover should be added to the paper and devoted to advertisements.

The man responsible for printing machinery so complex as that in Burleigh Street had now become is much tried, and may be forgiven if he is occasionally more of an autocrat than is quite agreeable or convenient from the merely editorial point of view, or quite compatible with the easy introduction of innovations. Hence, when Mr. Newnes sent for this engineer, explaining that he had arranged to give a coloured wrapper to *Tit-Bits*, and asking whether this could be done, the answer was prompt and decided. It generally is, from printers' engineers invited to make changes. No, it could not be done. At least, it could only be done if the wrapper were left white like the rest of the paper. Now, the fact that the actual paper was to be left exactly as it had been from the beginning, the advertisement sheets forming a supplement as it were, represented an idea

wherewith Mr. Newnes, opposed as he was to the introduction of advertisements, tried to salve his conscience. And then he was told it could not be done.

He had a way, when wishing to concentrate his thoughts, and to come rapidly to a decision, of getting up from his desk, walking to the window and looking out into the street for a minute or two. "Spy," in the *Vanity Fair* portrait, has caught the attitude to the life. When the engineer crossed his plans that day, Mr. Newnes, after a moment's reflection by the window, accompanied him down into the room where the machines were clicking and humming. "Now," he asked, "instead of all that great roll of paper running right through the machine, cannot you stop it at a certain part, put in a roll of green paper, and let the two work together?" The engineer was doubtful, but promised to "think what could be done." In three months' time he came back. He had found the way. In three months more the new machine was ready. Thus the editor, without any knowledge of engineering, or of the mechanism required for printing-machines, had suggested the idea which led to the construction of a new machine now in use all over the world. It was the largest of its kind, cost over £6000, and prints off seven copies of *Tit-Bits* in a second, or twenty-four thousand copies an hour.

So entirely satisfactory were these new giants in the basement, that when their career of usefulness was at one moment seriously threatened with being suddenly and ingloriously cut short, the head of the firm had need of all his fortitude to remain unmoved. But in this matter also he was the one who laughed last.

The trouble began almost as soon as the machinery had been put down. The neighbours complained of the noise. Since Southampton Street is close to the Strand, one might have imagined that the unintermittent roar of traffic from that quarter would make even nervous folk impervious to any other noise, and that it would swallow up all other sounds the district can produce. The neighbours, however, were of opinion that the machinery was so disturbing as to interfere with the successful conduct of their business. It was an awkward position for the owner of the said machinery, for though he himself was firmly convinced that the neighbours were mistaken, he recognized the difficulty of convincing them. But when the crisis became acute, necessity, the resourceful mother of invention, came to his aid, and he hit upon a plan by which this point would be settled once and for all. The plan succeeded so well that ever after, while keenly appreciating the joke and the success, he felt apologetic towards the

neighbours against whom he had "plotted so disreputably."

A certain firm, on the opposite side of Southampton Street, having repeatedly threatened an action on account of the disturbance, Mr. Newnes asked two police-officers to come to him at a certain hour. Having explained the situation to both, he took one of the two across the street to the premises from which the complaints had come, the other constable remaining on the *Tit-Bits* premises, where the foreman had received instructions to shut off every bit of machinery as soon as Mr. Newnes and his companion were seen to enter the house opposite, where the following polite conversation took place: "Well, sir," said Mr. Newnes, gravely polite, "what is your grievance? What noise are you complaining of?" The reply was not lacking in emphasis: "Can't you hear it yourself? Just listen! It goes on like that all day long. Can't *you* hear it, constable?" Oh yes, the constable could. There was no doubt about the noise. It was shocking. And so they stood and listened for some minutes, and all agreed that the noise was very grievous, very disturbing. Presently Mr. Newnes, turning to the police-officer, said quietly: "Now, constable, will you walk across the road, please, and listen to the machinery there?"



Few men would wish to be put in the unenviable place of the gentleman who had brought the complaint, when presently the constable came back, having gathered a few facts on the spot from his brother officer and from the heads of the machine-department. He explained that "the noise you hear cannot be from the machinery opposite, for it has not been running since we came into this house. It must be the noise of the Strand." And further complaints there were none, even though before long the activity of the *Tit-Bits* machines was enormously increased.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE "REVIEW OF REVIEWS" AND THE "STRAND"

THE prize competitions which brought such a harvest of gold and amusement to an enormous public, while they put the inventive power of the *T.-B.* staff to a constant test and incited to ever fresh endeavours as the cheers and the laughter of the crowd of readers re-echoed through the office, had also other, unlooked-for effects. Among the first of these was the addition to the staff of a youth destined in the years to come to play a prominent part in the inner history of London journalism.

The particular competition which gave Mr. Cyril Arthur Pearson his opportunity was a continuous one, connected with a feature of the paper known as the "Enquiry Column." In this column some dozen questions, either sent in by readers or supplied from the office, were asked, prizes being given to the competitor who supplied answers in the most satisfactory and interesting manner. In order to draw additional attention to this part of

the paper a special prize had been offered of a position at the office, with a salary commencing at £100 year (the same sum as that which Mr. Newnes himself had received for his first salary) to the competitor whose answers during three consecutive months should be best. At the end of this period a careful examination of the papers sent in revealed the fact that Mr. Pearson's replies had won the prize. This was communicated to him, and he was asked to present himself at the office. He appeared upon the scene a youth in his teens, without any journalistic training, but with excellent natural aptitude, and with the firm determination to succeed, two gifts which in time helped him to rise to an important and responsible position in Mr. Newnes's business, culminating in that of commercial manager. Mr. Pearson remained a valued and valuable member of the *T.-B.* staff, was indefatigable during the period of stress and labour preceding the appearance of the *Review of Reviews*—which, as will presently be seen, was on the bookstalls a month after the date on which Mr. Stead first put the idea of such a paper before Mr. Newnes—and did not leave *Tit-Bits* till he was about to start *Pearson's Weekly*, modelled on the paper to which he owed his introduction to journalism. It may be remembered that some years ago he purchased

several important London dailies, including *The Times* which, however, soon changed hands again.

The present Lord Northcliffe, then Mr. Alfred Harmsworth, also used *Tit-Bits* as the first rung of the ladder to wealth and prominence; for though he never actually joined the staff he was, as quite a young man, one of the most regular contributors. As events have shown he was, at the same time, a close and intelligent observer, who studied the various features of the paper to excellent effect. One of the most popular of these at the time was a page of "Answers to Correspondents," known at the office as "corres." For this page the editor had a special affection, together with very definite ideas as to the manner in which it should be conducted. He held that, first and foremost, all answers should be given in a manner which would make each correspondent feel that he was treated with special consideration; that here, behind this newspaper page, there was somebody to whom the inquirer's affairs were of real, human interest; who sympathized, and tried to give his advice a practical turn. Secondly, Mr. Newnes held that the answers should be couched in such terms, whenever this was possible, as to make them interesting to the general reader as well as to the individual correspondent. Nor was this merely the opinion of the practical editor



who, for very good financial reasons, sought to make his paper popular; for his vivid imagination, his innate good sense, his ready wit, and above all his unfailing social tact, made Mr. Newnes an ideal conductor of this part of his paper. He could put himself into another man's place; he saw the care and trouble which had driven this and that correspondent to apply for advice to an unprejudiced stranger; he understood the careless merriment and high-spirited daring which prompted others to ask puzzling and perplexing questions; the distress which drove people in financial or other business difficulties to apply to him; he could be patient and tolerant with the intolerant and the impatient; with cranks and faddists, and meet them half way, advising, suggesting, humoring, encouraging, out of the fullness of his own large, kindly heart, aided and abetted by his clear, level head. For years he took these letters, in bundles twelve inches high, and higher, went carefully through each, and answered them so fully, so wisely and well, that in course of time people belonging to every social class sought help and advice through "corres." Nor was there any part of his work which the editor found more interesting and stimulating.

In order to avoid at least on alternate days the incessant interruptions which made editorial writing at the office almost impossible,

Mr. Newnes worked three days a week at Wildcroft, his home on Putney Heath. There in the quiet room looking out into what was almost sylvan solitude before the motor began to whiz past with hoot and snort, you might see him bending over his long day's work, with his faithful private secretary, Mr. W. Plank, in attendance, and with his pet dog at his feet. Sometimes he looked grave and pre-occupied, or even a little irritable on those days which all men know, when everything is apt to go as wrong as if some mischievous, invisible imp were at the head of affairs; but mostly he was serene and well-content, and never happier than when occupied with great piles of "corres." Now and then he would get up, walk into the adjoining library, in search of information from reference books; or stand musing by the window in the attitude of the clever "Spy" cartoon; then back again to the writing-table, or to the armchair near the fireplace, which was a favourite place even when the summer sun shone in at the open windows and the grate held flowers instead of fire, writing answers to unknown correspondents, whole sheets of them, in the clear, firm hand at which no compositor had ever reason to grumble.

The columns on which so much affectionate care was bestowed became in time one of the most popular parts of the paper, as the editor

was assured in thousands of letters, and as also appeared by the votes in a prize competition. Not that his special interest in this feature caused him to slacken his constant and careful superintendence of every part of *Tit-Bits*. For many years not a line was published which he had not read and approved. No detail was too slight to receive his personal attention, and at short intervals he made thorough inquiries as to his readers' opinion on this or that page or column, substituting new features for those which had obviously ceased to interest, and always inventing and adopting fresh ideas. By this means he kept *Tit-Bits* first, by a long way, among the crop of imitators which were for ever springing up.

One day there appeared yet another publication which paid *T.-B.* the compliment which is supposed to be the sincerest form of flattery. Its name was *Answers to Correspondents*. Mr. Newnes, turning over the pages of the first number, noted that it was edited with great intelligence and aptitude, and said, with a sigh half of regret and half of admiration, as he put it aside: "This is the first real opposition to *T.-B.*" The editor of this new penny weekly was Mr. Alfred Harmsworth, who, having recognized that the "corres" of the little paper to which he was so steady and successful a contributor, had an extraordinary hold on a large public,

had turned his observations to practical account, and was now, in his first journalistic venture, making an intelligent bid for the patronage of the wide public accustomed to look to a correspondence page for both good advice and excellent entertainment.

As all the world knows, the stimulus to individual effort received by Mr. Pearson and Lord Northcliffe through their contributions to *Tit-Bits* has borne marvellous and manifold fruit; and the founder of the particular branch of the new journalism to which they owe their wealth and power was always ready to acknowledge their industry and capabilities.

Years ago the *Caxton Magazine*, in an article on Sir George Newnes, which appeared in the series of "Men of Mark," alluding to the fact that these two young men had followed where the editor of *Tit-Bits* had led, summed up its remarks in this piece of philosophy: "If there had been no *Tit-Bits*, it is tolerably certain that there would have been no *Answers* and no *Pearson's Weekly*. That means that there would have been no *Daily Mail* and no *Daily Express*! Ye gods, there would have been no Alfred Harmsworth and no Cyril Arthur Pearson!"

But while rivals and imitators were many, the prosperous years went on, and an idea was maturing with which Mr. Newnes had for years been more or less vaguely occupied



during the odd moments he could spare from the work actually on hand. He had now for some years been a member of the House of Commons, and to his former occupations had been added not only regular attendance at Westminster, but all the various activities outside the House which are expected of the Member of Parliament by his constituents and also, if he be as ready to help as was Mr. Newnes, by other members of his party, when speeches have to be made at the approach of a general or by-election.

At that time Harper's, Scribner's, and other American magazines had large circulations in Great Britain, one important reason obviously being that the American publishers took great pride in, and trouble with, the illustrations accompanying the letterpress. Mr. Newnes, as he was once described in a character-sketch published in one of the papers modelled on his first venture, was "a veritable literary physician" who "feels his public's pulse and knows exactly what is wanted." He was as sure, in his own mind, of the success of a magazine which should have a picture at every opening, as he had been of the success of *Tit-Bits* at the time when he could not persuade any one to advance him the sum of £500 required for bringing out the first number. He thought that surely some one on this side, knowing the requirements of the English people,

should be able to supply a magazine that would equal in interest any periodical edited three thousand miles away. Meanwhile, he could not find the time for fully developing this idea.

Presently an unforeseen occurrence hastened events. At that time Mr. Stead was editing the *Pall Mall Gazette* in the heyday of its political importance as an organ of the Liberal party. He also had for some time past been busy with the idea of a sixpenny monthly magazine, only, while Mr. Newnes was mainly concerned with giving the public a chance of filling their leisure hours with pleasant entertainment, Mr. Stead was bent on supplying information of a more solid kind to the mass of busy mortals eager enough for knowledge and keenly interested in the topics of the day, but unable to find time for reading long review articles. It did not take Mr. Stead long to make a definite plan as to what this new monthly should be and do, which he hoped to publish in connection with the *Pall Mall*. In its first half were to be reprinted some of the important interviews and "middle articles" from the daily *Pall Mall*, together with a summary of events of the month, specially written by the editor. When it is remembered that in those days Mr. Stead thought nothing of interviewing the Pope, an Emperor and a dozen other potentates and notabilities in the course of one of his lightning tours across Europe, it

will be seen that this part of the new monthly was bound to be lively and interesting enough to please the most news-hungry reader. The second part was to be filled with summaries of all the most interesting articles in the grave monthlies which supplied the leisured and the cultured with plenty of solid mental food, but which the large public did not buy, partly because they could not afford to pay for them, and partly because they had not the time for reading through the mass of printed matter. The projected magazine would present them with an epitome of the best things in the reviews, over and above that vivid, tingling first part.

But Mr. Stead, tearing about the world in connection with the crusade against immorality which had been the sensation of the year, had also been obliged to put his plan of the monthly aside. When he could take it up again the proprietor of the *Pall Mall* was abroad and could not be consulted, whereupon his editor, with characteristic eagerness and impatience to set to work as soon as he had made up his mind that the moment for action had come, decided that since there was no immediate chance of bringing out the magazine under the protecting wing of his own paper, he must find another way of launching it.

Mr. Newnes had then a winter residence at

Torquay, where he was spending a holiday, when one morning he received a letter from his old schoolfellow at Silcoates, in which three different journalistic projects were put forward with a view of Mr. Newnes carrying them out conjointly with Mr. Stead. Among them was the outline of the monthly review as Mr. Stead had conceived it. This appealed at once to Mr. Newnes as "distinctly good."

In many respects the two schoolmates of long ago differed as widely as two men can differ in character and temperament, but they were at one in this, that they were quick to decide, prompt to act, willing to take infinite pains in whatever task they might undertake, and above all, determined to succeed. In the present case the fact that both were equally convinced of the time being ripe for the publication of this particular magazine, gave additional zest to their work, and a more than common interest to their collaboration. Mr. Newnes, who was nothing if not methodical in business matters, wrote back by return of post, proposing a definite arrangement and suggesting that, if Mr. Stead approved of the terms proposed, a telegram would bring him to town next day, and the magazine should be out in a month. The telegram came, Mr. Newnes went up to town, the plans were matured next day in the Wildcroft library, and four weeks later the



*Review of Reviews* sprang into being, a veritable triumph of journalistic skill and industry. Mr. Newnes was the publisher, Mr. Stead the editor, and Mr. Pearson, then still in Mr. Newnes's employ, the business manager. On the first day sixty thousand copies of the new magazine were sold. Mr. Newnes's remark, after looking at the first draft of it on that winter morning at Torquay, was justified. It was "distinctly good." Not, however, from the point of view of the proprietor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, who, perhaps not unreasonably, declined to "share" his editor with another man, and thereby caused Mr. Stead to sever his connection with the *Pall Mall* and devote himself entirely to his new paper.

Those who knew the two partners in this enterprise were not surprised when before long there began to be little rifts within the lute that had been so finely attuned at the outset, and had made and was making such golden music, and that presently there were matters of utmost importance in which they could not see eye to eye. And both being men of very decided opinions of their own, the partnership was brought to an end before the *Review of Reviews* was six months old, Mr. Newnes at his own request being bought out. The partners separated by mutual consent, and remained good friends. And thinking of these matters, there comes back to my mind the recollection

of the little speeches these two partners made as they took leave of one another. So typical they were of the two men; so frankly given, so cheerfully accepted. Both were repeated to me at first hand, and whether it was Sir George Newnes who imitated Mr. Stead's rapid and dramatic utterance, or whether it was Mr. Stead employing deep chest-notes in reproducing Sir George's deliberate manner of speaking, it was equally difficult, listening to these sermonettes, to suppress a smile or chuckle. Mr. Stead, in his words of farewell, generously acknowledged his partner's great business ability, and said he felt quite sure he would have made more money by the *Review of Reviews* with a half share in the profits if he had remained with his first partner, than he would now make while owning the whole property. Mr. Newnes, on the other hand, preached a short homily on the subject of two kinds of journalism as observed by the practical man of affairs. "There is one kind of journalism," he said, "which directs the affairs of nations; it makes and unmakes Cabinets; it upsets governments, builds up Navies and does many other great things. It is magnificent. This is your journalism. There is another kind of journalism which has no such great ambitions. It is content to plod on, year after year, giving wholesome and harmless entertainment to crowds of hard-working people,

craving for a little fun and amusement. It is quite humble and unpretentious. That is my journalism." And so they parted, without regret, seeing the impossibility of working smoothly together, but without enmity, regarding one another with the amused tolerance of people who have agreed to differ.

The publication of the *Review of Reviews* from Mr. Newnes's office had an important sequel. A large additional staff had been engaged for the work, and when after a few months the new magazine was published elsewhere, Mr. Newnes, instead of discharging the new employees, determined to put his own long-cherished project of a sixpenny illustrated monthly to the test. With his talent for selecting the right man for the right place, he asked Mr. Greenhough-Smith, who had been connected for many years with *Temple Bar*, to assist him in editing the new periodical, gave the art department into the charge of Mr. W. H. J. Boot, and set to work. After twenty years' excellent service the art editor was obliged to retire for reasons of health, while Mr. Greenhough-Smith is still at his post, the editorship of the *Strand* having passed into his hands years ago when the head of the firm found he could no longer spare the time for taking part in the actual editing.

The success of the magazine was again immediate, magnificent, proving once more that

Mr. Newnes had in a rare degree the gift of knowing exactly what is required by the large public who will have none of the so-called problem stories in any shape or form, and eschew everything savouring of decadent or materialistic fiction, but are always ready to give a warm welcome to tales dealing in a natural way with healthy human emotions, adventures and experiences. By this time Mr. Newnes had good reason for confidently thinking in scores of thousands where the circulation of his periodicals was concerned, and when presently the young *Strand Magazine* went out into the highways and byways of the world over half a million strong, this seemed only as it ought to be. It made itself at home easily and immediately wherever it went, and the United States, as if to show their appreciation of the flattering reception England had hitherto given to American periodicals, took up the *Strand* with special warmth and fervour, while the Colonies followed suit. In fact, soon the sun no more set upon the new magazine than it sets upon the British Empire.

In the *Strand*, as in the rest of his publications, Mr. Newnes made it a rule to change individual features as soon as there were signs that the public tired of them. Constant watchfulness for such signs, together with unwearied effort to substitute only what was at



least as good as, and if possible even better than, that which had to be replaced, was the plan on which the paper was conducted. An excellent plan it was, if not an easy one to carry out. But the men in charge were undaunted, and the fertile brain of the founder of the *Strand* was responsible for some of the most popular features during those early years. Thus, while on a visit to Sir Richard Webster's old home, he casually opened an album containing a number of photographs of his host, from the time when he was a child till the present day. No sooner had he set his eyes on them than the thought flashed through his mind that these photographs would interest a wide public in the same manner as they interested him. A month later the famous and very interesting series of illustrations of "Celebrities at Different Ages" was begun.

Together with this talent for turning the slightest suggestion to account, Mr. Newnes possessed the capacity for taking infinite pains which, unfortunately, has led crowds of obstinately persevering dullards to regard themselves as misunderstood geniuses, since Carlyle invented his famous phrase and with it the entirely false doctrine that, if you have but perseverance, you are entitled to consider yourself a genius. Genius, like beauty, takes many forms, and Mr. Newnes had one form of

genius, without a doubt, but it rested on many other claims besides that of his willingness and capability to take infinite pains.

An instance of his determination never to rest till he had obtained the exact object he had in mind occurred while the first number of the *Strand* was in preparation. The offices were then in Burleigh Street, a side street off the Strand. When the name of the monthly was discussed, nothing better or more appropriate could at first be thought of than either *Burleigh Street Magazine* or the *New Magazine*. These titles were not what Mr. Newnes wanted, although he had no better suggestion to make. On the usual Sunday morning walk on Wimbledon Common he could think and talk of nothing but the name which seemed to be somewhere though it eluded him in a most tiresome manner. His friend and neighbour, Mr. L. R. S. Tomalin, who took the deepest interest in every enterprise embarked upon by Mr. Newnes, and who later on was for years one of the directors of George Newnes Limited, was as keen as the editor on finding a satisfactory solution of the problem. They talked of the fascination of Fleet Street and the Strand, of the history, the picturesqueness, the romance of the great London highway. "Why not call it the *Strand Magazine*?" suggested Mr. Tomalin. "Yes, that's it," Mr. Newnes replied, and when Mr. Greenhough-Smith met the two, the

inventor of the title was introduced as the godfather of the new magazine.

Next came the question of an illustration for the cover. Of course it must be a view of the Strand; equally of course it must be the best of its kind that could be produced. Mr. G. Haite, who was asked to make the drawing, sent in a score of sketches, all excellent, all attractive, but, in the editor's opinion, without a certain something which should be there, but of which he could not give the artist a definite idea. Then one morning before leaving home his eye fell upon a large oil painting representing a street in Liverpool, full of the whirling life and energy of a popular thoroughfare in a busy city. Yes, here it was, this something he had vainly tried to explain to the artist as being required for the cover of the magazine. The heavy picture was taken off the wall, put into the brougham, and taken up to Burleigh Street without delay. It gave Mr. Haite his clue. "In time to come," said Mr. Newnes, as the two discussed the matter once more, "I should like the cover of the *Strand* to become as familiar to the mind of the public as is the cover of *Punch*." A glance at the wrapper of the magazine shows how well the artist has succeeded in giving a life-like representation of one of the busiest and most fascinating streets in London. Except for the arrival of the motor-car, the scene is

still the same, with the human tides flowing East and West, year in, year out, in the selfsame way.

The name of Sherlock Holmes was at one time almost synonymous with that of the *Strand*. It was in its pages where the prince of detectives appeared one day out of nowhere, it might be said, since, so far, he had not attained the world-wide celebrity in store for him. The *Strand* had leapt into popularity with its first number; with the arrival of Sherlock Holmes it entered upon the period when it had to be sent to press a month before the date of publication, keeping the machines working till the day it was put upon the bookstalls. The circulation then rose to well above half a million.

In this connection another, and a most important one, of the characteristics which brought success to Mr. Newnes came into play. He had always been a great reader, but not of fiction. Real life, as he lived it and saw it lived every day, presented itself to him so dramatically that the average tale that is told in print seemed dull by comparison. At least, so he felt at that time, for later on, when his failing health obliged him occasionally to stay at home and abstain from work, he read a great many novels, and I have often sent or taken him batches of books which he either devoured in a day, or, if the opening chapter did not please him, put promptly aside with a little



good-natured grumble at people who wanted him to read through such "stuff."

But when it came to reading stories sent in to him as editor, he considered it his duty to read them himself, and went to work, perhaps with set teeth, but also with dogged perseverance, reading through piles of MSS., to come perchance only once in a blue moon upon a real pearl of price, while every day hours were lost over the task of considering the work of the unfit, the incapable. How often he groaned, but how steadily he went on with it, knowing full well from an experience gathered when once in a way he ventured to delegate the work to another, that his conscience would give him no peace unless he acquainted himself with every article that went into the paper, and missed no chance of securing only the best. Discoveries, however, of men like the author of *Sherlock Holmes* made up for much weariness and perturbation of spirit occasioned by the wading through many MSS.

After reading the first batch of detective stories sent in by Dr. Conan Doyle, Mr. Newnes bought not only every one of these, but having ascertained where the detective's former adventures had been published—strange to say, without exciting exceptional interest—he bought up all the stories on the market and began to publish them in the *Strand*. They were now for the first time advertised with all

the skill of the practised hand, with the result that Sherlock Holmes became the lion of the day, the hero, worshipped and adored, of a multitude counting by the million, and when, later on, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle killed him ruthlessly in the Swiss mountains, the outcry against this calamity was such that the author must needs effect a resurrection which, as Mr. Newnes explained to him, should not be very difficult, since Sir Arthur was a medical man even before he became an author. And so the boom went on afresh, and who knows but that there may be yet another addition to the records of the deeds of Sherlock Holmes, since he has not officially been numbered a second time among the dead ?

## CHAPTER VIII

### MORE MAGAZINES

It is said that—

“The web of things on every side  
Is joined by links we cannot see.”

Mr. Newnes's career is an exception to this rule, or theory. As you follow the path leading to his place in the history of English literature you see that every step is connected with the one preceding it; as one link in the long chain of his successes was finished, the next link was being forged, and joined adroitly and quite simply to the rest. As the *Strand Magazine* was the outcome of the publication of the *Review of Reviews*, so the *Wide World Magazine* followed the *Strand* in the natural order of things.

It was brought about in this way. Among the contributions sent in from far and near to the new monthly magazine, a considerable number came from strange, far-off corners of the world, where lonely folk had read and re-read the *Strand* stories till they knew them by heart, and pondering over them as they went about their silent ways, bethought themselves

that they also, in their checkered lives, had been made acquainted with strange things, and had played their parts in curious happenings. They need not draw on their imagination for the invention of fantastic and sensational plots; they had only to dip into their own remembered past to produce stories equal to any tale of adventure they had read. So here and there a man or woman began to beguile an empty hour with the fascinating task of fixing a stirring episode of his or her experiences on paper; the story was sent across seas and continents to the editor of the *Strand*, explaining that the MSS. contained only facts, though they might read like fiction. First they came singly, these curiously interesting stories of real life, but when they began to arrive in battalions they soon gave rise to the idea of yet another periodical, with the inevitable reminder that "Truth is stranger than fiction," for its motto. This magazine was sent out into the world with the excellent, comprehensive title *The Wide World Magazine*, and was taken up with positive avidity on both sides of the Atlantic.

No sooner was the *Wide World* launched than it seemed as if every venturesome Britisher round the world, and not a few adventurers of other nations, were bent on adding an account of their doings to the contents of the new magazine. Writers whose names had never been heard of, and authors with reputations to lose, were



equally anxious to contribute, and artists young and old delighted in illustrating the blood-curdling episodes. There was, of course, the possibility that here and there a writer, gifted with more imagination than actual experience, would invent adventures and offer them as facts, but every possible precaution against this kind of imposition was taken, and for a time all went well, proofs in some form or other being sent or brought by nearly all contributors, to show that the occurrences described had actually taken place. These proofs in many cases consisted of photographs, which were reproduced in the magazine.

Not infrequently an author, happening to be in London, would call in person, offering his experiences for publication in the *Wide World*, and stranger things were at that time told at the Southampton Street offices than the philosophy of most of us will ever dream of. The tellers of these stories were subjected to every possible test; they were cross-examined by acute observers and geographical experts; they had to produce whatever evidence they could, and when a story was published there remained little doubt as to its being substantially true. Hence, things went as well with the latest addition to Mr. Newnes's publications as with all the former, which were still "booming along." But as yet there had been no special sensation in connection with the magazine

composed of sensational true stories. No modern Defoe had arisen to fire his generation with the tale of another Robinson Crusoe.

Then one day there walked into the offices a thin, sunburnt, weather-beaten individual, a man of middle age, with restless, piercing eyes, and a quiet manner that seemed to cover a high-strung, nervous temperament. He explained that he had called on the advice of Mr. Henniker-Heaton, upon whom he had waited at the House of Commons in the hope of enlisting the distinguished Australian's sympathy, for after spending many years in Australia fate had landed him in London and he had fallen upon evil days. Mr. Henniker-Heaton, after listening to some of the man's tales, had suggested that he should go and pour samples of his adventures into the ears of the editor of the *Wide World*, and now here he was, acting upon that advice. The editor, by this time well seasoned to outpourings of the kind, was not at first too sanguine. But it was impossible to persevere long in an attitude of critical reserve, for the man had a sort of rugged eloquence, a manner of telling his story which made his listeners follow him, willy-nilly, into the mysterious places, the great silent solitudes haunted by the spirit of adventure in its most weird and fascinating form; the outposts where he had spent many years of his life, and to which he hoped and longed to return as soon

as might be, out of this arid desert of London, this noisy whirlpool of the centre of civilization.

He was of French extraction, Louis de Rougemont by name; he would like to tell his adventures for the benefit of the readers of the *Wide World Magazine*, and he was quite willing to submit to whatever test the editor might wish to apply in order to prove the truth of his tales. Nor did he fail to satisfy either the Southampton Street authorities, or that august body, the Royal Geographical Society, before whom he appeared twice by invitation, to be subjected for hours together to the questioning of experts; or even that still more solemn institution, the British Association, which did him the honour of inviting him to read a paper at its annual meeting.

When the story of his enthralling adventures and escapades began to be published, Louis de Rougemont became the man of the moment, not only to adventure-loving youth, but to staid and stolid citizens; in the drawing-room and the library, as well as in the servants' hall and in the workshop, at the West End club and in the village pot-house, he came first, and all other subjects a long way after. He had caught the ear, the imagination, of the whole community. The excitement lasted for months; the *Wide World* circulation leapt up to giddy heights as the stories became more and more marvellous. So far no one had a word

of criticism, though travellers and wanderers in Australian wildernesses able to verify many details as to localities and the tribes inhabiting them, were as eager to read as the general public which is bound to take the author at his word.

Then there came an adventure in which the hero de Rougemont described himself as going far out to sea on board a strange vessel. Having no boat to take him on the voyage, he simply went aboard a live turtle, the back of a well-seasoned member of that gentle amphibious tribe being quite strong and broad enough to carry a thin, lithe, athletic passenger of the de Rougemont type, as every one may see who goes gazing at the venerable patriarchs of the Turtle House in Regents Park. But those who had made a closer study of the habits and customs as well as of the proportion of the Australian turtle shook their heads and smiled somewhat cynically when next the talk at the club turned on the great adventures. After this it was not long before a voice arose—perhaps it is hardly necessary to say that it was the voice of a press-organ—which cast a doubt not only on de Rougemont's prowess as the captain in command of a sea-going turtle's back, but on the truth of his stories in general, on the ground that he had been seen at Melbourne in the course of the thirty years he claimed to have spent in the wilderness of Northern Australia



among monsters and savages. Also, some lynx-eyed frequenter of the reading-room at the British Museum had noticed de Rougemont diligently reading up books on Australia, which proceeding, though it might appear quite natural to an unprejudiced person, led the suspicious to the conclusion that the man was a clever impostor, who had succeeded in foisting wild imaginings as solid facts upon the public.

A long newspaper correspondence ensued, as thrilling, in its own way, as the adventures themselves had been, and from that moment anything de Rougemont wrote or said was discredited. Those, however, who had come most closely and frequently into contact with him during his stay in London, remained firmly convinced that, although he had been inaccurate in his dates, and in the fervour of his autobiographic reminiscences had sometimes drawn upon his imagination instead of rigidly adhering to facts, he was a man who had lived as strange and adventurous a life as is still possible in a world which is so nearly tamed and conquered by civilized man. Mr. Newnes, though de Rougemont had, first and last, caused him a great deal of annoyance and loss, always retained a sort of unwilling admiration for the man, holding that as a writer of fiction founded on fact he could produce work that would rank with the best of our time.

The *Wide World*, meanwhile, was but one of many new periodicals issued from Southampton Street. Among them are such fine productions as *Country Life* and the *Ladies' Field*, two illustrated weeklies to be found in almost every country house in the United Kingdom; the *Captain*, catering chiefly for "boys and old boys"; the *Grand*, *Woman's Life*, the *Garden*, *Newnes's Playtime Series*, *Newnes's Musical Library*, the *Strand Musical Portfolio and Copyright Songs and Music*, the *Garden* and a host of others too great for individual mention. The majority succeeded, and, like the above, are still widely popular; others, as was inevitable, died sooner or later, being choked by the mighty army of imitators which continued to spring up all around.

But whatever the tendency of a new publication might be, Mr. Newnes always threw his whole interest and energy into it. No detail was too small or tedious to engage his careful attention. There was, for instance, the *Million*, a paper intended to be a kind of British equivalent to a French paper with an enormous circulation. It was a penny weekly of the magazine type, with stories, household and gardening hints and advice, a few amusing illustrated incidents, odds and ends of light verse, a page for young people, and so forth. But its special feature was to be its coloured illustrations. This was before the days when

rapid colour-printing, as required for reproduction in magazines, became a fine art, and to the impartial eye, glancing at the Parisian print, it was a little difficult to see why the French public should be so enamoured of the illustrations which were like spirited thumb-nail sketches to which a child, out of its penny box of water-colours, had given a thin coat of pale pink, green or blue paint.

However, so it was; the circulation in France was as large as that of the *Petit Journal*, wherefore the temptation to create a similar paper for admirers of coloured pictures and light literature in this country was irresistible. "We'll do it better than they," Mr. Newnes said, when explaining the scheme to me one day. "We'll have better work both for the illustrations and the letterpress, and we'll be able to print better; it will be an entirely new, and a very cheerful and entertaining paper."

He toiled and moiled so happily over it, took such infinite trouble about the tints, the size, the subjects of the illustrations, and hoped so cheerfully for another great success. But the *Million* was not destined to live long; it flourished for a while, and then died, though whether it was that the colour-printing was not as successful as it had promised to be, or whether the whole paper was too French in its "get up" to suit English taste, it would be difficult to say. In any case, it was a

disappointment, and therefore it had to disappear, for though Mr. Newnes was the most tenacious of men once he had decided on a course of action, he was too good a man of business to go on when he saw that an article he had put into the market was not required. In such cases his rule was to cut his losses short, and frankly to acknowledge a mistake, a proceeding which could have nothing humiliating, in the face of the magnificent successes he had scored, showing only that he was human and therefore likely to err.

All this time the business had continued to grow and flourish greatly, and in 1891 it was floated as a company with a nominal capital of £400,000, under the sole directorship of its founder, who guaranteed for the next five years an annual dividend of ten per cent., which was duly earned, he never being called upon to make good his guarantee. In 1897 the company was reconstructed in order to obtain further capital for the increasing business, with a nominal capital of £1,000,000, of which 900,000 shares were issued. Two new directors were added, and shortly after Sir George Newnes's only son, Mr. Frank Newnes, having finished his studies at Cambridge and qualified as a member of the Bar, joined the Board, Sir George being governing director for life. As a caterer for the wide public which he had in mind when contemplating the publication of *Tit-Bits*,



Mr. Newnes had now reached the height of his career.

Many commercial enterprises were added to his own successful business during the later years of his life, and in a number of these he was again guided by the extraordinary instinct which enabled him to foresee success. Thus, his habit of occasionally standing for some minutes at the window in his room at Southampton Street, when engaged in thinking out some business scheme or problem, led to one of his most successful transactions. As he stood there, absorbed in thought, he began to notice, at first quite unconsciously, but gradually with increasing interest, that at the house opposite a very brisk business was carried on. This business was owned by the private firm of Messrs. Weldon. The continual stir and activity in front of the house, as the great rolls and bales of paper went in and the batches of printed papers came out, aroused all the business man's keen instincts. It fascinated him, and now he often stood of set purpose at his window, observing the cheerful bustle and drawing his own conclusions.

One day he could resist the inward prompting no longer, and on a sudden resolution put on his hat, walked across the street, asked for Mr. Weldon, explained who he was and inquired at what price the firm would sell the business to him. Mr. Weldon, altogether taken by

surprise, could only say they had not considered the idea of selling their business, but agreed to think the proposal over and let Sir George know their decision in a few days' time. On the appointed day word was sent that the heads of the firm had made up their minds to sell the business at a stated price, which was at once agreed to. Soon after, Sir George Newnes floated the company known as Weldons Limited, which ever since has paid a steady dividend of ten per cent.

Again, there is the story of the Darracq company. One day a stranger called at Southampton Street, asking to see the head of the firm of George Newnes Limited, on important business. Sir George Newnes made a point of never refusing to see a stranger who claimed that he came on a mission of importance, because, as he used to say: "You never know whether there may not be something in it." So the visitor was admitted, and explained that he was the representative of a syndicate who had some months previously deposited the sum of £10,000 with Mr. A. Darracq, of Suresnes, for the option of purchasing his business as manufacturer of motor-cars, with the intention of floating a company in England. The syndicate had so far failed to carry out their object, and stood in peril of losing the £10,000 in about a month's time, that being the final date of option. There was no hope of the period

being extended, as during the interval, since the option was given, the Darracq business had considerably improved, and its value was greater than the price originally fixed.

Now the syndicate had sent their representative to see whether Sir George Newnes would help them to find the purchase money. He was not inclined to do this, but declared himself willing to run over to France, look at the works and see the representative of the syndicate again on his return. The result of the visit to Suresnes was that he offered the syndicate to pay to them the £10,000 deposited, and himself to take over the option. The date on which the option would expire was now drawing so near that the unhappy syndicate felt they had no alternative, if they wished to save their £10,000, but to accept the offer. Sir George accordingly stepped into the shoes of the syndicate; then, with his habitual energy, set to work during the few days he had left at his disposal before the expiration of the option, to find the necessary subscriptions for the relatively big sum which had to be raised, he himself taking a large share. By dint of almost unheard-of efforts the matter was finally signed, sealed and delivered just at the last hour before the expiration of the option. Mr. Darracq was consoled and kept perfectly friendly towards the British company, Sir George enabling him to retain a considerable

holding in the new company, of which he also remained managing director. The Darracq company flourished exceedingly and has very amply repaid those who were sufficiently enterprising to invest in it.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

A DISTINGUISHED man of letters, recently surveying the developments of English literature during the last thirty years, its rapid growth, and extraordinary changes, assigned to Sir George Newnes a place beside those dauntless, splendid pioneers, Robert and William Chambers. The work, the critic pointed out, which the brothers Chambers began early in the nineteenth century, and carried on for fifty years, Sir George took up and continued, in his own way, and in accordance with the requirements of his time, but in the same spirit, the first and foremost aim in both cases being to bring good literature within reach of the masses. Sir George Newnes, he went on, was an educator as well as a purveyor of amusement, and he, as they, must be credited with never once swerving from his first purpose of supplying only that which is sound and wholesome, refusing to soil his hands with anything of a doubtful nature. Hence, in the history of English literature Sir George Newnes takes his place by the side of the

founders of the great Edinburgh firm of publishers.

How it would have delighted and gladdened the heart of the man who remained so singularly modest as to his own literary merits, that his name should be linked by one of the best judges of the day with the honoured names of the brothers Chambers! And how he would have tried to appear unmoved by the compliment, shaking his head and regretting, with a wry smile, that he was only half a Scotsman, against the two of them!

A comparison between the supply of periodical literature in the reign of William IV, when the two Scotch lads began to look cautiously about for a sphere of action, and that which, fifty years later, caused George Newnes to enter upon his first venture, shows the conditions to have been almost identical. When Robert Chambers, at the age of sixteen, set out, as a bookseller in Leith Walk, Edinburgh—his stock consisting of a dozen odd volumes saved from the wreck of the small family library, together with his own parcel of well-used school books—and when his brother William opened business close by, with ten pounds' worth of sample volumes from the stock of a London bookseller's agent, the price of the ordinary newspaper was sevenpence. To meet the then popular demand some cheap and worthless periodicals were published. In

William Chambers's opinion these were "the perversion of what, if rightly conducted, might become a powerful engine of social improvement;" and pondering over the waste of good material the astute young Scotsmen began to think of how they might turn to account the growing taste for reading among the masses, by offering something that was good and inexpensive, instead of that which was dear and mostly bad.

The grave North, graver by three-quarters of a century than it is to-day, required more solid food than George Newnes sought to provide. For while the Chambers brothers claimed as their purpose "to instruct and elevate independently of mere passing amusement," his chief aim was to provide light and entertaining reading for the enormous public whose lives are filled with work, and who ask for something that will rest and amuse the tired brain, rather than for information and instruction. But when William Chambers said to his brother: "Let us endeavour to give a reputable literary character to what is at present mostly mean and trivial," he gave expression to the selfsame idea which Mr. Newnes, in his time, put into practice so soon as he began to publish, and from which for thirty years, from the beginning to the end, he never departed.

The outcome of the Chambers brothers' long

struggle and patient striving was the appearance of *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* in 1832. The story of the reception of its first number by the Scottish public is but the story of *Tit-Bits* half a century later, except that in 1881, with increased educational facilities, a much larger public was eager to avail itself of the chance of showing its appreciation of the new periodical in a very practical form.

Once the firm of Chambers brothers in the 'thirties, and that of Mr. George Newnes in the 'eighties, were successfully launched, the similarity in the experiences of the heads of the two firms ceased, and they went their several ways towards success, Mr. Newnes leaping into fame and wealth almost at a bound, while the Chambers climbed the steep ascent slowly, painfully, and with incessant self-denial.

But the similarities of the early days of the founders of the Edinburgh and London publishing firms are astonishingly close. In fact R. and W. Chambers and George Newnes were made of the same stuff, the stuff that successful men of business are made of in every age, in every part of the civilized world. When such men come to honour the question is always asked, what is the secret of their success? But there is nothing secret about it; indeed, if all things could be traced as easily as the reasons which make honest men prosperous in business, life would have few unsolved riddles.



George Newnes's childhood was happy, and he knew nothing of the gloom which hung over the home of the Chambers' as they sank from comparative affluence to the verge of absolute penury; but his apprenticeship was as dull as William Chambers's had been when he worked from 7.30 a.m. to 9 p.m. as errand boy, with not even a Saturday afternoon off, to make a break in the "ceaseless drudgery." And Robert Chambers haunted the Edinburgh bookstalls just as George Newnes haunted the London ones, though the former had the secondary object of stealthily consulting the old Latin dictionary which he was too poor to buy.

When they actually started, they put their trust into exactly the same qualities, and on these, and these only, they founded their success. The first and the last were hard work and steadfast industry. "If the young and the thoughtless could only be made to know this—the happiness, the dignity of honest labour conducted in a spirit of self-reliance—the significance and probably temporary character of untoward circumstances while there is youth, along with a willing heart—the proud satisfaction of acquiring by persevering industry instead of by compassionate donation—how differently would they act!" wrote Dr. Chambers towards the end of his honoured life. Sir George Newnes, had he been given to moralizing, would have expressed himself

to the same effect. He, too, worked with might and main at whatever task he undertook; he spared neither time nor trouble; left nothing to chance; considered no detail too slight to claim his attention; realized that promptness and method are attributes indispensable to the busy worker, and that without constant care and watchfulness permanent success is rarely attained. Courageous, too, he was, and sanguine of success when striking out a new line. Once, when the foolish question was put to him, what he considered the secret of his success, he gave the characteristic answer: "Most people have no idea of doing anything beyond what they may have seen done before, and what they are told to do. They are frightened by originality, lest it might be disastrous. I suppose I have been inclined to do things differently from, rather than in the same way as, other people, and I have always struck while the iron was hot. That, I think, to put it briefly, is the secret of any success which has attended my efforts."

The day after Sir George Newnes's death the *Daily Graphic*, in a leading article, referred to what he himself called "doing things differently from other people" in these terms: "Something more than a notable figure in journalism has passed away with the death of Sir George Newnes. An innovator has gone, though he has left his influence behind." And after

giving a summary of the origin and purpose of *Tit-Bits*, the writer continues: "It has had scores of imitators; but the method of *Tit-Bits* was not at an end with that type of journal. Its principle—that of finding the kind of things that people are interested in rather than the kind of things they ought to be interested in, and of making a feature of it—spread to other periodicals. It invaded the evening papers; then, at last, it captured the morning papers, and was in truth the basis of the success of the first halfpenny papers. There is now a danger of running the principle to death, and perhaps, in its turn, the 'tit-bits' paper will be destroyed by some innovator yet unborn. For innovators are born, not made; and it was the application by Sir George Newnes of innovation to the monthly magazine, to the picture photograph, and to other subjects connected with journalism, that turned his enterprises to gold."

Over and above the more ordinary endowments which lie dormant in the majority of men, though in only a few are they so happily combined that by dint of careful fostering and diligent training they bring wealth, or fame, or both, to the possessor, the fates had bestowed upon George Newnes one great and special gift. They had given him a kind of prescience by which he knew long before the general demand for an article arose, that it

would be the "coming thing," to use an expressive slang term. It was this extraordinary anticipatory knowledge, this gift almost of prophecy in business matters, to which he owed a great deal of his success. But, it should at once be added, this would have availed him nothing, had he not had the courage to trust to it and the industry and the perseverance to act upon it. Without these more ordinary qualities, to which must be added honesty, courtesy, concentration of purpose and others far too simple to recommend themselves to the typical modern who thirsts hotly for a harvest of gold, but is impatient and disdainful of the "slow" and "old-fashioned" virtues, Sir George Newnes would never have founded the great firm that bears his name, nor would he have taken rank with Robert and William Chambers in the honoured place they occupy in the temple of literary fame.

In yet one other respect the career of one of the Chambers brothers would have coincided with that of Sir George Newnes, had not, in Dr. William Chambers's case, death intervened. In May 1883 "Her Majesty Queen Victoria, through her Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, had offered Dr. Chambers the honour of a baronetcy. Two years previously Mr. Gladstone had made him an offer of a knighthood; but that offer had been respectfully declined. This later renewal of the honour, however,



in the shape of a baronetcy, Dr. Chambers accepted; but his end came before the title had been formally bestowed." (*Memoirs of William and Robert Chambers*. W. & R. Chambers.)

The same compliment was paid to Mr. Newnes in 1894, when he received the following letter from Lord Rosebery, then Liberal Prime Minister—

“ Dec. 27, 1894.

“ 10 Downing Street, Whitehall.

“ MY DEAR MR. NEWNES,

“ I have great satisfaction in being empowered to offer you the distinction of a baronetcy to commemorate not only your political services but the good work that you have done in the cause of healthy popular literature.

“ I trust that this honour will be appreciated by your constituency, which has stood by you so faithfully in the face of hostile influences so potent, and that you yourself will receive it with pleasure. Believe me—

“ Yours very truly,

“ ROSEBERY.”

The baronetcy was among the New Year's Honours of 1895, and was not only widely popular among the general public, but caused even one of his rivals and opponents to admit readily and publicly that “ there are few men

on whom the honour of a baronetcy could have been more fittingly conferred, for Sir George Newnes is an English gentleman who is able in every way to uphold the dignity of his title."

It was because he had striven so hard, and worked so honestly and steadily that, when success came, and honours manifold, there was no one to look askance with jealousy or envy, and even those who were competitors in the race he ran owned unhesitatingly that he was "one of the most deservedly successful men of the age." He bore his honours very lightly, and no success ever surfeited him or caused him to cease from frankly and fully enjoying the good things which life had given to him. Nor could it take away one atom of the perfect simplicity of manner which, together with great natural dignity and reserve, surrounded him with an atmosphere of interest and charm.

## CHAPTER X

### M.P. FOR NEWMARKET

WHEN Mr. Newnes was just thirty-five years old, and while he was carrying on his ever-increasing business of publisher of periodicals for the family circle, he became a member of the House of Commons. Parliamentary life, as seen from the outside, attracted him as it attracts most young men of ambition, who, in their thirst for fame and glory, are conscious only of the fact that a political career may lead to the highest position in the country. But perhaps more than by the allurements of personal advantages and honours to be gained, he was drawn by the dreams and visions which every enthusiast of George Newnes's temperament has dreamed, and seen, on entering the House of Commons : the dreams of serving his country and his fellow-men ; of advancing the causes that seem good and great to him—the causes of the toilers, the poor and the forgotten ; of freedom and justice and mercy ; in short, dreams by the realization of which the world is to be made a better and a happier place. And like all but a few of these countless young

optimists, he too was destined to learn in the course of his political career that much of the early enthusiasm is inevitably bound to end in disappointment.

To quote Mr. Newnes's own words, jotted down after he had, for reasons of health, refused to stand again for Swansea, the constituency he represented from 1900 to 1910: "The trials of a young man going into Parliament are not easily described. He is fired not only with personal, but with party and national enthusiasm. He thinks he can put things right in a mere twelvemonth, but he finds that it is difficult to move a yard in a decade. Others like himself are also wanting to forge ahead, but the slowness of it all, the daily wretched grind which appears to produce nothing, brings despair into their hearts; before long their enthusiasm evaporates and they become mere parliamentary machines. How many men, clever, sincere and earnest, could tell the same story of having left the House of Commons for no other than this reason."

At the same time, every aspect of life with which he came into contact presented itself so picturesquely to Mr. Newnes that undoubtedly his membership of the House of Commons supplied him with far more interest and enjoyment than it would afford a man not gifted with his vivid imagination and unusually keen sense of humour. It was all so dramatic



from the very beginning when, on a flying visit to London, he was walking across Hyde Park one evening, and suddenly made the announcement to his companion that he was going into Parliament. His friend was one of the men who wished him well, and sympathized with his ambitions. But seeing the tremendous weight of business cares already on his shoulders, he suggested mildly that it might be better to wait before Mr. Newnes added the work and responsibilities of a Member of Parliament to his labours. "No," was the prompt reply of this young man in a hurry; "I would give a pound of my flesh to be a member of the House of Commons." And when George Newnes, in those heydays of youth and energy, was strongly bent on realizing an idea or ambition, it took more than a wise and thoughtful friend's gentle remonstrance to turn him from his object.

Therefore it is not surprising that soon after, when his intention became known, the spokesman of a Liberal committee in a Scotch constituency, happening to be in Manchester, called upon him with a view of acquainting himself with the aspirant's qualifications for representing a Scottish seat. The Scot was very patriotic, a fact which Mr. Newnes grasped at once. "What is your connection with Scotland?" the deputy asked, and was told promptly and with entire conviction that

Mr. Newnes's mother was one of the finest Scotswomen that had ever lived. Deep down in his heart, when uttering this speech, the prospective candidate thought he was making an excellent start. His interlocutor went on stolidly: "What about your father?" and when he was informed that the Rev. T. M. Newnes was a native of Shropshire, he hinted delicately that Shropshire was not in Scotland. "Yes," came the reply, "that is true, and one of the greatest regrets of my life at this moment is my physical impossibility of moving it there." To soften the blow of the disappointment at finding his parentage geographically unsatisfactory Mr. Newnes added the information that his godfather was provost of one of the principal towns in Scotland, but the fact did not seem to assert itself in any effective way.

By this time the comic side of the interview presented itself so vividly to Mr. Newnes that, throwing his chances of success away, as he thought, he became recklessly frivolous, expatiating volubly concerning his devotion to oatmeal porridge and other treasures supposed to have softening influences upon the true Scottish heart.

The 1885 General Election was then pending; candidatures were being rapidly filled up, and before the Scotsman had time to get home and report on his meeting with the intending

candidate who could be so irrepressibly and shockingly flippant, Mr. Newnes was approached by the Liberal Committee of the Newmarket, or Eastern, Division of Cambridgeshire, with a view to being selected as their candidate. On the day when he went to meet this committee he had a foretaste of the ups and downs in store for the political aspirant, upon which, years afterwards, he looked back with a whimsical smile.

There was another Liberal candidate in the field, and after Mr. Newnes had faced the men upon whose verdict on his political *credo* his chances depended, he was requested to absent himself for a short time while they deliberated as to his suitability to represent them at Westminster. As he strolled about outside the door of the place where his fate hung in the balance, his surroundings struck him as having an intensely lugubrious aspect (he thought afterwards the grassy place where he paced to and fro must have been a churchyard, but at the time he was too absorbed and anxious to make definite observations), and he sank deeper and deeper into an abyss of gloom and depression. Why, oh, why had he put himself into this position? he mused. Why had he not been satisfied with his life, crowded with interests, crowned with extraordinary success, as it was? Why court the humiliation, which not improbably awaited him that very hour, of

being told that he had been found wanting in the scales in which he was to be at that moment weighed against the other candidate ?

And who, ever having found himself in a position into which he has been urged or lured by ambition, or enthusiasm, or both, cannot fill in the picture of the man's mental distress as he walked up and down in the green place which grew more depressing with his mood ? Then, when the darkness had become so thick that it could scarcely grow blacker, a messenger came and invited him politely to come and hear the verdict. The Committee met him with outstretched hands and friendly looks and told him that they would be delighted if he would stand as their candidate at the approaching Election. They pressed round him, cordial, sympathetic, sanguine of success, and in a flash the cloud lifted and all the terrors fled that had lain upon him with such deadly weight, out in the dark place with the graveyard atmosphere. And there and then, under the most happy conditions, began Mr. Newnes's long connection with the constituency which returned him at three successive Elections, and of which he always spoke with a sense of gratitude and affection.

Another difficulty which seemed to loom immediately ahead was as easily dispersed as the depression of the day when Mr. Newnes first faced his committee. He had never in



his life been on a race-course, and the proposition that he should speak to a Newmarket audience sounded more than difficult. How could he interlard his speech with racing terms, when he was as ignorant of their meaning as he was of the war-cries of the Hottentots? How make playful and sympathetic allusions to approaching turf events, or to incidents in the history of famous races and winners, when he cared as little for such things as for a display of millinery in a show-window? But when it was explained to him that only half of Newmarket was in Cambridgeshire, the other half being in Suffolk; that Ely was the principal centre of population, and that most of the Division was agricultural, he accepted the offer, worked as hard as he could for six months, became immediately popular, and was returned in the Liberal interest by a majority of 973.

In connection with this, Mr. Newnes's first victory, it should be remembered that before 1885 the whole of Cambridgeshire represented one parliamentary division, and was only divided into three seats after the Redistribution Bill came into force. The sitting member, a Conservative, had the choice of the three seats, and immediately chose the Newmarket Division, because this was supposed to be the safest corner of the Tory stronghold. The fact that Mr. Newnes defeated him by close upon a thousand votes is eloquent enough of

the impression produced by the Liberal candidate. Of the other two divisions one returned another Liberal by a small majority, the third remained faithful to the Conservative cause.

And so the young and enthusiastic Liberal entered the House of Commons, full of high hopes and the sincere desire to become of the same use to his fellow-men in politics he was and had been in his profession.

One of his earliest experiences as a Member of Parliament so impressed Mr. Newnes that it remained to the end of life among his most vivid recollections. It is as far removed from the average House of Commons anecdote as the stars are from the solid earth, and is not without a touch of real pathos. He had not seen his own people since he had become a member, and was looking forward with special pleasure to the day when he would meet his parents and receive their congratulations. After being in the House for a few weeks, news was sent to him that his mother was lying very ill, perhaps at death's door. He hurried off to her at once, anxious but hopeful, as was his wont, and joyfully anticipating her motherly pride in the success of his candidature. But when he had greeted and cheered her, and the talk turned on his new dignity, what was his disappointment when she said, with a sigh of regret, as the cherished vision of seeing him in the Congregational pulpit rose once more before

her inward eye: "Oh, George, I would so much rather you had been a minister."

Six months later another General Election, the one fought over Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, was sprung upon the country. There is a short note, written years later, in which Mr. Newnes gives a graphic sketch of the scene during the division on this Bill. "The excitement was indescribable," he writes. "Pale men were flushed, and red-faced men turned pale as the fatal moment arrived. Every man was nervously anxious, and very many were visibly trembling. I noticed that many greetings were not returned, so absorbed were men in their feelings. When the result of thirty-six against the Bill was made known I went into the Outer Lobby, from where at that time we had to send telegrams. Here I found my own chairman, Mr. Bullock Hall, who had worked hard at the late Election. He was a strong Unionist, a man of some literary fame, and the owner of Six Mile Bottom, one of the finest game preserves in the country. Now, overcome by his excited feelings, he marched up to me in a positively menacing attitude. I saw that it would be useless to argue, so I said: 'Well, Mr. Hall, if you feel like that, you had better oppose me, as there is going to be an Election.' His face became tense and resolute, he looked at me and said: 'By Heaven, I will!' and I then went back to the House, where scores of

members still remained. They simply could not move away. I little thought that what Bullock Hall had said would come to anything, and he told me afterwards he had never thought of standing till I suggested it to him. This was one of the few cases where a man has put it into the mind of another to oppose him. The Election soon came. The Conservative party selected the Marquis of Carmarthen, now the Duke of Leeds, as their candidate. Mr. Bullock Hall determined, notwithstanding, to fight; but I was again returned."

In 1892 Mr. Newnes was returned for the third time. "Sometimes afterwards I wished I had not been," he said, when talking of the session following this Election—and indeed, of the whole of the 1892–95 Parliament—and recalling the incessant march round the division lobbies during those strenuous years. "Well may it be said," he remarked, "that those who have only taken part in a few Marathon races do not know what real pedestrianism means, unless they were also in that Parliament."

In the House itself he was generally a silent member, and probably no one seeing him there, cheerful and debonair, if occasionally a little absent-minded, when the pressure of his own work was very great, would have guessed that deep down in his heart he was a saddened and disappointed politician. But so it was.



He had meant to do such good work for the Liberal cause, to which he was so staunch, so loyal an adherent, and for which he had made many and great sacrifices in time, in money and in energy. As the years went by he felt more and more strongly that one man alone, unless he had the combined gifts of the diplomatist, the lawyer, and half-a-dozen others, and could, moreover, devote the whole of his time to politics, could not move the cumbersome parliamentary machine. But though he never made a striking speech, or introduced a political bill or measure, or became in any way conspicuously successful in the House of Commons, he was and remained a Liberal of the best and staunchest type, loyal and true to his party, and ready and willing to put himself and his means generously and at all times at its service.

Away from the House of Commons Mr. Newnes was an excellent platform speaker, who almost invariably aroused the enthusiasm of an audience, partly by his winning personality, and partly by the *bons mots* suggested by his quick mother-wit, which twinkled and sparkled through his speeches, lightening the dullest subject in delightful manner. As an after-dinner and social speaker he was at his best, and whether he spoke at one of the *Westminster Gazette* annual dinners, when he had the right word of pleasant banter for every

one from the office-boys upwards, or when he made a little after-dinner speech at some friendly gathering at his own hospitable table, or eloquently appealed for one of the charities to which Lady Newnes has always given such unwearied work and practical sympathy, he never failed to attract, to interest, to please. I remember an occasion not very long ago when the young Princess Alexander of Teck took the chair at a meeting held in the beautiful Wildcroft library in connexion with the League of Mercy, of which Lady Newnes was a vice-president. Next to me an aristocratic young beauty sat rather listlessly, as one after the other the speakers pleaded the good cause. Presently the master of Wildcroft was asked to say a few words. Unlike those who had addressed the meeting before him, he had no strings of appalling figures to marshal before the audience, neither did he draw heartrending scenes and episodes of the lives of the poor; his words were those of a man simply and sincerely interested in what he believed to be a good cause, in which the rich and the strong and the happy should aid the poor and the weak and the unhappy, and to which, urged by his wife, he was glad to give his support. When he sat down the girl who had so far looked tired and indifferent leaned forward to her mother, and said with shining eyes: "Mother, isn't he a perfect dear!"



"EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE."

(From the cartoon by "Spy," by kind permission of "Vanity Fair.")

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100



But to return to Mr. Newnes's parliamentary life. In his autobiographical notes the graver aspect of this part of his life-work is hardly touched upon. Not that he was not seriously interested in many questions. But the discussion of these he reserved for such occasions as, for instance, the long Sunday morning rambles when he and Mr. Tomalin strolled for hours together over Putney Heath and Wimbledon Common, often so deeply engrossed by their subject that other ramblers meeting them on the beautiful stretch of heath and furze, in the fresh keen air, had to introduce themselves in entirely unconventional fashion to obtain recognition.

Mr. J. A. Spender, who has for many years conducted the *Westminster Gazette*, of which Mr. Newnes was the founder and, until two or three years ago, the owner, is surely the best authority as to the Liberalism by which the proprietor of his paper was animated. In the obituary notice of Sir George Newnes which appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* there occurs the following passage: "From the beginning Sir George encouraged his staff to set a high standard, and faced the difficulties inevitable to the new enterprise with undimmed cheerfulness and patience. He recognized at once that, if the *Westminster Gazette* was to succeed, it must be something more than a commercial enterprise, and he never at any

time asked himself how a particular line of policy would affect the business prospects of his paper. The present writer vividly recalls the anxious period before and during the Boer War, when panic reigned in many newspaper offices and the staffs of various Liberal journals were suffering rapid changes. Like other newspaper proprietors, Sir George received many remonstrances—some from commercial men, others from politicians—assuring him that the *Westminster*, on its then course, was steering straight for ruin; but, if he passed them on to the editor, it was only with an amused indifference and a cheerful admonition not to swerve by an inch breadth from the course he was then pursuing. He was equally cool a year or two later when the Liberal Party was threatened with a serious schism, and when, once more, he found himself assailed by eager politicians urging him to throw the *Westminster* into their scale. ‘You will be doing best,’ he wrote to the editor on this occasion, ‘when you are most in hot water, and you may rely on me to be well satisfied when that object is achieved.’ . . . For a period of ten years the editor lunched with him regularly every fortnight, and on these occasions every detail of the conduct of the paper—commercial and political—was fully discussed. He was a man of the shrewdest judgment, and the paper benefited greatly by his ideas and his criticisms.

But his face was always steadily set against any cheapening or popularizing which might have damaged the influence of the paper with its more serious readers, and the present writer remembers many occasions on which a tempting-looking scheme was abandoned, after a short discussion, on this ground."

In 1895, after the defeat of the Rosebery Government, Mr. Newnes having lost his Cambridgeshire seat, decided that he "had had enough of politics," and for the next five years gave all his time to the manifold activities connected with the gigantic publishing firm he had built up, and with other commercial enterprises in which he had engaged.

## CHAPTER XI

### M.P. FOR SWANSEA

DURING the years of his retirement from political life Sir George Newnes had no less than thirty-three invitations from constituencies in various parts of the country to represent them in Parliament. But he remained by his decision till in 1900 an invitation reached him at his country house at Lynton, from the opposite side of the Bristol Channel, to contest Swansea Town in the Liberal interest. At the period preceding this Election Liberalism was at a low ebb, and there seemed no reason why Swansea, which in 1896 had succumbed to repeated assaults of the Conservatives, should return to its former stout Radicalism. For one reason and another the difficulty was extremely great of finding a candidate who would attempt to recapture the seat, and at the dissolution the Swansea Liberals were without a champion. It then occurred to a member of the local association that Sir George Newnes might be prevailed upon to accept nomination, and a deputation was appointed to proceed to Lynton. At first he declined, but the Swansea



Liberals would not take a refusal, and since tenacity in a good cause never failed to appeal to Sir George, he was in the end persuaded to return into the political arena, promising to go to Swansea the very next morning, the election being then only ten days off.



THE MEMBER FOR SWANSEA  
*Westminster Gazette*, December 18, 1900  
(By permission of Sir F. Carruthers Gould)

Next morning, however, the sea was so rough that the tug which had been chartered to take him across could not put in at Lynmouth, which has no pier, and he was obliged to wire to Swansea, explaining the situation. A reply arrived very promptly, couched in terms so expressive that the candidate, whose spirit, like unto the spirits of his disappointed committee, was up by this time, sent a second

message: "Will come to-morrow even if I have to swim."

Fortunately, two of Sir George's friends, Mr. (now Sir) Brynmor Jones and Mr. A. Thomas, K.C., who were contesting other constituencies, happened to be at Swansea, and spoke for the sea-bound candidate at four lively meetings, at each of which the spirited message from Lynton was read, arousing the enthusiasm it deserved. The next evening Sir George arrived at Swansea on a tug-boat. It was a wild, wet night, and as he stepped ashore with the brim of his slouch hat turned down and the collar of his coat turned up, he looked a pilot to the life. "The weather is foul, gentlemen," he said after the hearty salutations were over, "but I come, I trust, to bring you good political weather."

Tired as he was, after the rough passage across the Channel, he went at once to the Liberal Club, where the faithful Five Hundred were awaiting him, made a capital speech, outlining broadly the tenets of his Liberal creed, and was enthusiastically adopted as the candidate. Then he was whisked away to a meeting at the Swansea Albert Hall where 3000 welcoming voices touched him deeply, and made him lose the last trace of regret at having allowed himself to be lured from his retirement. In the course of the short campaign, Lady Newnes and their son coming upon the

scene, and working as hard as the candidate himself, the *Cambria Daily Leader* soon foresaw that it might safely entrust its poster with the prophecy "Liberalism wins. Lady Newnes wins hearts, and Sir George gains votes," a prophecy justified by events.

One of the features of the contest was the encouragement given to the young men on the Liberal side, and in this respect Sir George may be said to have anticipated the work of the National League of Young Liberals. His agent was Mr. W. J. Crocker, an astute organizer, who had been shrewd enough to secure an option upon the chief hall of the town for the two nights before the Election. It was decided that the best night for a rally of the democratic forces would be the Friday—the Election having been fixed for Monday—and the hall would therefore be free on the Saturday.

"Why not give it to the young men of the party?" asked Sir George. The suggestion was immediately acted upon. Mr. Frank Newnes, the candidate's son, spoke, and spoke well; his cousin, Mr. Brame Hillyard, delivered another effective address, and six other Liberals, all on the right side of thirty, made up the platform. They were, of course, working on favourable material; the blood of the Welsh had been stirred, but this only partly accounted for the striking success of the meeting, which

ended in an enthusiastic procession to the hotel at which the candidate was staying, to serenade him there and then.

The confidence of the Liberals on Election day was not unmingled with anxiety: the Tory candidate had so many personal friends; the war-fever was so contagious; the personality of Mr. Chamberlain so attractively truculent. Shortly before ten at night the counting of the votes was finished, and it was found that Sir George Newnes had not only won, but had won handsomely, turning an adverse majority of 474 into a favourable one of 1114. This set the seal upon a relationship with Swansea which lasted ten years.

Before another Election came, Sir George again thought of retiring from politics, and told the local leaders of the party that he had no desire to continue the representation. His health had begun to fail, his hands were more than full with many business undertakings, and the attractions of Parliament had lost much of their former charm for him.

They would not hear of his withdrawal, but pressed him hard to fight yet another battle, and when he consented and led the forces in the campaign of 1906 he increased his majority from 1114 to 1414.

After this Election his constituents did not meet him again, but they will always remember him for his unvarying urbanity and courtesy.



Not every member is a hero to his agent, but Sir George was to Mr. Crocker, who applied the sobriquet "Gentleman George" to him in the first days of their relationship, and "Gentleman George" he remained to every one.

Of the many obligations under which he placed the Liberals of Swansea at least one remains. He saved the town from a Tory press monopoly. The Liberal paper of the district is the *Cambria Daily Leader*, the pioneer of the Welsh daily press. It had become the property of a limited liability company. Shares sufficient to give their holders a preponderating voice in the management came upon the market, and alert business men on the rival paper, foreseeing a possibility of absorption, eagerly bought them up, the business side of the paper for over a year coming under the supervision of the proprietary of the *Post*. The sequel was the voluntary winding-up of the *Leader* Company and an offer to the courts from the *Post* to purchase at a nominal price. The arrangement seemed likely to receive legal sanction when the matter was brought before Sir George Newnes, who said quite frankly that he did not want to buy the paper, as he did not think it desirable that a Member of Parliament should own the public prints in his own constituency. Moreover, he could not give the necessary supervision to a business at Swansea.

But, on second thoughts, he changed his mind. He was too good a party man to let a Liberal organ, for want of what was to him an unimportant sum, fall into the hands of the Conservatives. And once he had decided, the whole transaction was concluded without more ado. When he had obtained possession of the property he installed the paper in new offices, equipped it with splendid machinery, and placed it on a basis from which it started on a career of constantly increasing prosperity. So far from having any anticipation of financial gain by the purchase of the paper, his impulse to buy was the same which had prompted him years ago to found the *Westminster*. He resented the idea of a Conservative press monopoly and was ready to make sacrifices in order to avert it.

To a man as richly blessed with the gift of seeing the comic side of things as Mr. Newnes, any amount of entertainment was, of course, provided by incidents connected with his various campaigns. His manner of re-telling the stories and anecdotes added a grace and charm to them which it is impossible to reproduce in print. He enjoyed them as much in retrospect as when they actually happened, and though, for all I know, he may have repeated them a hundred times, they were always so fresh and new, so natural and so absolutely free from anything unseemly, that

I am tempted to repeat one which is typical of all.

During one of his Cambridgeshire contests he was holding a meeting in a tent near Newmarket. A few hours before the meeting word was sent that a large gang of the enemy was to be present in the tent, to upset the platform. Now it so happened that this same platform, in the ordinary course of its being, and when not requisitioned for political purposes, was a huge farm-wagon, which it would be more easy to upset than the usual platform. The prospect was quite enough to rouse every spark of energy and fighting spirit in the Liberal host, and you may depend upon it that the M.P. was not the last of those who began to cast about at once for a way of worthily meeting the onslaught. After a little consultation it was decided that a band of young Liberal stalwarts, who were eager to "look after" the invaders, should be hidden under the wagon, and give battle when the great moment arrived.

Presently the Newmarket heroes were seen driving gaily along into Cheveley. They looked imposing enough, as they sat in their traps, each Jack with his Jill beside him, the sweethearts having probably been invited by the swains in order that the fair might have the opportunity of admiring the valour of the brave. The presence of the ladies gave a new

aspect to the affair, and tactics must accordingly be changed to suit the altered situation. One thing was certain; there must be no *mêlée* in which the girls might possibly be frightened or hurt. Time was passing; the young Tories were at the gate; what was to be done? In two minutes the plot was hatched by which the impending tragedy of the storming of the wagon-platform was turned into comedy to such effect that the enemy, having come to disturb, remained to be ridiculed.

When the gay Newmarket party drove up, they could hardly hide their satisfaction as the conveners of the meeting came out, seemingly in all innocence of heart, and invited them politely to seats close to the platform, where they would be able to hear the speakers well. This was precisely what they wanted. But when, in their great eagerness to be polite to the distinguished guests from Newmarket, their hosts urged the young ladies in an entirely irresistible manner to take the best seats of all, namely those on the platform, and the blushing maidens accepted after a few ineffectual protests, the swains' enjoyment showed signs of abating. With their girls on the platform, how could they upset it? And there they sat in the front rows, the seats of the mighty, listening with unwilling ears to the political gospel of the day according to those disgustingly



cheerful Liberals, while above them, in the midst of the enemy's camp, their sweethearts sat blushing and giggling. And when towards the end of the meeting Mr. Newnes rose and told the whole story, told it with many a word of admiration for the young men who, for the sake of the ladies whom they loved, were now abstaining from deeds of valour, and when in an eloquent peroration he wished all the young Tory couples very happy married lives, the audience nearly sent the tent flying with their shouts of laughter. Whether the incident had any effect on the votes it is impossible to say, but if the Liberal member had been popular before, he was ten times more popular from that day forth, and in any case he was returned with a large majority.

That he could also on occasion assume the part of the successful proselytizer was shown by an incident which happened when a bye-election was coming on in the Stowmarket division of Suffolk, which adjoins Cambridgeshire. Hitherto it had always been considered quite useless, and, indeed, impossible, to hold a Liberal meeting in Newmarket town. Mr. Newnes, discussing the situation one day in the House of Commons with Sir Charles Russell, explained that an attempt had been made to hold such a meeting, but that the speakers had been shouted down. "But," he added, "if you or Lord Hartington, who is a

popular sporting man, would come down, I think they would listen to us."

Sir Charles, who had his hands full enough, hesitated, but the energetic Member for Newmarket would not be denied. "Come, make up your mind to do it," he urged. "I will take the chair, for though I am no sporting man I know many of the Newmarket sportsmen, and I think they will listen to me now. My loud voice will also be of some use. To you they will listen in any case. We will get Baron Stern, the candidate (now Lord Wandsworth) to drive up in his four-in-hand, and then very probably we shall have a good meeting."

The arrangements were made, everything happened as predicted by Mr. Newnes, and the jockey-boys, who on former occasions had chiefly distinguished themselves by throwing beer bottles on the platform, did nothing worse than call out somewhat disrespectfully, "Go it, Charlie!" when the eminent lawyer was speaking. This was not only a great improvement on the beer bottles, but the meeting was also satisfactory in its results, for the election was won for the Liberals.

In connection with Sir George Newnes's election experiences an interesting incident occurred which was destined to become historic. During his first Swansea Election campaign Colonel Hills-Johnes stated at a Conservative meeting that he had just returned from South

Africa, where he had been staying with General Lord Roberts, then at the head of our army in the Boer War. Lord Roberts, the Colonel explained, was very desirous that the Conservative party should win the Election. The Swansea Liberals may be excused for thinking it hardly fair to bring into the political fight the name of a man who was then the most popular hero in the United Kingdom. Under the circumstances Sir George Newnes thought it would be as well to obtain information at first hand on this statement, and for this purpose he cabled to Lord Roberts explaining that a public statement had been made by a man just returned from South Africa, that the head of the army greatly desired the victory of the Conservative party at the approaching Election. Did Lord Roberts wish his name to be used during an Election contest for party purposes ?

Lord Roberts was at the time moving about from place to place at the front, and it was doubtful whether the message would reach him in time for his answer to be of use during the campaign. But on the third day the reply came : "Hills-Johnes no right to use my name. I never interfere in politics."

It goes without saying that the Colonel's remark had by that time been published all over the country, and considering Lord Roberts's wide popularity and influence, Sir

George Newnes surely did a great service not only to his cause at Swansea, but to the Liberal party, when he telephoned the message from South Africa at once to the National Liberal Club, where the man at the wheel saw to it that in two or three hours it was published in hundreds of papers in all parts of the country.

On a notable occasion during his parliamentary life Sir George Newnes showed his tendency to originate ideas and to "do things differently" from the average person. This was on the occasion when, soon after the opening of the 1906 Parliament, he invited all the fathers and sons who had been returned to the House at the recent Election to dine with him at his temporary town residence in Carlton House Terrace, he and his son constituting one of the families represented by two generations of legislators. Every father and son in the House came, except Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and his son Austen, who, however, wrote to the host that they would have been glad to be present if it had not happened that they would both be abroad on the date of the banquet. The guests present were Sir C. B. B. Maclaren and Mr. H. D. Maclaren; Mr. Russell Rea and Mr. W. R. Rea; Mr. C. E. Schwann and Mr. C. D. Schwann, Mr. J. W. Benn and Mr. W. W. Benn, and Mr. J. F. Brunner, whose father was at the last moment unavoidably prevented from taking part.



Sir George Newnes.

Mr. C. E. Schwann. Mr. W. Wedgwood Benn.  
Mr. J. F. Brunner. Mr. H. D. Maclaren.



Sir C. Maclaren. Mr. Walter Rea. Mr. Duncan Schwann. Mr. Russell Rea.

Mr. Frank Newnes. Mr. J. Williams Benn.

FATHERS AND SONS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS : SIR GEORGE NEWNES'S INTERESTING BANQUET,  
MARCH 30, 1906.

(Drawn by A. Forestier.)



The London papers next morning recorded the fact of the "Complimentary Dinner of Fathers and Sons in Parliament," and the *Illustrated London News* gave half a page to a clever sketch of the scene, drawn by Mr. A. Forestier; but the real charm and fun of this curiously interesting gathering were only revealed to those present. They were, so to speak, *en famille*, especially as they chanced all to represent the same political party, and, as every one knows, few of us are at our best at a social function where only the dear family is represented. But the *post-prandial* eloquence in this case was as happily high-spirited and sparkling as if the "Fathers" had been holding forth to an assembly of dignitaries, and the "Sons" to an audience including the young ladies of their choice or preference.

Sir George himself, acting as host and chairman, set the ball rolling. No one knew better than he how to strike the right note on such occasions, and every guest present fell into the mood suggested by the host, when he explained that in his opinion they might spend a pleasant evening together over "a little playful badinage, and not too much politics."

There was a touch of the fatherly pride and love for his only son, which inspired some of Sir George's happiest speeches, in the few remarks in which he expressed the Fathers' joy at seeing their Sons beside them in the

House of Commons, and wished the young men every success in their political careers. Sir Charles Maclaren, the next speaker, fell at once into the vein, chaffing the host on having found out, from "Debrett" that he, Sir Charles, was the oldest man of the company, and therefore the first to be asked to speak. "We are gathered together," he said, "at an interesting function. I suppose I ought to burst into poetry; an appropriate sentiment for a poem on the present occasion would be, 'Youth at the Prow, and Pleasure at the Helm.' I have one other quality besides my age which helps me to take special interest in this occasion. I am doubly a son. I was in the House of Commons with my father, and his father was in Parliament before him. I don't think any of you can equal that." Next Mr. W. W. Benn, for the Sons, made a brilliant little speech, chaffing the Fathers with all the delightful recklessness and assumed superiority of the younger generation, which is only possible in families where parents and children are quite sure of each other's sympathetic understanding. He was glad, he said, to find the parents felt the need for co-operation, "and as this is the initiation of some kind of Parents' Protection Association, it is quite in keeping with the fitness of things that the Sons should inaugurate a society on similar lines. But I should like to know where this sort of thing



will stop. Supposing women are elected to the House of Commons : the Mothers may start a Protection Society of their own. In that case the parents may combine, and we may have the Mothers' and Fathers' Parliamentary Protection Association ! Where should we be then ? ” Benn père, following, was in his happiest mood. “ I am bound to say,” he said, with a lugubrious glance at his offspring, “ I am beginning to take another view of this Father-and-Son notion. At first I had a sort of idea that it would be very nice to have the dear boy in Parliament ; but the thing is not working out quite as I expected. My first shock came in the following way. I went into the cloak-room of the House of Commons, and said ‘ How do you do ? ’ to the attendant. He acknowledged my greeting, and said with a smile, ‘ Two pegs now, sir ! ’ I said, ‘ Yes, and I notice one peg is above the other. ’ He answered with a grin ‘ Yes, sir, and your son has collared the top one. ’ ”

“ But that is not all. I have been trying to build up a parliamentary reputation, and I thought the Port of London would be a good subject to which to turn my attention. Last year, accordingly, I brought in a Bill upon the Port of London. I intended to build my career on that Bill. Imagine, therefore, if you can, my horror to find that this precious son of mine has sneaked my idea and has asked

permission to second a Bill upon the very same subject brought in by a member of that wretched London County Council! I have now nothing left to do but to say 'Hear, hear,' to this impudent offspring.

"Anticipating that you might expect the Fathers to say a few words, I consulted a friend in the lobby as to the most appropriate thing to say. He said, 'What do you want, Benn—a text?' I said 'Yes.' Then he gave me this 'Instead of the Fathers, shall come up the Sons,' and I heartily ejaculated 'No, no!' Then I went up to the Library, asked the Librarian if he had a Bible, and looked up that interesting part of the great Book which is specially devoted to the Sons—the Book of Proverbs. Well, I did find something comforting, after all. I found the phrase that the glory of the children is their Fathers, to whom the children were to look for guidance. And I was pleased to discover that there was nothing about the guidance of the Fathers: they were regarded as entirely satisfactory!"

Having thus scored splendidly on behalf of the Fathers, Mr. Benn and the other hoary veterans present had a moment's triumph, which however, was promptly cut short when Mr. C. D. Schwann arose and called upon the Sons to make use of this rare, favourable opportunity "for criticizing our parents. I have been with my own parent," he went on,

“in the secrecy of our home; and I always found that he used very practical arguments with me.” But Mr. Russell Rea concluded a witty speech on the Revolt of the Sons by a charming little domestic anecdote. “As for the third generation idea,” he said, “I am going into that competition! I have a small grandson with distinctly political aspirations; and I discovered him the other morning, with very hesitating fingers, it is true, printing on a card ‘Vote for Philip Russell Rea!’”

Mr. Frank Newnes, in giving thanks to the fathers, showed in his short speech that he has inherited his father’s talent for genial after-dinner speaking. “I may say on behalf of the Sons,” he said, “that I think it very nice of our Fathers to have us in the House. In return we will look after them, and see that they vote straight! Some members of the House, with their own idea of the fitness of things, are inclined to regard us as Devils, for they frequently ask us for whom we are devilling. There may some day be three generations in Parliament, but I don’t think Mr. Rea starts fair in a competition of this kind. For some of us are not even married yet, and therefore are very heavily handicapped. I think it but fair to admit that the fact of our Fathers having been in Parliament before us was a great help to us as Sons at the recent General Election. There is little doubt that a

constituency was interested to know that the Father was in, and wanted to see the Son in to keep him company. Mr. Rea, meanwhile, had not that advantage, because the Son got in before the Father. But even then the principle worked, for the constituency felt that, as the Son was in Parliament, the Father must be returned in order to look after him. We are, as has been stated, on the same side in politics, and I hope the time will never come when we shall see the Father and Son in different Lobbies."

And so the ball was kept rolling all the evening, Mr. C. E. Schwann's paternal indiscretions culminating in the recitation of a "poem" found in the Lobby, and "in the familiar handwriting of an old friend of ours." It is headed "Fathers and Sons," and runs thus—

"Fathers must be very queer  
 Who help to get their Sons in here!  
 Sons must be a sanguine set  
 Who strive within these walls to get!  
 Fathers have been striving long  
 To put to rights whatever's wrong—  
 Squabbling on in Party fights,  
 Sitting up long summer nights:  
 Arguing, fratching, and deriding,  
 Ever and anon dividing.  
 It does seem, as I said, queer,  
 That anybody should come here!  
 All you speak of is resented,  
 All you say, misrepresented.  
 What do you think of this, young Newnes?  
 Do you care to play such tunes?"



Don't you think, brave young Maclaren,  
Such a life as this is barren ?  
Can you ever be, young Brunner,  
As your Father, such a stunner ?  
To glory do you see your way,  
Young aspiring Russell Rea ?  
Young cygnet, can you carry on  
Like your noble parent Schwann ?  
Young starters, need we further tell  
How we truly wish you well ?  
May each rising young M.P.  
Better than his Father be !”

It may not be out of place in connection with this cheerful gathering, which was first and foremost the outcome of the host's well justified pride in the son of whom he could say that he—the son—had never given him a day's anxiety, to quote a passage from the speech which Sir George Newnes made in connection with his son's candidature during the Election of 1906, when Mr. Frank Newnes was returned to Parliament for the Bassetlaw Division of Nottinghamshire. Speaking to a crowded meeting at Retford Town Hall, Sir George said he had come to say a good word for his son, and he thought no father or mother in the division would blame him for doing so. He thanked all those present for their very hearty greeting, which he could only attribute to the fact that some one had been there before him who had paved the way, and apparently made such a good impression with regard to the son that those present were disposed to look favourably upon the father. “I wonder,”

Sir George said, " I have not been here before. It has been a little difficult for me to keep away, but I thought I would let the youngster go on his own for a bit. I have known him longer than any man, and am in an excellent position to give evidence as to his character. Well, I can tell you he has never given me a day's, or I may say an hour's, trouble or anxiety in his life."

Sir George continued that when his son arrived at the age of discretion he became a Liberal, which he (the speaker) considered a perfectly proper and natural sequence of events. He had heard it said his son was too young to be a parliamentary candidate, but he would get over that with keeping. It was averred, too, that his opponent, Sir Frederick Milner—of whom he wished to speak with every courtesy and respect, for it was a poor thing if they could not advance their own political opinions and yet be courteous and respectful to those who differed from them—was old enough to be the candidate's father, had had much greater experience, and that, therefore, his opinion was of far greater value. Well, he (Sir George) was old enough to be the father of their candidate, and he might be allowed to say he was proud of the fact. He had years' more mature consideration and greater experience—just about the same length as Sir Frederick Milner—and he was precisely of the same

opinion with regard to political matters as the comparatively youthful candidate for the Bassetlaw Division. So that, as far as the last argument was concerned, both parties, to use a golfing phrase, were all square.

There is no doubt that the happiest day in Sir George Newnes's later life was that when his son gained his parliamentary victory over Sir Frederick Milner, and became a Member of Parliament, as no doubt the hardest blow dealt to him during his illness, and one which hastened his end, was the son's defeat at the January Election of 1910.

## CHAPTER XII

### PRIVATE INTERESTS AND OCCUPATIONS

APART from journalism and politics, which were the main interests of Sir George Newnes's life, to which during the last ten years were added a variety of industrial and commercial affairs, he had a large number of occupations with which to fill his holidays and the odds and ends of time he could spare from work. Until his last illness crept upon him he enjoyed almost perfect health, and such modern complaints as nervous breakdowns, brain-fag and other traps in which the eager, restless worker of to-day is too often caught, were unknown to him. Probably his love of open-air pursuits on the one hand, and his ability to put from him at will the cares of the office, and to throw himself with his whole mind from work into play, from the difficulties and perplexities of his business into the fun and frolic of a game, rested the flagging brain and refreshed the tired body in the same way as sleep or absolute repose.

He was far too active, both mentally and physically, while his health remained normal,



to take rest during the day; and no sooner had he turned his back upon Southampton Street, or emerged from his study at home, than he was as deep in some other pursuit as he was strenuous when engaged in the more serious business of life. On fine days you might see him come out of his gate at Putney Heath, making his way to the Wimbledon Common golf club, and it is not often that you meet a more fine and picturesque figure than his, even on a golf-course, where the best types of British male physique are not rare. Or he would spend happy half-holidays in his large, covered tennis court, the "gym," where on wet and wintry afternoons good games and cheerful, unconventional social entertainment were to be had. Or he would, together with Lady Newnes or a friend, take one of those long drives into the country which, while they delighted the lover of the open air and rural scenes, were so fruitful of fresh suggestions in connection with his work, some slight object or incident observed often furnishing him with an idea by which another interest might be added to his publications.

Again, whatever the popular topic of the day might be, it had his interest, and there also he took the standard which, in his profession, had helped him to rise to his eminent position in the journalistic and publishing world. That is to say, he did not look upon

himself as one who, endowed with more than average brain power, is able to put himself at will into the place of the average person, and thus understand the point of view, or the needs and requirements, of that person. He had no intellectual vanity, and even among those knowing him well and perhaps not sharing or admiring his points of view, there is no one to accuse him of an undue idea of his own mental endowments. "He never suffered from swelled head," was the judgment of that quick and trained observer of men, Mr. W. T. Stead, who had worked with him during the time when the latter was at the height of his prosperity and success.

"I *am* the average man," Sir George Newnes would say. "I am not merely putting myself into his place. That is the real reason why I know what he wants." And so he was, in the straightforward simplicity with which he looked out into the world; in the frank enjoyment of the things that appeal to the average cheerful human being endowed with a healthy mind in a healthy body; and also in his loathing of all that is mawkish, maudlin and morbid, unclean, coarse and abnormal. At the same time, he was much beyond the average man, with whom he claimed brotherhood so honestly and genially, in the exceptional gifts of indomitable perseverance and industry; of quick perception and astonishing resourcefulness;

in the somewhat deliberate thoughtful manner which gave to all who came into contact with him a sense of a great reserve of strength and power.

One of his interests in private life, in which probably he was too modest when ranging himself with the majority of his countrymen, was his keen appreciation of the value of modern scientific discoveries by which the whole community would profit. Always quick to seize upon the practical side of a subject, he saw at a glance when a new chance was offered to the public for saving labour, for lightening the burden of the workers, for adding to the enjoyments and luxuries of the wealthier classes, and to the comfort and convenience of all. Thus while others still stood doubtfully watching developments, he was already enjoying the fruits of a new scientific discovery.

His house on Putney Heath was lit throughout by electricity long before Putney had made arrangements for supplying the residents with that commodity, and the installation at the offices in Southampton Street was effected soon after in very characteristic manner. "We cannot afford to have the disturbance of an invasion of working men for more than a day," he said, and sent for a firm of electricians. Could they put the light into the five-storeyed building in twenty-four hours?

No, it was an impossibility, they reported, after having inspected the place. But urged on by his impatience, and not unlikely fired by a very creditable desire to show what they could do, they made the attempt, and in forty-eight hours the work was done.

The motor car also had in Sir George Newnes a whole-hearted convert while as yet this new and expensive toy was regarded as a white elephant, and one with a dangerous temper and an unreliable constitution. There were few cars on the road, and no newspaper had as yet opened its columns to correspondence of the intense kind from infuriated pedestrians and equally angry motorists, on the subject of speed limits, dust-raising, reckless driving, cat-and-dog mangling, and the like, when Sir George ordered his first car. Having fixed his affections upon one of a certain French make, and finding that it could not be obtained in London, his eagerness could not brook the delay of waiting till it arrived in the usual slow way. Hence a chauffeur was despatched to Paris, with minute instructions, to buy the car at headquarters and to bring it back by road. This would not only hasten its arrival, but would at the same time furnish the trial trip during which possible deficiencies would be disclosed.

Nor did he ever tire of motoring. For years it was his greatest recreation to drive



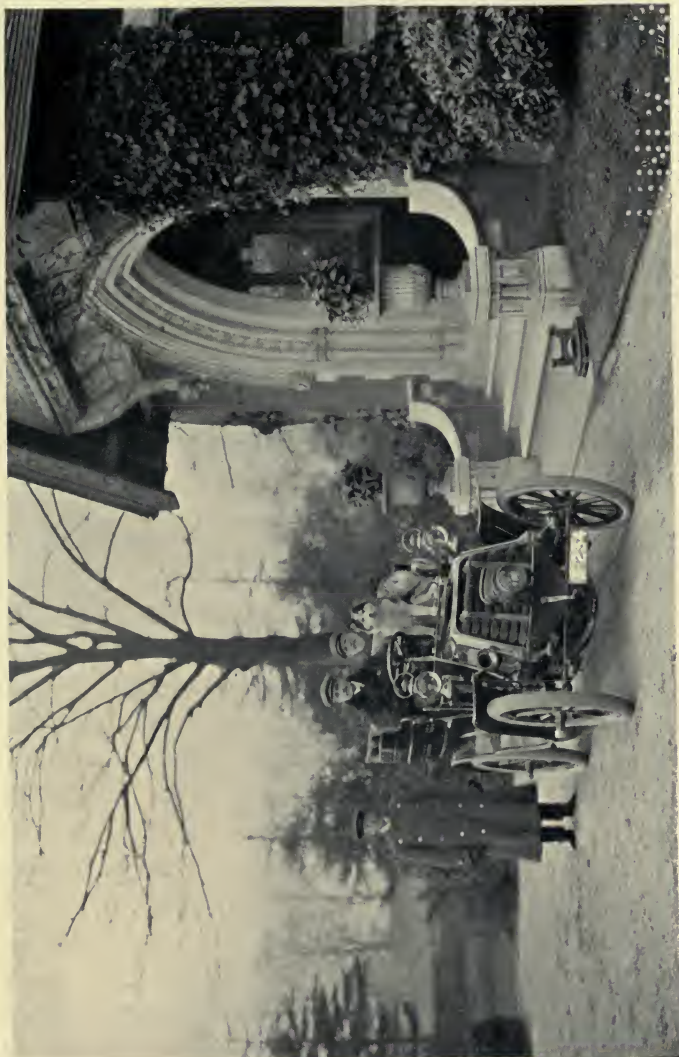
with a friend far out into the country, lunching at some country inn or seaside hotel, and returning in the evening, after an enjoyable day on the open road. When his son, an excellent driver, was of the party, and his favourite dog sat next to him, or beside the chauffeur, there was not a more cheerful and contented motorist on the road, and he and his family had motored across England in every direction before many people had realized the possibilities of long distance travel by motor car.

He was in telephonic communication with his office while yet the telephone, even to the majority of opulent business people, remained a sort of invention which might or might not be sufficiently perfected within the next twenty years to be of any use to them; and the phonograph had no sooner opened its mouth for the entertainment of the millions than it was introduced both at Wildcroft and Hollerday House, the summer residence at Lynton. In the latter place its first appearance was as profitable to a local charity as it was popular.

Lady Newnes, who showed an active and practical interest in benevolent work wherever she might be, was taking part in a bazaar, and the strange new instrument, out of the brazen mouth of which came forth, with uncanny realism, the sound of the human voice, singing, laughing, declaiming, even threatening

and scolding, by request, was carried bodily to the bazaar. At first the young Devonshire sirens who charmed guineas for "button-holes" from the pockets of opulent masculine patrons of the bazaar, were inclined to grudge its popularity to the thing that was so closely related to the classical *vox et praeterea nihil*; but even they fell a prey to its witchery when presently it began to sing "My Old Dutch" and other equally ravishing songs, or when it imitated to the life a monologue by the most famous comedian of the day, describing how that gentleman had fared on a shopping expedition to a West End draper's establishment. And when the day of reckoning came after the bazaar, and the organizers found to what an extent they were indebted to the phonograph for the financial, as well as the social, success of the undertaking, there was great rejoicing.

When he was young, his means slender, and his days brimful of work, Mr. Newnes had always time to listen, and money to give, to those who came to him with tales of real distress and difficulties. His sound common sense soon distinguished the true from the false, and though he had less patience than many men with the loafer and the ne'er-do-well, he had more than most human beings of the charity that thinketh no evil. The men with whom his work brought him into



*Photo by*

SIR GEORGE NEWNES, HIS SON, AND "EREBUS" AT WILDCROFT, PUTNEY HEATH.

[W. Plank, Esq., Putney





contact, as he drove about the country, the commercial travellers and small business people, never appealed to his sympathy in vain, and to the end of his life members of that class often came to him for help, and were generously assisted. He himself said nothing about these matters, but some of those whom he had helped upon their feet again, after they had gone under through illness or ill-luck, were not men to forget benefits, and it was they who told the tales of thirty years ago, while some of them can relate similar tales of quite a recent date. For his loyalty to old acquaintance never suffered change, and when in the years of his great prosperity he met one who had been a friend in the olden times, and had remained a clerk or traveller with only a very modest place in the social world, his manner was still the same it had been when both were young, and when Mr. Newnes, with his breezy optimism, his friendliness and urbanity, was welcomed wherever he went.

And as he gave freely and gladly when he had but little to give, so he continued to give generously, even lavishly, after he had accumulated the wealth to which the foundation was laid with the success of *Tit-Bits*. "James," he said one day many years ago to his brother-in-law, "I am going to be a rich man." Very quietly he said it, as if he himself were rather wondering at the change in his fortunes, and

there was no undue elation in his tone. It would be a pleasant thing to be a rich man; it would mean ease and enjoyment to him and his as well as to others. He would share his pleasures with his friends; and to those others into whose lives there came few, far too few, moments of ease and enjoyment he would also give out of his abundance. So, when the time came that he could give largely, he did not forget the promise he had made to himself in the past, witness his great gifts whereby the public, and especially the working classes, could benefit. Among such are the electric tramway at his native place, Matlock; the fine Free Library at Putney; and the Town Hall and Congregational Church at Lynton, after he went to live in the old Devon town. The latter benefactions were quaintly and cleverly recorded in an article which some years ago appeared in a West Country paper, and as the manner of his giving was always the same, some paragraphs from this chronicle may be quoted. It is written in imitation of the style of the old monastic chroniclers, and describes Sir George Newnes's connection with Lynton under the title of "The Story of Sergeorge the Giver," telling of his delight when, coming to the Land of Lynton, he saw that it was "a goodly and pleasant country"; how he built himself a lofty pleasure-house high on the hill, and

how, having "garnished it for himself and his people," it came to pass that "Sergeorge looked forth from his tower, which was on the Hill of Hollerday,\* and he saw that many of the people and their horses and cattle toiled slowly and with much travail from the bottom of the hill, which was Lynmouth, to the top of the hill, which was Lynton.

"And he said—Why do the people toil and strain to mount the hill by this road? And they answered him—Because there is no other way.

"Then he said—Verily this is a sore trial for the weary traveller and for the poor beasts also. I will build them a cliff railway. And he built it.

"And the people who were glad spake unto him and thanked him, and they stood before him and blessed his name.

"And after this it came to pass that Sergeorge looked forth from his tower and perceived afar off a valley which he had left behind. And behold there were many horses toiling up and down the hills that lay to the West, and they strove much to drag their heavy burdens from the city that was Barum to the city that was Lyn.

"So Sergeorge said unto his people—If it seems good unto you I will build a railway

\* Here the Chronicler slightly errs. The Cliff Railway was built before Hollerday House was erected.

from the city of Barum to the city of Lyn. And he built it.

“Then the people danced, and sang, and made a sound with trumpets and cymbals, and with much shouting.”

It should, however, be explained that the two railways did not represent actual gifts. They were both entered into on business lines, but it was Sir George Newnes who took the initiative in, and the risks of, the undertakings, and who did not engage in them solely for the purpose of making money, but, as the chronicler explains, because it pained him, the lover of animals, to see horses strain and toil painfully along the steep rough uphill roads. The boon conferred upon North Devon by the two lines is one by which the whole community profits.

The next paragraph in the chronicle, meanwhile, deals with actual benefactions bestowed upon Lynton.

“And when the town which was Lynton waxed big and contented, and many people came to dwell therein, Sergeorge arose and said—Lo! there is no meeting-place where these good people can assemble together and take counsel one with the other. Do I not well to build a meeting-hall? And they answered him—You do well.

“Then he called his chief architect before him, and he said—Build me a Town Hall



and see well that it is good and becoming to the uses thereof, and pay great heed to the requirement of these people that they complain not, neither do they have cause for disappointment. For this I will give much of my treasure to build a suitable meeting-place with many offices for the councillors, and a place where the people may dance, play and make joyful noises. And he gave it.

“Then Sergeorge looked forth from his tower which was on the hill of Hollerday yet a fourth time, and he saw that in all that fair land there were but few Church steeples where there should have been many. And he took counsel with the people and said—What will you give that yet another Church may be built ?

“And they went up unto him and said—We will give a plot of land on which to build a Church, but we have not much money. We pray you help us.

“Then Sergeorge answered them—I will give a plot of land three times as large as you have given, and also much money wherewith to build a Church, also will I give the furnishing thereof. And soon they began to lay the foundations of the holy house.”

The chronicle might be carried further still, for “Sergeorge” bestowed upon Lynton many minor benefits—minor only as compared with the munificent ones already described, which he

and Lady Newnes gave to both individuals and institutions in and around Lynton. These are too many to be enumerated. But it was no mere formality when on the day before the master of Hollerday House, the "Squire of Lynton" as he was often affectionately called by the townspeople, was laid to rest in the little graveyard at the foot of his own hill, the Rev. W. E. Cox, in the course of his Sunday morning sermon, referred with obvious emotion to Sir George as one who for many years had been the best and truest of friends to the townspeople. And when the clergyman of the Established Church and the ministers of the Free Churches at Lynton took part together in the funeral service, this surely was also a sign of the spirit by which the dead man had been animated. He had made friends of all alike, giving to men of all sects without first asking: "Thou seekest God beneath what Christian spire?"

To the Salvation Army, again, he was a staunch and generous friend, and long ago, when General Booth brought out his "Darkest England and the Way Out of It" scheme, Sir George was one of the first to contribute the sum of £1000 towards that noble and valiant attempt at bettering the condition of the unknown, untold multitude struggling in the black depths of outcast London.

Even if no scrivener with a taste and talent

for archaisms had arisen to record some of Sir George's large benefactions they would have remained as a lasting memorial of him, for such things cannot be hidden; nor should they be, if it were only in order that the example set by one ready and cheerful giver might suggest to others to go and do likewise. But somewhere in the regions from which the angel came when good Abou ben Adhem, "awaking one night from a deep dream of peace," saw him writing in a book of gold, there must be another chronicle of the deeds good men have done in secret, as they went through this world of much dumb pain and hidden suffering. And in that other-world record the name of "Sergeorge the Giver" will stand out in shining letters, for the gifts he gave silently and in secret were the best and the greatest of all. Had it not been that those through whom he gave, or those who received the gifts, had made it known how good and kind he was, no one would ever have heard of them.

Now it was a poor man upon whom consumption had seized, sent to Davos at Sir George's cost, and kept there when it was found that he had come too late to be cured, because in the high Alpine valley he could draw breath more easily than in the lowlands, where the poor lungs laboured with so much pain and difficulty. Then it was the family of one of his employees, who had been discharged and

imprisoned for gross dishonesty, whom he kept for years; and again it was a poor clerk whom he had known in the olden days when he himself was only at the beginning, and who, somehow, could not get on in the world, but was for ever struggling for a bare existence; the waiter who had served him now and then; the unpractical man of scholarly tastes; the struggling lad who was the only bread-earner of the family; the tottering crone, past work and past the power of looking after himself; the former servant who had been unfortunate in the investment of his savings. He listened to them all, attentively, kindly; and he gave to all, as long as they had not brought their misfortune upon themselves by reckless waste or vicious living—gave gently, pityingly, never *de haut en bas*, and he gave as if giving were a pleasure: which, indeed it was to him.

The fact that the best beggars of Manchester, when their profession brought them to London, made Wildcroft, Putney Heath, a favourite place for rendezvous, to which they streamed with a hopeful heart, is suggestive of the reputation for giving which Mr. Newnes had brought with him from the north. This reputation, which nothing could kill, had its foundation probably in the fact that occasionally the man in whom the heads of the "profession" had such touching faith, had made the mistake of giving a sovereign to a particularly tenacious



intruder, in order to get rid of him, a proceeding from which, however, he abstained in later years, when he had learnt that gold so spent profits no one, and least of all the recipient.

In this respect a very charming beggar, a man with a cultured voice and honeyed tongue, taught him a valuable lesson. He came to Wildcroft with a long tale of woe, this "Cambridge man," claiming help from the Member for a Cambridgeshire Division. He was very persistent, this gentleman who looked ill and ragged and, if the truth must be told, rather dissolute; and he made haste to explain that he had recently come out of a certain hospital at Cambridge; and was only reduced to his present condition because he was not yet strong enough for work. They took him in at Wildcroft, and comforted him with a dainty meal in a pleasant room, and there he revived and was glad, while his host who, somehow, did not quite believe in the story, put himself into communication with the Cambridge hospital authorities, demanding a few details as to the disease from which the poor young man had been suffering such agonies, all those long weary weeks he had spent at the hospital. A wire came back that they had never heard his name; there had been no case like his at the hospital, and they would not be surprised if the young man turned out to be a fraud. And the exit of the "Cambridge

man" from Wildcroft, if it was not less pitiful than his arrival, was even more inglorious.

But disillusion such as this, though they were not rare, never caused him to turn against private charity; they only made him more careful and perhaps a little distrustful when a sad story became too harassing, as it was told by the voluble sufferer.

Another not very popular form of assisting good works, which Sir George Newnes was frequently induced to practise, was that of presiding as chairman at one of the annual banquets at which many benevolent institutions raise a considerable part of their income, in donations or subscriptions. The chairman's duties in this connection are no sinecure. He is supposed to work hard at obtaining contributions from friends and others interested in the work; to inspire indifferent outsiders with the desire to take part in the banquet and to figure in the chairman's list of subscriptions; to head that list with his own substantial contribution; to whip up stewards, and cause them to start other lists of subscriptions; to sit through a long and elaborate dinner; to make the speech of the evening, and to listen to the speeches of many other orators whom nature may, or may not, have destined for post-prandial eloquence.

The chairmanship of such a banquet is, in fact, an honour for which there is very little

competition among men of wealth, especially if their days are as crowded as were those of Sir George Newnes. But again and again he took the chair at one of those City Hall or West End hotel festivities, and no one who did not know him very well would have imagined that the man sitting there with such a friendly, kindly, interested face, who made so genial and tactful and appealing an after-dinner speech, had come to the feast worn and tired with the day's work; that he was longing, with an inward groan, for the quiet of his home, and that, in his heart of hearts, he was just the least little bit bored by the lengthiness of the whole affair. "Why can't they give their guineas and eat their dinners at home?" he said to me one evening, when he was taking the chair at a dinner in aid of the Royal Hospital for Incurables at Putney Heath, the institution to which both Sir George and Lady Newnes were such constant friends. But even while he grumbled he seemed to repent, for he added quickly: "However, they know their own business best, I dare say." And at the end of the evening the general opinion was that he made an ideal chairman, "one who really liked it!"

Perhaps the opinion of a rival publisher, who had begun his career in Sir George Newnes's employ, may in conclusion be quoted on this subject. "Many men," said this writer, in

an article on Sir George Newnes, “ would have been spoilt by the success which has attended his efforts; but to his credit be it said that, as far as character goes, he is the same man to-day that he was when he read out that little ‘tit-bit’ to his wife, many years ago. A truly admirable trait in his character is that he has never looked askance at the friends of his comparatively humble days. Not seldom, but many times, has he stretched out a helping hand and given substantial assistance to former comrades upon whom troublous times and misfortune have come; for by him ‘auld acquaintance’ is never for a moment ‘forgot.’ It would be well, indeed, if other men who have experienced the smiles of Fortune were as ready to relieve and help those who have been favoured only with the frowns of the fickle goddess.”



## CHAPTER XIII

### A SERVICE TO SCIENCE

SIR GEORGE NEWNES, as has been shown, was quick to avail himself of any modern scientific discoveries tending to add to the conveniences of daily life. In return, one might say, for the advantages he reaped thereby, he conferred upon one great and romantic branch of science a service which those are best able to estimate at its true value whose knowledge of Polar expeditions is above that of the general public.

In the summer of 1895, Mr. C. E. Borchgrevink, F.R.G.S., having just returned from his first visit to the Antarctic regions, laid his observations before the Sixth International Geographical Congress, then sitting in London. The Norwegian explorer had sought help for further testing in practice the theories he had formed concerning the Antarctic Continent; but though the importance of the subject was everywhere recognized, and, to quote Mr. Borchgrevink's own words, while "tons of moral support were lavishly presented to me

from all sides, the funds for my enterprise did not come before my work acquainted me with one of those rare men whose brains, heart and funds, were only equalled by his spirit of enterprise.

“ In 1896 I first met Sir George Newnes, and laid my plans before him.

“ In 1898 he placed the necessary funds at my disposal for the realization of my Antarctic expedition plans.” That same summer the *Southern Cross*, the steamer designed by Colin Archer, who also designed the *Fram*, in which Dr. Nansen made his great Arctic expeditions, left St. Katherine’s Dock, London, with the Union Jack which the Duke of York, our present king, had presented to the expedition fluttering from the mast. Some idea of the importance of the undertaking may be gained from *The Times* report of the luncheon which Sir George Newnes gave on board the vessel on the eve of her departure.

“ Within the next three days the *Southern Cross* will start on her voyage to Hobart Town, and yesterday a numerous company accepted the invitation of Sir George Newnes to luncheon on board, and to give a hearty ‘send-off’ to Mr. Borchgrevink and his companions.

“ The preparations are nearly complete. The deck of the barque was crowded with sledges, kayaks, snow-shoes, ice-axes, and

stores and implements of all kinds, a large space being occupied by nearly one hundred Samoyed dogs for sledging purposes.

“Among the guests were Admiral Sir E. Ommanney, Mr. W. Ridley Richardson, Mr. Borchgrevink, Mrs. Borchgrevink, Sir Guyer Hunter, Captain Tomkins, Captain Brooke-Greville, Mr. Fieldhouse, Mr. E. Hudson, Dr. Mill, Dr. Bowdler-Sharpe and Mr. F. Newnes.

“After the toasts of ‘The Queen’ and ‘King Oscar,’ from whose subjects a large proportion of the crew are engaged :

“Dr. Mill proposed success to the expedition, which was about to undertake a work of international importance. It was a reproach to human enterprise that there were parts of this ridiculously small earth that civilized man had never reached, and never attempted to reach, and this reproach, in so far as it referred to the Antarctic regions, the munificence of Sir George Newnes, combined with the courage of Mr. Borchgrevink, would, he hoped, remove. Mr. Borchgrevink had already shown that he could do good work as an explorer, and that was recognized three years ago when the International Geographical Congress passed a resolution to the effect that it would be a misfortune if the nineteenth century should close without an effort to explore the Antarctic regions. Alone and unaided, Sir George Newnes had

fitted out the present expedition, from which great results might be expected, possibly not results of sensational interest, but of enduring value for geographical science. In the name of the British geographers he wished the expedition God-speed, useful work, and a safe and quick return. (Cheers.)

“Admiral Sir E. Ommanney expressed his interest in the object, and admiration of the equipment, of the expedition.

“Mr. Borchgrevink said he was grateful to the man who had helped him in his endeavour to accomplish the object of his ambition. He hoped to be worthy of that confidence, and sailing under a British flag presented by the Duke of York, he would be mindful of the British naval motto—‘England expects every man to do his duty.’ (Cheers.)

“Sir George Newnes said it was difficult on the crowded deck, and amid all the dock noise, to prolong the proceedings, and the heat almost induced a wish for Antarctic regions. (Laughter.) He had not intended any public function on the starting of the expedition, remembering that putting on the armour was not the time for boasting, and he would rather have waited until the vessel returned and those on board could say they had done the world some service. He would avoid saying much. No doubt the possibilities of the expedition were enormous, and he reminded them of the



paper read this year before the Royal Society, by Dr. Murray, on 'The Scientific Advantages of an Antarctic Expedition.' Many eminent men declared their opinion that the thing ought to be done, and if the Royal Geographical Society undertook the task, Mr. Borchgrevink would be glad if they followed his excellent example. He took the opportunity to say that Mr. Borchgrevink and himself had received every courtesy at the hands of the Royal Geographical Society. The reason of the expedition he would not go into. The scientific reasons were so obvious, and had been so much discussed, that all who had studied the subject would admit the possibilities were enormous, and there might be a commercial side to them. ('Hear, hear.') At the meeting of the Royal Society the opinion was expressed that a big whaler should be selected and fitted out with the best modern appliances, and that was exactly what had been done, with the best crew experience could select. How long the *Southern Cross* would be away could not, of course, be foreseen, but he hoped that tidings would reach England in six months, and that in the year 1900 he would welcome Mr. Borchgrevink on his return. It was generally known that a Belgian expedition under Captain Gerlache had gone out in another direction, and was last heard of at the Falkland Islands. It had been thought possible that the expedition

was in trouble, and Sir Clements Markham had suggested that the *Southern Cross* should go to the Falkland Islands in search of them. After giving the fullest consideration to this he thought that to go to the Falkland Islands would be a mistake. Captain Gerlache had knowledge of the route of the *Southern Cross*, and would try to meet Mr. Borchgrevink who, of course, acknowledged the first duty to humanity, and would put everything aside to assist Captain Gerlache. He hoped he expressed the feelings of all present, as he felt sure he did of thousands throughout the country, that kind thoughts would follow Mr. Borchgrevink and his gallant companions, in the hope and belief that they would triumphantly return, having done something the world would call heroic. (Cheers.)

“Dr. Bowdler-Sharpe said the keenest interest and sympathy was felt at the British Museum in the expedition, and he bore testimony to the high qualifications of Mr. Nikolai Hanson, one of the zoologists on the staff.

“Sir Guyer Hunter in proposing the health of Mrs. Borchgrevink, said she might comfort herself with the assurance that all that human foresight and experience could suggest, had been done to secure the success and safe return of the *Southern Cross*.

“The proceedings closed with the singing of the National Anthem.”

On the afternoon of August 22, 1898, the *Southern Cross* glided out of the gates of St. Katherine's Dock, and the *Westminster Gazette*, in an article from which the following extracts are quoted, described how merrily all went forth on the great adventure :

“ Once in the main stream she swept as gracefully as a swan in and out among the busy craft that filled the Thames. In appearance the ship was as gay as a ladybird—her black hull shone like a mirror; from deck to mast floated a stream of bunting, whilst from the mainmast flew the Union Jack; the foremost bore the Norwegian flag, and the mizzen-boom that of the pilot.

“ As she passed down the river she was greeted by an orchestra of whistles, some with notes as full of music as those of the nightingale, others with only the croak of a rook, but from the siren of the biggest liner down to that of the oiliest, tiniest barge-tug, all joined in ‘ Hip, hip, hurrah ! ’

“ And all the time that the down-river voyage lasted, the whistles kept up the exciting melody. At Greenwich the waterside was crowded; there were cheers and counter-cheers, and as the *Southern Cross* passed the boys' training-ships every yard was manned; bands played, and the bugle-cry sounded its greeting from the topmast stay, and, to make

the harmony quite complete, a good number of the ninety picked Siberian dogs on board took up the chorus. To tempt fair weather always to surround the ship, three of the crew had fixed their chests of clothes up on the cross-trees; and for yesterday afternoon at least, the charm worked, for the sun shone all down the route, till one of the most remarkable sunsets happened that has been seen on the Thames for many a day. The west was a sheet of crimson gold, and the river a sheet of fire. The moon rose pale and silvery, then the stars came out in a crowd; up went the lights, the bright white on the foremast and the red light on the larboard, and the green light on the starboard. The craft on the river lost form; their lights only were visible—a great mysterious crowd of will-o'-the-wisps. Gravesend was approached at 8.15, and it was decided to coal at the hulk. So the *Southern Cross* took up her station, and black diamonds began to rattle aboard. Three or four boatmen now came alongside, and a few friends who had to go ashore crept down the side of the ship into the boats, and with them some four of the younger men of the expedition, for there is to be a last breaking of bread (at least for some time) in the Mother Country. . . .

“ At 9.50 we rise from the table, and leave those who have mothers and fathers and little sisters to bid *au revoir*, in quiet corners where



even the stars do not reach. It is only three minutes to the pier. At the gateway the young explorers tread on English soil for the last time for many months to come. We go down to the pier with its pilots lolling there on the seats on the look-out for ships to come and ships to go. One member of the expedition hangs behind—the mother has to say good-bye to her only boy in England, and we wait and wait on the landing, and we talk of home, of our hopes, and of home-coming. Every one is as full of spirits as a cricket.

“The *Southern Cross* sounds her whistle again and again to tell the ‘boys’ to come aboard; at last there is a footfall on the pier. We are all present. ‘Now, gentlemen, please,’ and down the steps of the landing-stage in file they go. ‘Shove her off the mud—keep her away,’ are the words. ‘Good luck! *Au revoir! Bon voyage!*’ we cry. There is a dip of oars, through the reflections of the green, red and white lights of the next landing-stage she passes, and then disappears into the night. The lights of the ships reflect in the Thames like a myriad of floating stars, and away in the distance above, and more brilliant than they all, glows the white light on the foremast of the *Southern Cross*.

“Before the morning is here the good ship will have gone down the river, and possibly by to-morrow night will have for the time

being had her last glimpse of the white cliffs of Albion. Most cordial wishes go with all on board. May they all reach that goodly age of fourscore years and ten when man would sleep in Abraham's bosom!"

Far down South they went to live their heroic lives, reaching unnamed, untrodden regions of ice and barren rocks and endless space, taking their observations, recording new geographical, zoological and meteorological facts, with no living beings but the penguins and the seals to look on. One of the bays on the seaward edge of an ice-barrier was named Lady Newnes Bay, and twenty miles westward of Cape Washington a promontory, almost free of ice or snow, was named Newnes Land "after the generous Mæcenas of the expedition, Sir George Newnes, Bart."

Mr. Borchgrevink gives a sketch of this dark land towards the north-west of Cape Washington, which now bears the name of the man through whose munificence the voyage of the *Southern Cross* to the Antarctic Continent is numbered among the expeditions which have tried to solve the secret lying due south of the great ice barrier forming the seaward boundary of Antarctica discovered by Captain James Cook in 1772.

"Towards the west," writes the leader of the Newnes expedition, "a low peninsula

descended from some picturesque and wild-looking basaltic rocks, which stood sharply out against the white cover of Mount Melbourne. They towered up into the most fantastic shapes some seven hundred feet high. At places the pinnacles seemed in the very act of falling, and evidently did not want a very great force brought to bear upon them to do so. Through the appearance of these rocks I gathered that they had been there for some time, and it is likely that the gales in this vicinity were considerably more moderate than those prevalent at Cape Adare. Towards the north-western side, and parted from the low peninsula on the western side through a small ridge with numerous passes, a small penguin colony was thriving, and as the young ones were not so far advanced as those few which were still left at Cape Adare when we departed, they did not seem to have any immediate intention of leaving their breeding-place. At all events they were evidently well protected by the cone of Mount Melbourne from the south. Although we had to use considerable care in approaching near this promontory with the *Southern Cross*, because of the drifting pack, we effected a landing in one of our whale-boats without much difficulty. It was remarkable how the pebbly peninsula on which we landed resembled that at Camp Ridley. On this beach, however, there were no penguins,

but a great many skuas with nearly full-grown young ones. It is evident that this low ground from time to time gets swamped by waves started in the small cove to the south, between it and the base of Mount Melbourne, where evidently large blocks of icebergs break off from the ice-sheet and plunge into the cove. Vegetation was found at the place where this peninsula rose towards the east; here the ground consisted of large and small brimstones, and basalt thrown in the wildest disorder. Wonderful caves, passages and arches were found, and this dark land discovered in the middle of everlasting ice and snow, and surrounded by mighty peaks and crevices, conveyed to our minds an idea of what one of Vulcan's gigantic workshops ought to be like."

Nearly two years after the *Southern Cross* had left her moorings in the London dock, the operator of the telegraph office of a small New Zealand town was roused one day at midnight by a stranger who explained that he must send a cable to England. This was the leader of the expedition, who cabled to Sir George Newnes: "Object of expedition carried out. South Magnetic Pole located. Farthest south with sledge record 78° 50'. Zoologist Hansen dead. All well on board."

When speaking of the expedition, on which



he had spent £38,000, Sir George sometimes said, with an assumed air of pious resignation, that his share in the results was a stuffed penguin. This, indeed, stood like an alderman enthroned in the hall at Wildcroft, a magnificent specimen of its kind, with thick, sheeny plumage, abortive wings, enormous feet and eyes that seemed even in death to be on the look-out for the main chance. But there was Erebus, too, the best of the hundred Samoyed dogs which went so gaily and noisily out with the *Southern Cross*; which quarrelled with such conviction, did such fine service down in the icy south, and died so unwillingly, when food became scarce, and some had to be converted into meat for their brethren. Erebus was not the only survivor, for quite a band of these lively Siberians were put upon an island in the Pacific, by permission of the New Zealand government, but he, the finest and best tempered of all, came back to spend his remaining years in peace and plenty, in a gigantic kennel near the Wildcroft gates. From that green, shady place he ruled as overlord of all the household pets, and after having drawn sleighs and loads through Antarctic wildernesses of eternal winter, he ended by being a dauntless, experienced motorist, who was always first on the seat next to the chauffeur, his willing slave, when the car was brought to the door. And Sir George should also have

included as his share in the results of the voyage of the *Southern Cross*, the dark promontory that bears his name, far south under the shadow of grim Mount Melbourne. But best of all, there was the generous endeavour to assist in discovering the secrets of the ends of the earth over which the ages have passed like dreams and shadows, and on the barren soil and among the endless snowfields of which the conqueror man is now at last setting his first footsteps.

## CHAPTER XIV

### “ THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE ”

IN the autumn of 1892 the placards of the London morning papers were sent out one Saturday morning bearing in more or less sensational type the legend “ Sudden Sale of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.” The announcement may conceivably have left the general public quite cool, but to the journalistic world of London, and to those connected with the *Pall Mall* of that day, it was exciting enough. Those of the members of the editorial staff who had left the dear, tumble-down old office in Northumberland Street on Friday at the usual time, knew nothing of the great event that had meanwhile taken place, and were only informed next morning by those whose duties had kept them late at their post.

“ What does it all mean ? ” we asked, with the placard announcement staring us in the face, for, of course, the bill of the morning paper which had used the fattest type, had been secured and was now decorating the wall of the news-room in good journalistic fashion. It seemed so impossible, so like a poor joke,

that the *Pall Mall*, our *P. M. G.* should, or even could, have been sold, so absolutely and entirely had we felt it to belong to us. We were all young together, the whole of the editorial staff, and one and all worked for it not merely as a matter of duty, but because the paper was our pride and glory, the finest paper in the world, in the service of which there was great joy and much fun. And behind all the pleasure, the excitement and the fun there was the feeling that while it frolicked with the frolicsome and smiled with those that smile, it was at the same time bent on grave missions and deeply interested in many serious causes, politically and socially, and that its sympathies were as wide as the world. And now it was sold. What did it all mean?

“It means,” Mr. E. T. Cook, the editor, said gravely and quietly, “that unless something unforeseen happens, in a fortnight’s time we take our hats and walk out of the office.”

It was all very mysterious. Late on the Friday afternoon, the proprietor, Mr. Henry Yates Thompson, had come into the office, assembled the few members of the staff who were still at work, and announced that he had sold the paper. The name of the new proprietor was not disclosed, but since our agreements bound us for some months, no immediate changes were made, except that the editor and his first lieutenant, Mr. J. A. Spender,



declined to remain at their posts unless they had a safer guarantee that the politics of the *Pall Mall* would not be changed, than an off-hand verbal assurance to the effect that the paper would be continued on the same lines as before.

But while outwardly no noticeable alterations were made during the first few weeks after the paper had changed hands, and while the “ new people,” as we called the (to us) nameless strangers, occasionally came and went mysteriously in and out, the spirit of our old *Pall Mall* was already taking wing. During those last few weeks before the editor and his assistant left, we worked for *our Pall Mall* as people work for some one near and dear on the eve of a departure after which, humanly speaking, there will be no return, and when every service rendered to the one who is going becomes a token of mingled affection and regret. As the days pass and the end comes nearer, the undercurrent of sadness grows stronger, though every one strives to appear cheerful, in the endeavour to make the parting less of a wrench. Outsiders who had heard of the change, and knew nothing of the turmoil it was occasioning, used to say in those days, that “ the new people at the *Pall Mall* were making the paper even better than it had been,” not knowing that the new régime had not yet begun.

Presently the truth leaked out that Mr. W. W. Astor, the American millionaire, had bought the paper, and that its politics would revert to those of its beginning, when Mr. Frederick Greenwood was editor. As the Liberal party realized that in losing the *Pall Mall* it was losing its one strong and powerful champion among the London evening papers, the organ which had been controlled by Mr. John Morley and Mr. Stead, and to which Mr. Alfred Milner, then one of the most brilliant of a bevy of young Oxford Liberals, had been a daily contributor, there was a good deal of consternation and regret at the thought that in future the paper would be added to the forces of the Tory host. To the political interest in the affair was added a touch of human sympathy and admiration when it became known that the men at the head of the paper, both at the beginning of their career, had thrown up the important positions they held rather than sell their political principles. "They are not the sort of men who will long be without a post," it was said; "somebody will be only too glad to snap them up." But all the time the *Pall Mall* was turning more brazenly Tory, and there was no Liberal paper to take the place of the old *Pall Mall*.

Mr. Newnes, then Liberal member for the Newmarket Division of Cambridgeshire, had been talking the event over with his friend on

the usual Sunday morning walk across Putney Heath, and without a personal thought Mr. Newnes had agreed that here was a chance for a good Liberal to render a great service to his party. “ Why don’t you do it ? ” Mr. Tomalin asked, half jestingly. After just a moment’s reflection the answer came, “ I think I will.” Before the day was over Mr. Newnes had written to the late editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the subject; in a week’s time the plan for a new Liberal paper, to be conducted on the lines of the old *Pall Mall*, was complete, and three months later, on January 31, 1893, when Parliament met after the Christmas recess, the first number of the re-incarnated Liberal *Pall Mall*, under the new name of the *Westminster Gazette*, fluttered gaily through the lobbies, and with its green placards and posters carefully shaded to harmonize with the pale green tint of its pages, added considerably to the colour-scheme of the wintry streets, and to the liveliness of the kerbstone trade.

The whole transaction had been completed as easily and quietly as if nothing more than the organization of, say, a new cricket or chess club had been in question, instead of the tremendous undertaking of launching and financing an important daily paper. Everything had been done with extraordinary rapidity. Mr. Newnes having informed himself whether Mr. Cook would accept the editorship

of the projected paper, and conduct it on the lines of the *Liberal Pall Mall*, there seemed nothing more to be said. Quite unconsciously the founder and first proprietor of the *Westminster Gazette* had a lordly way with him, and when the question of the editorial staff was raised, and Mr. Cook explained that he thought his former staff would be willing to come over and help him with the new venture, he said only, with characteristic deliberateness: "Well, bring them all over." Again, when it came to the actual agreement between himself and his editor, and the latter asked that it should contain a clause whereby he had absolute control of the politics of the paper, his one remark was: "Why, you might refuse to support the Government and I should not have the power to stop you." Mr. Cook admitted that this might indeed be the case, but that independent support was often the best service, whereupon the agreement was entered into without more ado.

Quick decision, prompt action, careful attention to all essentials, including the slightest details by which the success of the undertaking would be heightened, together with a cheerful anticipation of success, these were the lines on which Mr. Newnes worked then as always, and with results with which neither he nor those in his employ had reason to quarrel. He never nagged or haggled, and only interfered



where proprietorial interference was unavoidable.

When it came to the preparations for the actual production of the new paper the proprietor was entirely in his element. No suitable premises could be found, so he put up a large building at the corner of Tudor Street; when machinery had to be put down he ordered the best in the market, and when it could not be manufactured in time to print the first issue there was no fuss, no confusion; arrangements were quietly made with another newspaper firm to print the *Westminster Gazette* till its own machinery should be ready. Then, when the actual day of the first appearance of the paper drew near, and he could exercise his talent for inventing new and attractive forms of advertisement, he had what he called a thoroughly good time. Nor did he make the mistake of advertising the *Westminster* in the same manner in which he had advertised former publications. The mode of advertisement which made *Tit-Bits* rise to the height of an 850,000 circulation would not appeal to the public for which the new political paper was intended. At the same time, they also liked a little sensation, and they should have it, and enjoy it, too. It must be amusing, and the sensationalism must not be aggressive. It must be of the subtle kind that lends itself to gentle dinner-table talk, to discussion among

theorists and cranks and riders of hobby-horses, and it must be of sufficient importance to interest seriously minded people.

It seemed no easy thing to combine all these high virtues in an advertisement, but he did it with perfect ease and with utmost success, and after it had become the talk of London people wondered, as usual, why in the world no one had thought of it before. It was so simple.

Instead of printing the *Westminster* on the ordinary white paper, a pale green tint was chosen, and so far from allowing readers to accept this as a matter of course, as they would have to accept the name, the type in which the paper was printed, and other technical details, special attention was drawn to the colour, and a careful explanation was added to the effect that the green tint was supposed to be less trying to the eyesight than any other.

The tired City man, who would no doubt wish to have the solace of the *Westminster Gazette* on going home at the end of the day, and who would read it in the train, had in particular been kept in mind when the colour was being chosen by the paternally concerned purveyors of the paper; and since the majority of readers, whether in train, or drawing room, or study, would read it without a doubt mostly by artificial light, under which the green tint was particularly beneficent, it

would save the eyes of all. Perhaps a *soupeçon* of a harmless joke entered into the scheme, but that was so much to the good, and the fact remained that more than one eminent oculist had actually preached the doctrine of the superiority of green paper over white as a background for print. This was, of course, only the latest development of the old theory that it rests and refreshes the eyes to look at green things in nature and green walls in the house, and that the same effect is obtained by shading rooms with green blinds, lamps with green shades, and so on.

To give this innovation all the importance it was supposed to deserve, readers of the early numbers of the *Westminster* found that even in the grave and dignified leading article the green tint was lovingly dwelt upon as “the colour of the grass, the trees and the billiard-table,” a little stretch of the imagination or the colour-sense which did not bring forth a single protest.

The editorial recommendation of the green was followed by an invitation to readers to send in their opinion as to the desirability or otherwise of the innovation, so that the fate of the colour of the *Westminster* might be decided by plebiscite. If the majority of readers voted for the green, green it was to remain; if they voted against it, the usual white paper would be substituted. In good

democratic fashion, the will of the people was to prevail.

Thereupon a veritable hurricane of letters and post cards swept into the temporary office where the infant *Westminster Gazette* was cradled while its own home was being built over the way. The storm raged for an extraordinary number of days and weeks, and the assailants of "the colour of the grass, the trees and the billiard-table" were as impassioned in their abuse as its defenders were in its praise. "No *Westminster Gazette* for me as long as it is printed on that vile, bilious looking paper;" "You've done your best to kill your paper at the outset;" "I was wavering between sticking to the old *Pall Mall* or coming over to the new one, but I can't stand your sickly colour, so that settles it." Such were the comments, typical of the communications from gentle advocates of pure white. They generally were dashed off on post cards, those favourite missives of infuriated correspondents.

But those who ranged themselves on the side of the green were just as enthusiastic in their support. "For the first time in my life I can read my evening paper in the train without straining my eyes," was the tenor of their messages; and when the harvest of opinion, including feeble pun and doggerel rhyme, classical quotation and heavy riddle and



acrostic, was gathered, and eminent oculists and opticians had, on and without invitation, given their opinion, and cranks and theorists had had their say, every one began to wonder on what side the victory would be. In the end, Mr. Gladstone, expressing warm approval, turned the trembling scales definitely in the direction of green, and gradually the storm began to abate. Now, after eighteen years, ninety-nine out of every hundred readers of the *Westminster Gazette* would probably be inclined to think that a virtue had gone from the paper if it changed its habitual green dress for that of any other colour. At the time of the battle of the green there was not a member of the staff but delighted in the contest, and most of all did the originator of the successful advertisement enjoy the joke.

It was at the time when the *Westminster Gazette* was founded that, as a member of Mr. Cook's staff, my own professional relations with Sir George Newnes began. During the first three years these did not amount to much, for the ideal proprietor of a newspaper—and Sir George was an ideal proprietor in every way—is like the constitutional monarch who reigns but does not rule, unless in a great crisis he is obliged to exercise the prerogative of the Crown.

Some years before, he had invited me to take charge of a section of a new paper he was

about to publish, and this first experience had been such that I looked forward without any trepidation to permanent work on any paper owned by him: the arrangement had been so pleasantly made, with such obvious desire to make the task easy and to show me that he had complete faith in its being performed to the best of my ability. Once he had given the work over to me I was left entirely free to choose my own subjects and to handle them as I thought fit; so that in a very short time he succeeded almost too well in dispelling my fear of editorial thunders. For, instead of always meekly acquiescing in any suggestions he had occasionally to make, I could even sometimes find it in my heart positively to rebel, with the sort of rebellion upon which he looked with good-natured tolerance, and which generally ended by his saying: "Well, I suppose there is nothing for me to do but to submit."

Once the *Westminster* was started on its way, and we all had fallen quite naturally into our places which were exactly the same as those we had occupied on the old *Pall Mall*, there was nothing to bring me into direct contact with the proprietor as such, for it was his rule all through to confer only with the heads of departments, and with these as rarely as possible. He was very careful in choosing those he put into responsible positions, but once he had placed them there he only inter-

ferred when his interference became an absolute necessity.

At the end of the first three years several important changes took place on the editorial staff of the *Westminster*. Mr. Cook resigned the editorship for that of the *Daily News*, and Mr. Spender was appointed editor in his place.

There is, by the way, an interesting paragraph in Sir George's autobiographical notes, concerning this change of editorship. "When Mr. E. T. Cook took over the editorship of the *Daily News* there came a very difficult time for me. Whom was I to appoint as his successor? It would astonish many people if I were to mention by name some of the number of men of high position in the intellectual world who applied for the post. I thought it only right to give the position to Mr. Spender, who had been next in command, and he has ever since occupied it in a manner which I have no hesitation in saying has brought high credit to himself and to the paper over which he presides."

Mr. Charles Morley, the present editor of the *Pall Mall Magazine*, retired, when Mr. Cook left, from his position as editor of the *Westminster Budget*—the illustrated sixpenny weekly, which, when the *Westminster Gazette* was started, had also come into existence, standing in the same relation to the latter in which the *Pall Mall Budget* had stood to the daily *Pall Mall*.

The *Westminster Budget* had not flourished as it ought to have done under the editorship of the man who had made the *Pall Mall Budget* widely popular at home, abroad and in the Colonies. The chief reason for this comparative non-success was no doubt the fact that the number of sixpenny illustrated weekly papers had enormously increased during the 1880-90 decade, when the new journalism in all its branches came into being, and new papers sprang up with a rapidity which was bound to result in over-production, and so bring disaster to some of these competitors for popular favour.

When Mr. Morley left, Sir George Newnes, accustomed as he was to enormous circulations and large profits, was inclined to discontinue the *Budget*, and spoke to me about it one day at Wildcroft. I was attached to, and interested in, the weekly, in the editing of which I had some part, and when confronted with the direct question whether I did not agree that it would be best to let it go, I said I thought it a pity to kill a paper which at that time had an extremely interesting, if not a large, circulation, as we knew by the number of letters and other communications from all manner of odd nooks and corners of the Empire and the world.

The idea of editing the paper had never occurred to me, and I had little time and less ambition to take over additional responsibilities. Hence, when, in answer to my mild



objection to the execution of a living paper, the proprietor said: “ Well, if you like to play with it for six months, and see what you can make of it, do so by all means,” I thought he was jesting, and paid him in what I considered his own coin by declaring that executioners had no right to harrow the feeling of the relations of the condemned. “ But I mean it,” he said. There remained nothing to be done except to obtain Mr. Spender’s sanction to my being released from some of my duties on the Daily. The whole matter was settled in less than five minutes. It was a thoroughly typical instance of Sir George’s rapid decisions, and of his method of settling a matter promptly, simply and without pettiness of any sort.

Equally typical was his attitude during the nine years that I edited the *Westminster Budget*. He was not a man to express approval in so many words, as he was also slow to chide or to find fault, but you felt as if a greater compliment could not be paid to you than when on one of his rare appearances at the office, and after making a suggestion for some change or some new feature which he thought would improve the paper, he would end by saying: “ That is what I think you might do. But of course you know best, and you must do as you like.” And the very form in which a suggestion was made was always that of the helpful critic, the diffident adviser. “ If I

were you," he would say, "I think I should make a little change in this, that, or the other feature." The autocrat or the dictator I have never known him to be; nor have I ever heard him utter a word of harsh or unfair criticism. He would take thought and trouble to help you in your work, and he would trust you absolutely, so long as you did not abuse his trust.

When, some eight or nine years ago, the publication of the present weekly edition of the *Westminster Gazette* was being planned, Sir George forfeited one of his precious Sunday morning walks to come and explain to me the projected *Saturday Westminster*, in the editing of which he wished me to assist Mr. Spender. The Golden Age of the new journalism was over by that time; Sir George had seen the rise and fall of multitudes of papers and periodicals, and most newspaper proprietors had begun to think more than twice before launching a new publication of any kind. But he was as firmly convinced that the new idea would "catch on" as he had been twenty-five years before, when he brought out his first small weekly at Manchester, and he lived to see the fine success of this the last of his many successful journalistic ventures.

On this occasion again his generous consideration for others, his unflinching tact and kindness came into play. His own idea was that since the *Budget*, though no longer a loss

to him, was not financially what might be called a good property, it should now be merged into the new penny weekly. “ You cannot both edit the *Budget* and help Mr. Spender with the *Saturday*; it is too much for one person. Now, won’t you let the *Budget* go, and devote yourself entirely to the other? The terms of your agreement will remain the same, and you will have an easier task,” he added, and when I had no immediate answer ready, he added: “ Think it over, and let me know. Mr. Spender and I won’t do anything definite about the *Budget* before we know what your wishes are.”

The kindness of it all was such that it was difficult not to fall in with the course suggested, but I could not give the word which would be the death-sentence of the poor *Budget* without one other struggle, and proposed to undertake the work on the new paper and continue the *Budget* on the understanding that if I found the work too heavy, I would let the *Budget* go. Again he agreed, with only a shake of the head at such perversity; and not till, several years later, the work on the *Saturday Westminster* had increased to a degree which made it a physical impossibility to work the two papers together, was the *Budget* discontinued at my own request. Sir George was in Canada at the time when I wrote to him that now, if he agreed, we would let the *Budget* depart, and the fact that he cabled

immediately on receipt of my letter, in order that I might as soon as possible be relieved of the double responsibilities, added to this long story a final touch characteristic of the kindest and most considerate of men.

That my personal experiences are not exceptional will be seen from the following extracts taken from Mr. Spender's tribute to Sir George Newnes which appeared in the *Westminster* after the death of the latter—

“The serious journalist could not have found a kinder or more forbearing employer than Sir George Newnes during the sixteen years that he was proprietor of the *Westminster Gazette*. In 1903, when he founded the *Westminster*, he was at the height of his fame as the pioneer of a new type of popular journalism, and there were not wanting those who predicted that he would either unduly “popularize” or grow impatient of the time and effort required to establish a serious newspaper. Nothing in the event proved farther from the truth.

“He was not one of those proprietors who try to do the work of their editor; he realized to the full that there is nothing more paralyzing to the man who has to do the work day by day and to take quick decisions on which he cannot consult any but his immediate colleagues than to be constantly harassed with the doubts and displeasures of a proprietor



who cannot be on the spot when the work is done. His advice to the present editor on his appointment fourteen years ago was: ‘Don’t ask yourself all the time what I may be thinking. I had far rather that you took a line with which I personally may disagree than that you should potter and hesitate until you can discover my opinion;’ and in the agreement which he made he yielded full political control—subject to the general lines of policy—without the slightest reserve. This did not mean that he withdrew from interest in the paper, or failed, when he thought fit, to express his opinion. . . .

“In dealing with a newspaper staff Sir George Newnes was at all times a model employer. At a time when newspaper offices were subject to many and arbitrary changes, and the position of the working journalist seemed to be growing more and more precarious, it was his special desire that those who served him should enjoy security of tenure. The readiest response met every appeal on behalf of a member of the staff who had fallen ill or needed rest; and on the inevitable occasion when a good journalist makes an honest but expensive mistake he was at pains to console rather than to reproach the offender. For these reasons the *Westminster* staff remember him gratefully as a kind, straightforward, and warm-hearted man, who made it easy for them

to do their best in the service of their newspaper.”

The experiences of the other political paper owned by Sir George Newnes, and saved by him for his party, were precisely the same. Mr. T. Rees, the editor of the *Cambria Daily Leader* writes in this connection: “During the years Sir George was proprietor of the *Leader* his relations with the staff were of the kindest character. When he was critical, he was always helpfully so, and nowhere is his memory held in greater veneration than in the office of the journal which he owned at Swansea.”

And where they knew him better than we did in Tudor Street, or his staff at Swansea; where indeed they knew him best of all—at Southampton Street, that centre of his activities—the opinion is still the same. The shirker, the incompetent, the unreliable might stand in wholesome dread of him, and might be aware that it was not well to be caught napping; but gave him willingly of their best service, and “would do anything for him,” knowing full well that the occasional sharp flare up of indignation was but a straw-fire, lasting a moment, and leaving no trace of ill-will behind. He bore no malice, an incident once closed was completely forgotten; and though as a rule he would brook no argument at the moment of irritability, he was even then not deaf to

a reasonable defence of the accused, and could see the opponent's point of view though he was human enough not to retreat at once from his own position.

A slight, but thoroughly typical instance of this happened one morning at Wildcroft. The telephone installed in the study was by no means sacred to Sir George and his secretary, the whole household making occasional use of it. It therefore happened that the various reference volumes kept in a cupboard were not always in the apple-pie order in which Sir George, who himself was extremely neat and methodical in his habits, wished all his appointments to be kept. He had obviously discovered the free and easy manner in which the telephone volumes had been deposited in the little cupboard, for one morning while dictating to his private secretary, he came to a sudden halt before it in his walk between the window and the fireplace, and flinging the two doors wide with a gesture of impatience, he said, rather impressively : “ That does not look very nice, does it, Mr. Plank ? ”

It took some courage to oppose the chief in the morning mood to which even the most mild and complacent of men are apt to give way when the sky is grey, and work heavy and complicated. But it had to be done. “ Well, sir,” replied the man at whom the implied complaint was levelled, “ seeing that

every one in the house can go to that cupboard, how can I keep it tidy? The butler is constantly sending and receiving messages for her ladyship, and her ladyship herself, as well as Mr. Frank. . . ." "That'll do, Mr. Plank, that'll do," said the critic, and resumed his walk. When "her ladyship's" name was brought into the fray, the fray must be ended; her doings were above criticism; she might do as she liked, she could do no wrong. This was often his way of a retreat from a little tussle in which he had not covered himself with glory, and in which he felt that the victory was not due to him. His pride—a very harmless touch of pride, and one to which men of his temperament mostly are prone—would not let him make full and generous confession of his mistake at the moment when the straw-fire of irritability was still hissing under the dash of cold water thrown upon it; but he was not obstinate enough to "hold his own opinion still," and the "that will do" meant surrender and apology, though it might not sound so.

The story of the *Westminster* may be concluded with another short paragraph from the autobiographical notes. "There are two kinds of political papers; one which aims at a large circulation and large profits, and another which strives for influence among thoughtful people. The latter is what the *Westminster*



*Gazette* has always been.” There is not one word of the price he paid, in actual coin, for founding and financing through all the uphill years before a large daily paper can possibly be made to pay its way; but those who know of these things will best appreciate the sacrifice in money Sir George Newnes made so generously during the sixteen years at the end of which he sold the paper to a syndicate of wealthy Liberals, who continue it, under Mr. Spender’s editorship, on the same lines as those laid down at the beginning.

## CHAPTER XV

### HOME LIFE

FROM the day when Mr. Newnes took his bride to the home at Manchester, to which he had looked forward with such eagerness ever since his business prospects permitted him to think of a home of his own, his marriage was an almost ideally happy one. The home-lover's anticipations were more than fulfilled, for husband and wife were of one accord in all essentials; and both were young enough and wise enough to adapt themselves to one another in the minor matters in which difference of taste and opinion often leads to permanent estrangement and much domestic discomfort, unless both husband and wife are from the beginning inclined to yield.

It was but a modest household at first, but it was a very cheerful one, and a large and united circle of relatives and friends shared in all its interests. And so it has remained all through the years. Of the kind of family friction by which so many an eager, ambitious man is hampered and distressed, Mr. Newnes never had any experience; his wife was at all

times the best of friends, who made his well-being her first care, and who, with her intelligent insight and practical mind could counsel as well as sympathise during the periods of anxiety which no man of affairs can escape; who rejoiced with him and was proud of his successes, and whose loyal love and devotion knew no change.

After their two boys were born, in the days when as yet the publication of *Tit-Bits* was only a shadowy idea which might, or might not, take substance some future day, there were probably few homes in Manchester, or anywhere, in which there was more of the quiet, cheerful contentment that is one of the best and rarest possessions alike of millionaire or toiler. Nor was the sunny outlook ever clouded during the years at Manchester, and it was still the same when first they settled in their permanent London home on Putney Heath.

The parents' delight in their two little lads—healthy, intelligent, pretty children—gave the crowning touch to the happy years of the first great successes; and the boys were old enough for the first plans for their future to be made half in jest and half in earnest, when suddenly the younger of the two sickened with brain fever, and in a few days was dead.

The child had, together with great physical beauty, been endowed with extraordinary

talents. When he was six years old, he began to play chess, and a year later, when he died he had been engaged in playing a game by post with his uncle, Mr. J. Hillyard. Six moves had been made, and then Arthur Newnes's short playtime was over. They think of him still with a pain which has not quite lost its note of despair. It was all so cruelly sudden, and Artie had been so lovable a child. The chess-board, standing for years in Mr. Hillyard's house, with the figures in the position of the last move of the game to which death had put an end, and Mr. Hillyard's remark, as he recalls the dark days when the little lad died, that "I felt that the next move would be in Heaven" recall Eugène Field's "Little Boy Blue," the exquisitely pathetic poem on the child who put his toys away at bedtime, and told them to wait where he had placed them, till he should come back.

“ So toddling off to his trundle-bed  
 He dreamed of the pretty toys.  
 And as he was dreaming an angel song  
 Awakened our Little Boy Blue—  
 Oh! the years are many, the years are long  
 But the little toy-friends are true!  
 Aye faithful to Little Boy Blue they stand,  
 Each in the same old place—  
 Awaiting the touch of a little hand,  
 The smile of a little face.”

When Arthur died, his father's fair hair turned grey, though he was only forty years



old. The blow was so terrible that for a time it crushed him altogether; it had come out of the cloudlessly blue sky. Only by plunging harder and deeper than ever into work could he fight down the bitter pain.

Mr. Newnes's devotion to his children had been beautiful to see. It is said that in the upright and honest man the boy never dies. In Mr. Newnes's case the boy not only continued to live, but he easily conquered the reserved and dignified man of the world; and when he played with his children there was no need that he should "pretend" to be a boy again—he simply became one for the time being, as intensely and naturally interested as the boys themselves in their childish games. It was their father who played their first cricket matches with them; who showed them how to dig and delve in the Wildcroft grounds; to play at being builders and gardeners and journeymen; who taught them to ride that wonderful new vehicle, the tricycle, which was just then coming into fashion, and who was not above taking a valiant part in the kind of warfare which is the best entertainment the world can provide for lively little lads.

There was one occasion in particular when an unforgettable assault was made which not only furnished the excitement of a real conquest of territory, but also left the conquerors in possession of a much desired

new realm. The Wildcroft grounds, though situated in the green wilderness of Putney Heath, were not extensive, and if the house should be enlarged they would be altogether inadequate, both as the gardens surrounding a beautiful home, and as a playground for two energetic and enterprising little boys who had inherited their father's great love of the open air.

For some time nothing could be done, for the Heath itself could not be bought, and the owners of the two estates adjoining Wildcroft did not seem inclined to move, an attitude with which it is not difficult to sympathize, since even now there are not many spots within twenty minutes of the centre of London to be compared to the charm of the high parts of Putney Heath, with its sense of remoteness and wild freedom. Wildcroft still stands amidst bird-haunted copses of birch and chestnut and elm; and still the pure, strong air blows over from the Surrey Hills and from the sea beyond them. The sunsets over Kingston Vale and Richmond Park, as you can see them from the western windows, are still undimmed by the mists and smoke which hang over densely populated places; and the early mornings, when the song of the lark is the only sound coming from the outside, are as dewy, and the late evenings as silent as if they were deep in the country. But the Portsmouth

Road and other roads well known and much frequented by motorists, run by, and something of its old charm is gone from the district. This change, however, has only come during the last ten or fifteen years; before then, Wildcroft would have possessed all the attractions of a delightful country house, had it not been that the grounds consisted of only a sunk lawn just large enough for a tennis-court, a small rose- and rock-garden, a narrow path bordered by shrubs, and the usual space of turf and evergreen-shrubs on either side of the glazed entrance from gate to front door.

But when he had almost given up the hope that he would ever be able to extend the grounds, Mr. Newnes heard that one of his neighbours intended to sell his house. In fact, it was already in the agent's hands. Ten minutes after this piece of news was brought to him he visited the owner of the quaint old Georgian house, asked the price of it, and agreed there and then to buy, saying only: "Why did you not come straight to me, and save the agent's fee?"

There was wild jubilation in the Wildcroft nursery when the news was brought that now at last the fence would fall between Wildcroft and the neighbour's garden, that the old house would be pulled down and a new lawn made, and a carriage-drive; that trees would be planted, and there would be no end of work

for two young men who owned a wheelbarrow and other implements of the gardener, the house-breaker and the forester. Before they undertook to assist in these tasks there would, however, be an occasion for something much more heroic. The father took his boys into a corner and discussed the great plan with them, and from that moment the three waited with equal impatience for the day when the purchase-money should be paid, and the property become theirs to do with as they liked. For the father and his two sons had conspired together to make that day a great and sensational festival, which was to begin as soon as the solicitor telegraphed that the bargain was concluded, the price paid, and the property belonged to Mr. Newnes.

How they watched and waited for the telegraph boy, those two little lads and their father! At last he came; the deed was done. And then and there the three went forth to face their old enemy—the boundary fence—for the last time, determined not to rest till it had fallen and was finally vanquished. As arranged by the instigator of the whole adventure, the gardener was there, and the groom, and the stable-man, and there were weapons with which to attack the old fence, hammers and pick-axes and poles and spades, and they all set to and never ceased hammering and battering and shaking and pushing, till the fence



began to creak and tremble, and finally it swayed and fell with a slow crackling sound, and lay on the ground and could obstruct no more. Then the conquerors rushed through the breach and disported themselves for the first time in what presently became their permanent and beautiful playground. And it would be difficult to say whether the father or his two small sons more enjoyed the fun and the excitement.

But before he had put off his winning baby ways, Artie had gone for ever, leaving upon the home a shadow which only lifted very gradually as time began to heal the cruel wound.

Of social life in the ordinary, conventional way, Sir George Newnes was not fond, and avoided it as much as he could. It often required all his wife's diplomacy and power of persuasion to make him come even to such mild and short entertainments as an afternoon reception or garden-party. "You know you promised to go," she would say, entering his study with a cheerful air of determination, and declaring that it was time to get ready. Sometimes he yielded, a little ruefully and plaintively, but sometimes he would pretend to be stern, and explain that the amount of work that day was overwhelming, and that, if he absented himself even for an hour or two, he would have to work half the night, "and keep

poor Mr. Plank at it till he drops." And both knew, all the time, that this terrible and sudden pressure of work covered only his disinclination to go and "amuse himself" in a manner which seems to please crowds of people, but which to him was dreariness itself as compared with the interest which every day of real life brought in such rich abundance.

"I cannot think why you insist on dragging me there," he would say to his wife—half in jest and half in earnest, when now and then, generally for some good and special reason, she had teased and coaxed him into joining her—and as they were leaving home he cast a look of appeal for pity at the friends he left behind playing tennis or other games in the covered court which made so admirable a playground for half-holidays. And not unfrequently it happened that half-an-hour later Sir George was at home again, having quietly slipped away from the social gathering so soon as he had greeted his host and hostess.

The shouts of laughter which greeted him on his return, received an answering, though silent, laugh from the unwilling wanderer as he came in with an air of amusement and immense relief. "I don't know what my wife will say when she finds that I have deserted her," he would say, and shake his head, as if astonished at his own daring in playing the truant; though he knew full well that of all

lenient judges she was the most lenient, standing between him and all the petty duties and obligations of social life, giving no thought to self where his happiness and comfort were concerned, and adjusting her life to his with unvarying cheerfulness and readiness.

But if, as he himself would say, he was but a "bad guest," he was the very best of hosts, who was never happier and more in his element than when his house was full of friends who would fall in with the friendly, easy family life, and make themselves entirely at home and happy. They might not see much of him in the early part of the day, for the morning hours he spent regularly in his study, and it might happen now and then that he was silent and pre-occupied after a long morning spent over proof-sheets and correspondence, business problems and perplexities. The mood, however, never lasted long; though he was not, on the whole, a talkative man, his conversation was never artificial or strained, and he was always interesting because he himself was always interested and perfectly natural. And whenever he threw off his habitual reserve, and either entered upon the discussion of some question of general interest, or drew upon his own experiences, he was a talker whose geniality and ready wit would have entitled him to a place among the popular *causeurs* of the famous salons of old.

His social tact, again, never failed him; it was as much tact of the heart as of the head, and of all the qualities which gave him his wide popularity this was the one by which most people were drawn to him. He was at all times careful and anxious to avoid hurting any one by an unkind word or allusion, not only in private life, but in his business relations. I can recall several occasions when, in connection with some wild or unreasonable request or complaint from ignorant readers or fault-finders, I was impatiently inclined to pay them in their own coin, he said serenely: "Don't be rash, and don't offend them; things are always best settled by courtesy. In the long run, although I agree that it is very soothing to relieve one's momentary feelings of indignation, it answers best in every way to be polite." And he would no more say an unkind word of an absent man or woman than he would say it to their faces. If he was obliged to criticize or reprove he did so frankly, and without anger or bitterness, and when he had done so, the incident was closed and forgotten. Whenever it lay in his power he would put people at their ease, give them a pleasant sense of their own importance or attraction, by some agreeable remark or attention; and never was the degree of his interest carefully regulated to suit the social or other importance of the person on whom it was bestowed.



A slight but entirely typical instance of this tact of the heart came to my knowledge quite recently, when a lady who has no social importance and is very far from claiming such, said to me: "I hear you are writing a biography of Sir George Newnes. I did not know him well at all, but the first time I met him has left on me such an impression that I should like to tell it to you. The whole incident is very slight and unimportant in itself, but it may be of some use to you in showing what sort of a man he was.

"I was invited to a garden-party at Wildcroft some years ago," she went on. "Not that I was a friend; I had only met Lady Newnes occasionally at the house of a mutual friend, and it was through this friend that the invitation came to me. As far as I know, Sir George had never seen me and was not aware who I was. The friend with whom I had come could not, of course, remain with me all the time, and presently I was left wandering about alone, as I did not know any one else. Not that I minded this in the least. The grounds were lovely, there was a crowd of beautifully dressed people and some well-known men and women whom it was interesting to watch.

"Presently I saw Sir George Newnes coming from the house and walking slowly towards the shady lawn. He must have noticed that I had

no one to talk to, though I tried not to appear neglected, for instead of going straight to the people he knew, and who probably interested him, he came to where I was, and began to talk in the kindest way, not for a minute or two, and as if he were discharging an obvious duty as host, but for a long time, and as if he liked it, showing me the old sun-dial on the sunk lawn, the monument where the first telegraph station had been in the grounds, and only leaving me when, in the refreshment tent, he had seen that tea was brought to me, and my friend had come back and joined me."

All through the summer Sir George lived as much an outdoor life as a busy man, whose work is at his desk, can possibly do, and golf on Wimbledon Common, and motoring all over the country gave to his fine face the healthy outdoor colour which went so well with the clear eyes with the young look in them, and with the prematurely white hair. But I am not sure whether he did not enjoy his home life even more during the winter, when no blue skies and sunny spaces lured him from a game of whist or auction-bridge; or, best of all, from the chess-board, for chess remained his favourite indoor game; and the facts that he was the leader of the House of Commons Chess Club, the president of the British Chess Club and the organizer of the Anglo-American chess matches, which were played by cable, and for which he

provided the trophy, show that his interest was not confined to a quiet game at home.

The *Field*, in its obituary article on the death of Sir George Newnes, wrote—

“An all-round sportsman, Sir George’s favourite pastime was chess. Joining the Manchester Chess Club, he soon became one of its leading members and hon. secretary, which post he held till late in the ’seventies, when he conceived the idea of providing light and wholesome literature for the masses. With his well-known exuberant virility the project was no sooner conceived than it was put into practice in the form of *Tit-Bits*. During the following ten years Sir George had abandoned the practice but not the love of the game, and as soon as he was established in London he joined the then newly established British Chess Club; he became its president, and it is no secret that through his instrumentality, the splendid house in King Street, Covent Garden, was made available for the club, where the best talent foregathered. The Universities played their annual matches at the club, with due *éclat*. Many interesting events took place under the auspices of Sir George, the annual visits to the Paris *Cercle des Echecs*, tournaments, correspondence matches with Liverpool and St. Petersburg, and Sir George provided the stakes for a match between Dr. Lasker

and Blackburne, Teichmann and Mieses, and other events too numerous to mention. Sir George became the leading spirit of the British Chess Association; he provided the splendid amateur challenge cup now in the custody of the B.C.F., and also the trophy for the Anglo-American cable matches, which were started at the British Chess Club, and are now continued by the City of London Chess Club. Sir George was no mean adept at the game himself, and it was his pride that he never lost a match game, playing regularly for the Manchester Chess Club in his earlier days. He never travelled without a chess-board, and many a good game was fought on his yacht, the *Roxana*, during the cruises to Norway and the Mediterranean. The last important event with which Sir George's name was pre-eminently connected is the London International Congress, Sir George having been president of the organizing committee, and it was he who issued the preliminary circular to the chess clubs."

During his younger years he joined readily in all manner of social indoor games, and I remember a Boxing-night long ago on which I received for the first time the warm hospitality of Wildcroft, when we acted charades, in which Sir George, though he took only minor or not very garrulous parts, always managed





Photo]

LADY NEWNES,

[Walter Adams & Keatinge]



to raise shouts of laughter from the audience, and make it difficult for us other actors to preserve the dignified gravity of stage heroes and heroines. And many years later, not very far from the end, when he had done with amateur acting and nearly all other diversions of his light-hearted youth, he showed one day that the talent was still there, though it was now never exercised.

Lady Newnes and I had been discussing the Christmas Fund of the *Westminster Gazette*, which, among other things, provides weekly pensions of half-a-crown for a number of old people. A new pensioner was to be added to the little band, and as we sat by the fire talking about the old man's means, and the luxury with which he would imagine himself surrounded when suddenly his weekly "income" of five shillings received the magnificent addition of two-and-sixpence. "He will think himself a millionaire," said Lady Newnes. Sir George, who had come in and quietly joined the circle, asked now and then a question about the Fund and the old folk whom it benefits, and when we had decided that the new candidate should be admitted as a pensioner he said very solemnly: "Lucky old boy! It sounds delightful—half-a-crown a week, as regular as Saturday comes round, and nothing to be done to earn it. I really think I should like that pension myself. What do you say? Could

you make me one of your pensioners ? ” “ Yes, easily,” I said with equal solemnity ; “ I promise to give it to you regularly once a week as soon as you have given the usual proof that you are over sixty years old, have less than ten shillings a week to cover all your expenses, are now too feeble for work, and without friends who can support you. The only thing you have to do is to come to my door every Saturday morning—shall we say at six o’clock ?—hold out your hat for me to drop the half-crown in, and to say ‘ Thank you ’ as nicely as you can.” Yes, he said, that sounded well, got up and walked out of the room, as we thought, to return to his work, as he often did on quiet evenings. In a few minutes, however, the drawing-room door opened, and in came and hobbled a bent old man, in a slouch hat carefully battered out of shape. Leaning with trembling hands upon a stout cudgel, and with his face hidden by the brim of the hat and by the upturned collar of his overcoat, he limped up to us, coughing an old man’s cough, and saying in a wheezy voice that he had come for his “ ’arf-crownd,” if the lady would kindly give it to him. It was a piece of excellent acting, and since it was by his sanction that the *Westminster Gazette* Christmas Fund was started, he being ready and willing to let a member of the staff devote three months entirely to this work, and to pay all expenses



connected with the Fund, he might well be allowed this little joke, without appearing in any way unfeeling or indifferent to the lot of those who are old and weak and poor.

In the years of his early manhood, when for the sheer love of tramping, Mr. Newnes spent many a holiday on the open road, he often had quaint opportunities of displaying his histrionic talents with great success. On one occasion he and his brother-in-law, Mr. J. Hillyard, had been overtaken by a shower, and then happened upon a piece of very muddy road. Their boots were sodden, and caked with mud; their clothes spattered, and their general appearance was anything but orthodox. With coat-collars turned up, and the air of gloomy silence about them which falls upon tired and hungry pedestrians when the clouds are gathering and the wind begins to whistle while they are far from shelter, the two might easily be mistaken for tramps by any one inclined to think them such.

Presently, while they were making a halt on a lonely moor, a specimen of the genuine professional fraternity of tramps hove into sight, and joined them as a matter of course, obviously having ne'er a moment's doubt that they belonged to his order, and hailing them in that belief. Mr. Hillyard said nothing, but with a rapid glance of warning his brother-in-law fell at once into the part attributed to him,

talked tramp-language to the best of his ability, exchanged experiences with the stranger, and gratefully accepted advice and information as to the houses and farms in the neighbourhood where money and food, and perhaps an article of clothing, would be forthcoming if they would go and ask humbly at the back door. They walked together for a while, and the genuine tramp never suspected that he was the only professional gentleman of the party. When taking leave of them, as their roads divided, he expressed the hope that they might meet again, and continue the good comradeship of their first encounter.

The good pedestrian was also a good dancer, though his last terpsichorean performance took place after he thought he had renounced the pleasure for ever. He and his brother-in-law had been together in the north of England, and now, on their way home, had gone to a country station at which they were to board the Scotch night-express on its way to London. On arriving at the station they were informed that the train, for some reason or other, would be some hours late. It was a dreary outlook. But there was a small inn close by, and to it they went to pass the time over a meal. Still, when they had finished their frugal supper, there was a long hour to wait.

Then, through the gloom and the silence of the best room of the tavern there came the

merry sound of a fiddle. They were both young, fond of music, and easily entertained. Hence they followed the sound, and came to a room where evidently the servants of the establishment and their friends were having a party. The two strangers watching at the open door were soon discovered, and one of the railway porters who had seen the present Duke of Argyll occasionally travelling up and down the line, spread the exciting news that the taller of the two was Lord Lorne, to whom Mr. Newnes in his early manhood bore at first sight a striking likeness, and for whom he was often mistaken.

This was sensational enough, in all conscience, but when the supposed nobleman and his friend, who no doubt was also a member of some august family, asked whether they might join in the fun, and invited some of the belles of the ball to a dance, the villagers began to see their entertainment in the light of a very aristocratic function indeed. Nor would they believe the supposed nobleman when, being addressed as "my lord," he disclaimed his right to any such title. That was only because he wished them to be at their ease, they said, and continued to bask in his smiles till the belated train came in and whisked the distinguished strangers away.

And if, in the neighbourhood of the north country village a buxom, middle-aged matron

still occasionally tells the story of how on a certain winter night thirty years ago, she danced with the duke who married a daughter of Queen Victoria, it is not improbable that she is repeating the tale of the two travellers from the south, and the belated Scotch express.

After Sir George's only surviving son, Mr. Frank Newnes, had finished his education, and been admitted to the Bar, he entered his father's business, and came to live at home. From that time informal dances, for which the covered tennis-court made an excellent room, were frequent enough at Wildcroft, for both Sir George and Lady Newnes were very fond of the society of young people, asking for no better entertainment than to watch, and in their quiet way to share, the high spirits and merriment of their son and his friends. But Sir George himself no longer joined the dancers, and was well satisfied with playing the part of looker-on.

A pleasant feature of home-life at Wildcroft was Sir George and Lady Newnes's love of animals. You could not be long in the house without seeing a graceful Persian beauty—its "blue" coat and feathery tail groomed to perfection—walk with an air of immense superiority into boudoir or drawing-room, gently observant, choosing its place with calm deliberation and occupying it as if the best were just good enough for it. If you saw the



master at his writing-table, a dog was sure to lie at his feet; if you met him in the grounds, the dog was at his heels, and when he drove or motored, the dog sat in the car or carriage. The very proper and commendable rule which all lovers of pet animals frame so piously in theory, and disregard so wickedly in practice, that no pet is to be fed in the dining-room, or receive donations of things good to eat off the luncheon or dinner table, obtained in the present case, and was chiefly honoured in the breach, the exceptions to it coinciding numerically almost exactly with the number of meals served.

At the beginning of a meal everything looked as if this were indeed the model household, in which the pets had been made to understand that at meal-times they must shine by their absence. Then suddenly a dainty fore-paw would be laid on the mistress's arm, and the Persian beauty, standing straight up and surveying the table with greedy, calculating eyes of yellow fire, would make mutely eloquent appeal for something in the nature of a liver-wing, and the wise butler would without a word produce a small dish into which a choice morsel was quietly placed to be dealt with under the table.

The master would not even pretend to observe the rule, but when the Airedale or Pom or Samoyed sitting by his side began to wag

a friendly tail, or utter the sigh of greed or gluttony into which an intelligent dog knows how to put such worlds of longing and weary resignation, he would satisfy the supplicant's highest hopes without delay. "We don't allow them to be fed at table," he would say to a visitor whom he knew to share their love of animals, and with a glance of understanding at Lady Newnes, "but we'll make an exception just to please you."

In the course of years many pets came and lived and disappeared, migrating with the family when they went to their summer residence at Lynton, and living lives of much freedom, peace and plenty. But the greatest of all was Petz of Hawarden, a black Pomeranian, and son of the famous Petz who was for many years Mr. Gladstone's daily companion. Petz the Great, and his wife, equally well-bred and aristocratic, had been brought over from Germany by Mrs. Harry Drew, Mr. Gladstone's youngest daughter. After they took up their residence at Hawarden, Petz, forsaking all former loves, attached himself at once, and with a passionate attachment, to Mr. Gladstone, and one of the prettiest of the many attractive domestic scenes at Hawarden Castle which I remember, is that of Mr. Gladstone sitting in his usual place in the window corner of his library, with little Petz at his feet, asleep with the sort of slumber in which

both ears and one eye are kept open for the detection of disturbing influence which may be threatening. The old man's magnificent head, bent over his book or manuscript, standing out ivory-white against the window and the green silence beyond it; the crowd of books all round the room and on the shelves jutting out from the walls; the Beaconsfield bust above him, between the windows, so strangely lifelike with its mysterious smile; the sense of deep, unruffled peace pervading the room, and then the small black dog keeping guard over his old master: it was a beautiful, and a touching picture.

Petz, what time he could spare from his duties as Mr. Gladstone's bodyguard, was an excellent husband and father, and some of his descendants are still great in the land, while he, of course, has long ago gone to sleep somewhere in the greenest and quietest parts of Hawarden Park, where the legend of many a Hawarden household pet can be read on moss-grown stones, and where, in May, sheets of wild hyacinths spread their blue shimmer over the little graves. In fact, Petz died soon after Mr. Gladstone left Hawarden for his last winter in the south; and little Dorothy Drew often tripped through the park to put a wreath or posy on the old dog's grave, on the headstone of which is engraved the inscription "Faithful unto Death,"

When Petz I. was in his prime, he had a son who was endowed with nearly all the father's distinguished qualities. But there being many other pets and Petzes at Hawarden Castle, Mrs. Drew decreed that Petz II. must go out into the world, and that he should be sold for the benefit of a certain charitable institution in the parish where Canon and Mrs. Drew were then working. Mrs. Drew had told me this, explaining, however, that the dog would only be sold to friends, or friends of friends, who would be sure to give him a good home. Knowing that Sir George Newnes's admiration for Mr. Gladstone, if nothing else, would incline him towards the offspring of the faithful Petz, and hoping that my account of the ravishing beauty and super-canine wits of Petz II. would do the rest, I told him of the dog. "How much does Mrs. Drew want for him?" he asked, and a few days later there arrived at Wildcroft a lively, fluffy pup, pitch-black, the image of its famous sire. Sir George was away from home, but the little creature went into his room at once, and settled there, the love of bookish places being perhaps part of his heritage, and made friends forthwith with Mr. Plank, the private secretary. Then Sir George returned, and Petz II. would henceforth love and obey no one else, though he was friendly enough, in an offhand way, with the rest of the household.



At first this utmost devotion was charming and pretty; complimentary too, in the highest degree, for, as every animal lover knows, the immediate attachment of a dog to one who is a stranger to him, is far more complimentary than that which is proverbially known as the sincerest form of flattery. When the master came out of his room, in the morning, there stood Petz on the threshold, ready to accompany him downstairs; when he sat down to breakfast, Petz also was there; did he go for a stroll on the Heath, Petz's black nose pushed through the side-gate just in time before the gate closed; whenever the carriage was at the door, Petz sat in his seat before any one could say him nay, and it is impossible to say how often he was stolen and brought back for a reward, for if his master went out and left him behind, Petz would somehow manage to get away, and go hunting far and wide, in search of him.

This was sometimes troublesome, but it was not the worst result of Petz's devotion. There were days when Sir George was in a very restless mood, and when he could only think while moving about. At such times he would walk for hours to and fro, from his study into the library, and thence into the hall; then out into the grounds, across the lawn, all round the paths, pacing in all many miles, till the problem which he had been turning over in his mind,

had been solved. And all the time, hour after hour, the little dog was at his master's heel, taking every turn, now into the house, now out again, till he began to pant and droop, and till his tiny feet were tired and sore.

In his absorption the master might not notice these signals of distress, but when he did, and put the dog indoors, the lamentations bursting from poor Petz were such that his imprisonment became unendurable to others as well as to himself. Then he would be released, rush out and go to heel again, and flag and pant and follow on and on, till the sight was so pitiful that, in order to give the dog a rest, Sir George had to curb his own restlessness, and sit still for an hour or two, while Petz went peacefully to sleep—with one eye and both ears open.

Of his horses too, Sir George was fond. Not in the doubtful way of those people who say so patronizingly: "Oh yes, I am very fond of animals, in their right place"; which, interpreted, means that the dog is left to the servants or stable-people's care, or is chained up in a dull and dreary place; that the cat is not considered at all when arrangements are made for the household during the absence of the family; and that the horses, as long as they look "smart" in harness, and give no trouble on the road, receive no further thought. That was not Sir George's way of being fond of

animals. He informed himself as to their well-being when they were not under his eye, and woe to any one who abused the power over "dumb things" which is given to a great extent into the hands of human beings.

Before he entered his brougham, on going to town, his quick eye saw at a glance whether there was anything amiss with horse or harness. If his coachman did not see to it that proper care was taken of the horses in every way, he found that his otherwise easy-going employer would allow no slackness in this matter, and if an animal that had served him well fell ill, nothing was left undone to ease its suffering.

He had an especially beautiful horse in which he took a particular pride and pleasure. One evening he sent a friend from town home in the carriage, with the spirited and intelligent "Orange," to draw it. The road was being mended part of the way, the horse stumbled, and broke the skin of both knees very badly on the new metal. Everything possible was done, but in a few days' time the veterinary surgeon had to tell Sir George that though the horse would still be capable of working, the scars would be so unsightly that he would not again be fit to draw the carriage, the suggestion being that the creature should be sold for hack-work. He looked at poor Orange with the beautiful head, the glossy coat and the injured knees, and then said quietly:

“No, if he is no longer fit to draw my carriage, he shall at least not be sold into slavery. Rather than let him come to that I’ll have him shot.” And so poor Orange’s fate was decided; he did not fall upon evil days.

From the Southampton Street window, through which he observed so many things, he kept a look out on the carts and horses employed in his business. One morning he saw a small van-boy, who was left in charge of a cart, beguile the time with pulling the horse’s head this way and that, to the creature’s bewilderment and obvious discomfort. “Send that boy up to me,” he said, and when, ten minutes later, the urchin left the editorial office he knew exactly what his employer’s opinion was of boys who take a pleasure in giving pain to helpless creatures. “I’ll find you better employment than pulling a horse’s head,” was the parting injunction; “or we might even be inclined to dispense with your services altogether, if we catch you at that game again.”

One of the first cases with which Sir George had to deal after being made a magistrate at Lynton, was that of a poor man whose horse had strayed into the road and helped himself to a mouthful of something inside a fence that “wasn’t his’n.” When he had listened attentively to all the details of the case, he refused to impose a fine. “It would come hard on the poor horse as well as on its owner,” he said.



All these are trifling things, but they are worth re-telling, perhaps better than more important ones, because such actions are done almost instinctively on the spur of the moment, and go a long way to show how kindly was the heart of the man, and how considerate he was in his dealings with all living creatures, especially with those who, as the world judges, are of no importance.

## CHAPTER XVI

### LYNTON

SIR GEORGE NEWNES sometimes said of himself in all sincerity that he represented the average man. Readers of the story of his life are by this time aware that in many respects this was far too modest an estimate. He had many qualities which set him above the average person, and one in particular which is extremely rare. Great and sudden prosperity came to him in early manhood, and his was the temperament which fully appreciates the ease and enjoyment which wealth is able to procure. Without ever overstepping the boundaries of good taste or ostentatiously displaying his possessions before the world, he made his surroundings as pleasant and luxurious as possible, and crowded his holidays both at home and abroad with as many and various diversions as he filled his working days with serious occupations, sharing whatever he did in the most generous manner with friends. But unlike most who are placed in similar circumstances, he never grew blasé or tired of his amusements, and his enjoyment of

the latest holiday or hobby before his health broke down, was as fresh and keen as in those wonderfully happy days when, at the age of thirty, he suddenly found that many of the beautiful things for which he had hoped and longed, though he had never envied them while they were beyond his means, were now within easy reach.

One of the greatest desires of his life which he could satisfy, thanks to his prosperity, was that of being as often as possible near or on the sea. For to him the sea was not the evil, fearsome thing it is to a few of us, nor the sad dividing line which Matthew Arnold saw in "the unfathomed, salt, estranging sea." He loved the sea with a strong and unchanging love, and the last time he was out of doors, a few days before his death, he was carried on to the lawn high up on his Devonshire hill, on a glorious day in May, to look once more upon the wondrously beautiful view that had given him such pleasure all through the years; the great foreland rising beyond the town of Lynton out of the silvery waters of the Bristol Channel, and beyond the waters the Welsh hills, far away, faint and opalesque, like the hills of dreams.

Sir George himself held the theory that in most people born inland this love of the sea is far more intense than in those born near the coast, and that their affection increases

with the distance of their home from the sea-board. He being born within a few miles of the very centre of England, it followed that he must be counted among the greatest lovers of the sea. To this natural inclination was added an inherited passion, for his mother, as has been told, would every now and then follow a mysterious call of the sea, and flit quietly from her Midland home to indulge in a short sea-trip all by herself, so that she could give herself up wholly and fully to the fascination of the wide waters.

His elder brother Edward had inherited this same passion to such a degree that, after often and vainly trying to obtain his father's consent to going to sea, he ran away from home, joined a ship, worked his way up, earned his captain's certificate, and soon after lost his life when his ship was wrecked off the dangerous coast of Brest, and when he plunged into a terrific sea trying to rescue a drowning comrade.

Many years ago, as soon as Sir George found that he could leave his business for some weeks in winter and do a good deal of his work away from town, he took a winter residence in some pleasant sunny place on the coast, and during the last twenty years of his life he and his family usually spent a month or two early in the year, when our English spring is doing its best to rob life of its charm, yacht-



ing in the Mediterranean or the Adriatic, inviting a party of friends to join them, first in a yacht taken for the season, and later in his own beautiful vessel, which for some years was considered the finest private yacht owned by an Englishman.

Nearer the end of his life he also spent several winters on the Nile, Egypt having a strange fascination for him: the great waterway, up which he often went as far as the Second Cataract, revealed its beauties to him long before it became one of the popular highways on which the well-to-do winter tripper disports himself. But the Nile never drew him like the sea, and one reason for his wintering in Egypt was that, after his health began to show signs of giving way, it was considered that life on the quiet river, flowing through a country pervaded by the soothing spirit of a great and immemorial past, would help to restore him.

He encountered adventures wherever he went, as all men do who go on their travels with an imagination as vivid, a mind as keenly alive as was his to the picturesque, the dramatic, the unusual, and with a natural readiness to be interested and entertained. Indeed, so numerous and various were his experiences that he was beginning to think of writing a volume of yachting stories as soon as those looked-for days of leisure should be at hand

which he was not destined to see. He jotted down some notes on events and incidents which happened to him at Corsica, at Jaffa, where he was nearly drowned, at Venice, and here and there at places on the French and Italian Riviera, but the notes are too cursory to furnish material for anecdotes or stories.

One delightful story, however, Sir George told me himself one day at Wildcroft, when he had come to luncheon looking tired and just a little cross. He would not speak at first, and I told him he reminded me of the captain of a certain pleasure yacht who used to come in to luncheon after a long morning on the bridge as grim and unsociable as could be. Then after the first course or two the cloud would lift from his face, he would shake himself, turn to his neighbour and say, with a beaming smile, "*Now* I feel better," and for the rest of the meal the captain's table would be the merriest in the room. The story turned Sir George's thoughts to the sea, and to his own cruises among the Norwegian fjords. From the way he spoke of these summer holidays I imagine that they had charmed him even more than those down in the south.

His yacht, the *Albion*, was anchored for the night at the head of the fjord. It was in June, when the light of the midnight sun, which rises again before it has quite set on the distant horizon, constitutes all the night

that falls upon those scenes of grim gigantic rock and mighty waterfall and gurgling green waters. To those, by the way, who have never spent consecutive weeks between June and August in the land of the midnight sun this condition of things may seem ideally attractive, but in reality it has a few serious drawbacks; and after the sun has shone for six weeks on end all day and all the night into your white-walled cabin on board, or into your beautifully clean, whitewashed bedroom at the village inn, you may well be forgiven if you begin to range yourself on the side of the wicked ones who loved darkness better than light, even though you may not be conscious of your deeds having been as particularly evil as those of the original lovers of darkness appear to have been.

Late on one of those glowing northern summer evenings Sir George was watching the gorgeous, silent scene from the deck of his yacht. Presently he noticed a small Norwegian pleasure boat put off from the landing-place of the village at the fjord head, not at all an unusual sight, since the natives, and especially the summer visitors at the places ashore, reserve the cool twilight for their amusements, and rest during the hot hours of the day. In the boat were two ladies and a gentleman; one of the ladies rowed, the other steered. It often happened that strangers

rowed out to see the beautiful yacht that lay like a white sea-bird upon the water, and the owner of which was known to be a kindly, courteous gentleman, who would allow them to come on board and look over the vessel.

As the boat drew near, the inmates obviously not wishing to intrude at this late hour, Sir George called across, asking whether they would like to come on board, since his own family and friends were still assembled in the drawing-room. Yes, a fresh young voice with a foreign accent called back, they would be delighted to come, if it were not too late. And so they came on board, the Norwegian clergyman, his wife, and her fair young sister, a tall girl with an aureole of golden hair round her winsome face, and with the peculiar grace and charm which the fairies of the saga-haunted north bestow upon some of their favourites.

She alone of the three talked English, but Lady Newnes and her niece, Miss Jessie Hilliard, gave them all so cordial a welcome, and the two girls especially made friends so easily over a common interest in music and song, that in half-an-hour's time the party on the *Albion* was merrier than before the arrival of the strangers and the fair Ida sang old Norwegian songs to a delighted audience. The impromptu midnight concert ended in an invitation from Lady Newnes to the young girl to join the yacht for a few days, and



be taken to a place farther north where she had never been, and which she would like to see. She would love to come, she said, but could not, because she had promised to be the bridesmaid next morning at the wedding of a rich peasant girl. It was to be a real, old-fashioned country wedding, at which all the ancient customs would be observed, and old national peasant costumes worn; the sort of wedding which Grieg had in mind when he wrote the "Wedding Procession" music. Ida, the town-girl, must not miss the chance of seeing it while she was on a visit to her sister and brother-in-law. But would it not interest the English ladies and gentlemen, she added in her pretty, broken English, to see the old-world function that would take place at her brother-in-law's church? Norway would soon be too civilized to want such simple ceremonies any longer; they were already of the past in all but the most remote country places.

The suggestion was received with great approval, and next day one of the prettiest and quaintest ceremonies imaginable was witnessed by the English visitors, who were entertained at the northern manse with simple, gracious hospitality. The first favourable impression having been confirmed on both sides, the Norwegian girl, who turned out to be a niece of the famous novelist, Jonas Lie, joined the yacht

and became one of the most popular members on board. Nor did the friendship which had begun at midnight, and under such romantic circumstances, end there, for Fröken Lie, before her marriage to a Norwegian judge, spent some happy months at Wildcroft, Carlton House Terrace, and Lynton with the friends who had, as Sir George used to say, "picked her up out of the water" and who gave her, in her own words, "the happiest time I have ever had."

It was his love of the sea which guided Sir George to the place that was to become his favourite residence, and where he was destined to spend the last year of his life in comparative happiness after he was obliged to withdraw from all work. Many years ago he and Sir Thomas Hewitt, K.C., had become acquainted at the British Chess Club, of which Sir George was president and Sir Thomas vice-president. They made friends over the game to which both were devoted, and Sir Thomas occasionally spoke of his Devonshire home, and in return had to listen to a good deal of chaff as to his affection for a place eight hours by train from London. As if there were not plenty of country districts just as pleasant and beautiful as Lynton, which it took a whole day's tiresome train journey to reach!

Shortly after Lady Newnes and Lady Hewitt

had also met and become friends, Sir George and his family were invited to spend a few weeks in summer with Sir Thomas and Lady Hewitt at their Devonshire home. This was before the days of motor-cars, and from Barnstaple Lynton could only be reached by coach or private carriage, the journey uphill and down dale being long and not altogether pleasant to any one with a spark of imagination and pity. For the hills were lengthy and very steep, and the sight of the horses toiling painfully up, and struggling down with almost equal difficulty, would go a long way to spoil the traveller's pleasure in the beauty of the scenery.

Sir George, who had a perfect horror of cruelty to any living thing, especially to creatures so helpless as an animal in the service of man, was not too favourably impressed with the long drive from Barnstaple to Lynton, although his host had thoughtfully provided two extra horses to draw the carriage up the last steep hill leading to his house.

At the moment when these horses came in sight the travellers were just watching from their carriage another horse being forced down towards a rushing river by the too heavy load of trippers behind it; and what would have happened to this party had not a thick wall stopped them on their road to ruin, it is not pleasant to contemplate.

The first sight of Sir Thomas Hewitt's home,

which lies remote and beautiful on the hill-slope, in the greenery of fragrant woods and pleasaunces, wrapped in an old-world atmosphere of deep repose, with here and there a glorious glimpse of the sea below and far away, drove the thought of the distressful carriage-drive out of Sir George's mind, but no sooner had he and his friend the chance of a quiet talk than he broached the subject. His fertile brain had already worked out a plan for putting a stop to all the torture to animals, all the danger to travellers by road. More than this; the realization of this plan would also bring increased popularity and therefore increased prosperity to Lynton and the entire district.

“Has it ever occurred to you,” he asked his host, “that this river which rolls down like a torrent might be harnessed and made to bring up every ton of coal and every passenger from Lynmouth to Lynton, without any cruelty to the poor, labouring beasts, and any danger to human life?” Yes, said Sir Thomas, the idea had often been considered, but for one reason or another it had never been definitely taken up. He himself was fully persuaded that a cliff railway, worked by water-power, would be an immense boon to the place. “Is there any one in the place who is likely to undertake the construction of such a railway?” Sir George asked. There



was a certain man who might be inclined to take the matter in hand ; he was asked to call the same night after dinner and “ talk about it,” Sir George, with habitual eagerness, being anxious to carry out the project without delay.

To quote once more from his own notes—

“ That night we fixed up a plan by which we could make a cliff railway. I took the rest in hand. In a month the work was begun. In two years the railway was opened, with thirty pressmen down from London to report it. At that time it was the steepest inclined railway in existence. It has since been running for twenty years, and can boast of never having lost a parcel or a passenger. The only mechanical part of it for which I was responsible was a provision that the man at the wheel should do something before the car could move. The arrangement is that he has to lift the brake off, and keep it off, in order that the car may proceed. If the brakesman does not do his duty for any reason, the brake acts automatically. Whatever might go wrong the worst that could happen, up or down, would be that the car would stop.

“ We have four or five other automatic brakes, and I remember at the luncheon held at the Valley of Rocks Hotel on the opening day I explained all these provisions for the safe working of the lift in detail. When

had finished some one called out 'But what if the yall fail?' So I said to him: 'Well, if they all fail, the car can only stop in the middle of the track, as I have explained, but if you wish for more information as to what would follow if everything happened that can not happen, you must try to make a record passage between Lynton and Lynmouth, cause all the brakes to refuse to act and all the other appliances for the safety of passengers to fail, and then notice the result.'

There is a little story in connection with the great opening day of the Lynmouth to Lynton lift—as the cliff railway is locally called—of which I am reminded by Sir George's obvious satisfaction that the event brought thirty London reporters to Lynton. He says nothing of this incident in his notes, but I am sure I may be pardoned for re-telling the story, since he himself, after a moment's astonishment, was the first to laugh at it right heartily.

From the Lynmouth-Lynton point of view the opening of the line was, very naturally, a most imposing and important affair, a thing to be taken very seriously indeed. What would life in quiet country towns and villages be, if the inhabitants were not wise enough to make the most of little things? And this, after all, was not by any means a small thing, since besides being an immense boon to the

natives, it would bring a far larger number of American and other tourists to the most beautiful part of Devonshire, so soon as it became known that it could be reached easily, and without that toilsome, precipitous climb at the end of the long coach-drive. Still, from the unsympathetic, or perhaps scornful, outsider's point of view the stir and commotion which, for this one day, put local interests first, and possibly caused a slight lack of attention to the wants and wishes of strangers, was much ado about very little.

After breakfast on the opening day Sir George and his friend Mr. Tomalin were walking in the grounds of the Valley of Rocks Hotel with the pleasant sense that this was a great and important day, and Sir George would not have been the frankly human man he was, if he had pretended not to know that to him would fall the chief honours of the day. The town was all beflagged and garlanded, the whole population was making holiday; even at this early hour there was the hum and stir of pleasant anticipatory excitement.

Then out of the hotel door there stepped a stranger, whose apparel as well as his morose face proclaimed that he had no part in the rejoicings. He joined the two friends on the lawn and, after a remark or two, said with a note of utter disgust in his voice: "The whole

place is upside down, they are making a lot of fuss about this little shoot. For just a second Sir George and his friend stood dumfounded. Could they believe their ears? Was this what the epoch-making event looked like, seen through the eyes of an outsider? Then they both burst into laughter, and laughed and laughed, the innocent offender looking on in amazement, and finally turning away with a shrug: in his view the people that day assembled at Lynton were obviously as crazy as the arrangements made for the comfort and convenience of passing tourists.

The cliff railway was the first link in the chain which bound Sir George permanently to Lynton. Later on it was he who suggested, and found a large part of the capital for, building the narrow-gauge railway line between Lynton and Barnstaple, which runs through some of the most exquisite hill scenery in the length and breadth of England. Then gradually, and for all his former chaff of the man whose chief residence lay one hundred and fifty miles from London where he had his work and most of his interests, he began to occupy himself with the thought of building a country house somewhere near the twin villages lying in the green valley on the borders of Exmoor. It is a vast region of limitless views, strong pure air and a sense of freedom, where the great silence is only interrupted by the dull



thud of the horses' hoofs as the stag hunt sweeps past, or as a party of trippers drive along the red roads, quoting *Lorna Doone*, while the flocks of sheep graze and chew the cud close by in utter content. In the distance the famous Exmoor ponies disport themselves as if they alone were the lords and rulers of these breezy heights. The Lyn Valley itself, in its serene and luxurious loveliness; the Valley of Rocks in its elemental grandeur, and above all, the restless, heaving sea, now in its fury lashing the rugged coast, now rippling playfully shorewards in silvery wavelets, proved irresistible to the lover of the sea and the hills, and soon Sir George Newnes was looking about for a position whence as many as possible of the characteristic features of the district could be enjoyed. And here, as usual, he did not set out in the ordinary conventional way to find the place for a home-stead, but evolved a plan by which he obtained a property which had several peculiarly charming features.

Just above the town of Lynton, there was a hill, bare and bleak and very steep to climb, which was for sale. It looked unpromising enough, to the ordinary eye, as a place for a large summer residence. There was not a shady tree upon the whole of it, the layer of soil upon the rocks was thin and of the poorest, and of level ground there was none at all. But

long before you reached the summit there stretched out before your eyes a scene of such rare grandeur and loveliness that you might have searched far and wide along the whole of the Devon coast-line before you found its like.

As he looked upon the panorama of sea and rock and moor and woodland, Sir George decided that here, high up on the hill-side, he would build the pleasure-house where he and his family and friends might come when they were tired of the bustling, noisy life of London, and renew their strength in ideally fair surroundings. And since, for all his frank enjoyment of unconventional social life, he was a man inclined toward solitude, whose natural tendencies were towards retirement and reserve, and who was not entirely at ease in daily life unless he felt that he could easily withdraw into complete privacy, he bought the whole of Hollerday Hill, his quick imagination foreseeing what few others could see at the outset, namely that by dint of ingenious planning and careful study of the possibilities of the place this barren hill might be converted into a place of exceptional loveliness.

The work of bringing order into the chaos was tremendous, and even before the actual building could be commenced a good road had to be constructed in order that the building



Photo]

[Langford] SIR GEORGE NEWNES, BART., TOWARDS THE END OF HIS LIFE,





materials could be brought up without suffering to the horses; the place where the house was to stand had to be levelled out of the face of the granite rocks; a sufficient water-supply had to be arranged for, and many other details which have no existence for those who build on an ordinary site, had to be carefully considered. But so keen was Sir George's interest, so great his delight in this plan, that he curbed his natural impatience, and watched the slow growth of his new domain in calm content, insisting only that nothing should be left out in the construction of the house which would add to the comfort and enjoyment of the occupants and to the saving of labour.

The winding road, cut out of the rock, was planted on either side with a magnificent variety of trees, flowering shrubs and rock-plants, which thrive so well in the soft pure air of North Devon that after a few years the approach to Hollerday House became famous far and wide for its wondrous beauty. In May and June, when the shrubs, the wild rock-roses and all the other spring flowers are in bloom, the way from the gates of Hollerday to the summit of the hill is like a road through fairyland, so absolutely lovely, with the added charm of a silence intensified by the soft whisper of the breeze in pine and chestnut and acacia tops.

Lady Newnes made little flower-gardens here, there, and everywhere in sheltered nooks

where the ground could be levelled, and her walled rose and pansy garden, to mention only one of many of her special creations, was "a sight to dream of, not to tell," all through the spring and summer months. It is the charming homeliness of the place which lends to it, above all other things, the peculiar grace that is so often absent from the elaborate domains of the wealthy.

Playgrounds there are, too, in plenty, for Sir George and his son were equally devoted to outdoor games; tennis courts and bowling greens are there, and croquet lawns for the less active; cool shady nests among the ferns, all hidden in pine-scented woods, and giving glimpses of the sea far away, with steamers gliding towards the horizon and the wide Atlantic, or to the Welsh coast rising dimly between the glittering sea and the shining sky.

And, best of all, there are the "wild" parts near the summit of the hill, where your foot steps on springy turf, all golden in spring and summer with tiny wild flowers; where the rabbits play among the grey boulders; where pine and fir plantations vary with slopes of heather and gorse, and where, when you sit on the short hard grass near the cairn and watch the scene around you, the hours go by unheeded, and the eternities of the past and the future seem to mingle in the glory of the present. The sea lies deep, deep below, almost

all round; the fantastic outlines of the hill-tops above the Valley of Rocks stand out against the wide sky with their suggestion of old monasteries and witchcraft and romantic vanished centuries; and with the sighing of the wind among the rocks there mingles only the sweet, plaintive cry of the circling sea-birds and the drowsy hum of honey- and bumble-bees.

If it were not that the white highroad winds through the Valley of Rocks, and that here and there you catch sight of a piece of the famous North Walk half way down the hill, on the edge of precipitous cliffs, there would be hardly a sign of human life. At sunset time the summit of Hollerday Hill is like the holiest of holies in the wide temple of Nature, and he must indeed be an unemotional being whose heart does not expand in this magnificently beautiful place. Except on Sundays, the grounds of Hollerday were all day long open to the public, and thousands of visitors, as well as the inhabitants of the district, had the privilege through the years while Sir George lived at Lynton, of sharing in the enjoyment of the scene.

The spell was never broken which the whole place from the beginning cast over its owner, nor did he ever grow tired of watching from the terrace or lawns in front of the house the loveliness around. He was a restless man, who found it increasingly difficult, as his health

and strength began to give way, to remain long in one place; but as his eyes fell upon the green valley, the foreland and the sea, his unrest went, and the deep peace which comes unbidden, and which nothing but close communion with Nature can give, fell soothingly upon him. At one time he contemplated buying the manor of Lynton, but this idea was not carried out.

In his beautiful home on the hill he lived whenever he could throw off the burden of work; and crowds of friends enjoyed the generous hospitality of Hollerday House, as they had shared Sir George and Lady Newnes's pleasures at home and abroad. When the symptoms of diabetes, from which Sir George had been suffering for some years, became more serious, and it was occasionally thought necessary that he should take a prolonged rest, it was to Lynton he went. There, leading a very simple, restful, open-air life, he found new strength to battle against the gloom and depression which began to fall upon the man to whom life had always been so great and precious a gift, and who, still in the prime of manhood, could only think of death with the shudder with which all normally constituted human beings shrink from the idea of annihilation while yet the years are far off when death must come in the natural course of things.

It was to Lynton that Sir George and Lady



Newnes went in the summer of 1909 when he had been medically advised to seek retirement for at least the autumn and winter. At first the pleasure of being back in the place which he felt more and more to be his real home had the usual stimulating effect, and again and again, when the disease made another onslaught, he battled against it with all the strength that was left to him. But the spring did not bring the hoped-for improvement, and though he suffered no physical pain, and had to the very end the appearance of a strong man in his prime, with prematurely white hair, life ebbed away more and more rapidly and the tired brain could not regain its activity. The world retreated, and there remained nothing but the loyal love that had been his all through his happy married life, and now stood by him, strong and pure and forgetful of self, his till death and beyond.

On the whole, the last months of Sir George Newnes's life were not unhappy, for as the end came nearer the thought of death seemed no longer to haunt him. But one strong regret he was yet to experience. This was when his son, who had represented the Bassetlaw Division of Nottinghamshire in the House of Commons on the Liberal side for four years, lost his seat in the January Election of 1910. The father's great love for, and pride in, his only son made this temporary set-back in what promised to

be a successful political career a heavy blow, and one he felt to the last.

It is with Lynton and its gracious influences that the last page of the autobiographical notes deals. He was very near the end when he wrote the final sentence: "The charm of the place has grown on me so much that a short while ago I came here to reside permanently"; and it was at Hollerday where he died quietly one morning when June threw all its glory upon the enchanting scene.

As he lay dead in the silent house high up on the hill, every day and almost every hour brought additional proof of the strong hold which Sir George Newnes had on the affection of those who knew him. His winning personality had gained him friends wherever he went and whenever he came into personal touch with others. The servants of his own household were devoted to him, and even the two male nurses who had been in attendance for some weeks before the end, and knew him only in the last stages of mortal disease, mourned him as one who had grown dear to them. The occasional labourers on the estate, the men and lads who had seen him about in the village and the district, and to whom he had sometimes said a friendly word—in fact, the whole countryside was in mourning for "kind Sir George." As the wonderful floral gifts began to arrive, and overflowed from room to room, they spread

around his simple coffin a living pall of roses and lilies and palm and bay. Glancing at the messages sent with these farewell tokens you felt that there was hardly one but had in it the unmistakable note which only comes with the sense of personal loss.

The colleagues and co-workers of many years, who were still working on: a little band of men who had served him when he first set out on his strenuous career; a late chauffeur who far off had heard of his death, and sent his wreath of purple iris to "a good and much-loved master"; a crowd of private friends in every station of life; and many a man and woman whom, in his own quiet way, he had befriended—they all put that into the words wherewith they bade him the last good-bye, which shows that the heart is stirred, and which no amount of mere esteem or admiration can ever call forth.

And you had but to glance at the faces of those who followed the coffin as it was carried by the volunteer bearers down the winding road which he had cut out of the desolate and barren rock, to see that genuine sorrow had brought them out of their busy world to accompany on his last journey the staunch and loyal friend, the man to whom they were drawn by the human bonds which outlast all other ties. It was this which gave the funeral in the hushed and mourning village

its unique and touching character, and which, by those who were present, will ever be remembered as something finely and tenderly human. It was the best tribute to a man much honoured and esteemed for the services he had done to the public, who, from the beginning to the end of his life, possessed in an extraordinary degree the rare quality of drawing men to him through their affections, and of keeping friends by reason of his own goodness and kindness of heart.

There was no serious newspaper in London or the provinces but paid its tribute of high esteem to Sir George Newnes on the day after his death, and the North Devon papers in their obituary notices all agreed that with him the county lost one of its best and most generous friends.

“The news of Sir George’s death,” wrote one, “caused a profound feeling of regret in Lynton and Lynmouth, where flags were flown at half-mast as a sign of public grief. By all classes he was beloved for his broad-mindedness, generosity, and particularly for his kindly interest in the working people, which was a most noticeable trait in his character. Large as his private benefactions were, his gifts to Lynton were on an almost princely scale.” Another, in the course of a long appreciative article, wrote: “From the time Sir George and Lady Newnes took up their residence in North Devon the deceased,



by his generosity and foresight, conferred untold benefits on the two villages of Lynton and Lynmouth—benefits in which the vast number of visitors who crowd to the place from all parts of the world have been able to participate.”

To the benefits actually conferred upon the place there must be added one of great importance which Sir George intended to confer, and in connection with which he had spent a large amount of thought, time and money. The approach to Lynmouth by sea is of the most primitive character. No steamer can put in, and passengers have to be landed in small rowing boats. Sir George himself had experienced the disadvantages of this state of things when as parliamentary candidate, and later on as Member, for Swansea, he was frequently crossing the Bristol Channel. His intention was to build a pier, which would not only have added greatly to the convenience of the inhabitants, but would also have still further increased the prosperity of the twin towns, by bringing shoals of visitors across from the Welsh coast. He introduced a Bill into Parliament enabling him to construct a pier at Lynmouth, and paid all the expenses connected with the passing of the Bill, but was prevented from carrying out the project, first by pressure of other work, and later on by ill-health, until, unfortunately, his rights had lapsed.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MAN

IN the spring of 1911 Sir William White, K.C.B., unveiled at the Newnes Public Library, Putney, a bronze bust of Sir George Newnes, set in a marble niche. It had been placed there at the suggestion of Mr. L. R. S. Tomalin, that most constant and devoted of friends, by public subscription, as a tribute to the memory of "the donor of the magnificent library," as the Mayor of Wandsworth explained.

Sir William White, in the course of an affectionate and generous tribute to his friend and neighbour on Putney Heath, of whom he spoke as "a man among men, a man who in any company was distinguished by his appearance, his manner, and his great natural gifts," said that Mr. Oliver Wheatley, the artist to whom the work of executing the bust had been entrusted, had achieved a triumph in producing so excellent a likeness of Sir George Newnes.

This was not a mere form of speech, and must in no wise be taken as the customary conventional remark which every one expects to hear on occasions of this kind, when speakers

almost invariably labour under the impression that they are bound to pay compliments, and deal out platitudes to the artist, no matter whether a likeness be good or bad. In the present case it was the literal truth; the artist had achieved a triumph, and this was the more remarkable as he had never met or seen Sir George Newnes, but had been guided only by photographs of Sir George, and by whatever help those actively interested in the execution of the bust were able to give him.

Of portraits and busts of Sir George there is, fortunately, no scarcity. Several busts had been made of him during his lifetime by order of men or communities desiring to express in some permanent form their gratitude for benefits bestowed upon the public, and there are also any number of portraits, by painters and draughtsmen, as well as by amateur photographers, who were easily attracted by his picturesque personality. With his handsome head and regular features he generally "came out well," to use a popular phrase, but those who knew him best felt that what these portraits and busts showed was only one part of the man, and that somehow the best and most real part of him had been left out.

Most of the likenesses of Sir George Newnes show all the dignity, the intelligence, and the many other sterling qualities which go to the making of the face of a distinguished, clever,

successful man. But they omitted the subtler qualities by which a man makes friends and keeps them; the qualities which attract strangers and inspire crowds with confidence, affection and enthusiasm: in fact, the qualities of the heart and the soul without which a man, though he speak with the wisdom of man and the tongue of an angel, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, is but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

But where most of those had failed who had attempted to paint or draw or photograph, mould in clay or carve in marble, the likeness of the man, Mr. Wheatley had succeeded. He has put that into the face, the eyes, the poise of the head, which re-awakens the sadness which those who knew him well in private and in public life felt when they heard that Sir George Newnes had passed away.

And the thought that this likeness in the entrance hall of the Putney Free Library reveals the man at his best moment, brought back a recollection of the artist whose work is said to represent a nearer approach to the art of the old Italian painters than that of any other British artist of the past or present. Mr. G. F. Watts once wrote to me—I forget in reference to what subject: “In Heaven we shall be always what on earth we were only at our best moments.”

Watching the sunset-light fall softly upon the



bronze face, in the marble niche of the Library which he had given to the people, I wondered where the freed spirit of this man had flown, and was led on to speculate as to his own religious creed, his own idea of "Heaven." Reserved as Sir George was in the discussion of all serious matters—perhaps because he was a very serious-minded man, for all his apparent cheerful light-heartedness—he was most reserved in giving expression to his religious beliefs. As the son of deeply and truly religious parents he had probably inherited instincts of reverence and faith; his childish prayer in the garden-house at Silcoates School showed that in his early years he was anything but indifferent to spiritual influences, and the open-handed generosity with which, later in life, he helped any religious body the work of which seemed good to him, no matter by what sect it was set afoot, spoke for itself.

It is true he was no regular attendant at any place of worship for some years before the end came, though he went occasionally to the Thursday noonday services at the City Temple, to listen to an address by his friend the Rev. R. J. Campbell. And he would not be drawn into any discussion on a subject connected with religions and creeds, much less would he himself speak lightly or disparagingly of sacred things, or permit others to do so in his presence. But if the practical Christianity still counts for

anything, which, while it is in no way militant, is always ready to help and further the good work of the Churches, and which shows itself in a kindly, honest, helpful and hopeful life, then Sir George Newnes was as good a Christian as most men.

On the very rare occasions when he was, perhaps in spite of himself, induced to express an opinion on the mysteries lying on the other side of death, he seemed to range himself with the reverent and open-minded agnostic, and he said once, rather wistfully, when some one resented as irreverent the idea of a discussion on the subject of what Heaven would be like : " There is, in my judgment, a curiosity in the soul of man with regard to the great Beyond, which, if it is reverently stimulated, may lead to conceptions that will help men in the struggle for righteousness." He never wavered in his steadfast belief in an all-just and all-merciful Father, nor would he for a moment accept the idea of a God who could or would punish His creatures with everlasting punishment.

Such was the man as I knew him from the time when his two little lads ran out to wait impatiently at the gate of Wildcroft for the return of the father who was also the best of friends and playmates, to the day when the blinds in the great house on Hollerday Hill were drawn, because the master had died, and when

the flags at Lynton flew at half-mast, because the man who had been a friend to one and all in the old town, had disappeared from the scene which he loved best on earth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Looking backward upon the grave-stones along the lengthening road of life, who has not felt that among the sleepers beneath these stones there is one, here or there, of whom it is quite impossible to think as dead? You may have seen them in their coffins, followed them to the grave, and watched the grass and flowers grow on the mounds above them, but still, whenever you think of them, they are in the midst of life, working, striving, forging ahead; keenly interested in many things and people; happily absorbed in living, and so integral a part of the drama of life that a world without their active presence seems unthinkable.

Sir George Newnes was one of these vivid, powerful personalities, and even as I finish this impression of his ardent life, and remember the June days when he lay in the silent room from which the floral tributes overflowed in a wide stream of living colours; or the golden sunshine when we put our last posies of roses, mignonette and wild flowers from his own hill under the high pyramid of flowers on his grave, I cannot yet believe that he has disappeared for ever.

And sometimes, while writing this *Life*, and glancing through a chapter with which I was even more dissatisfied than with the rest, it has seemed to me as if he himself had read the book, and were standing by the window where he so often stood, giving his friendly and amused opinion with as much detachment as if my subject were any man but himself. Then, presently, he seemed to turn towards the room, the whimsical smile lighting up his grave face, while he pointed out some error or inaccuracy, saying: "If I were you, I should alter that. But, of course, do as you like."

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He died before he had completed his sixtieth year; humanly speaking, he might have lived and enjoyed life for another twenty years. But there is truth in Rousseau's famous saying: "To live does not mean to breathe, but to act; it means to make use of our organs, senses, faculties; in short, of every part of our being which helps us to be conscious of our being. Not he has lived most who has attained great age, but he who has been most vividly conscious of living." In this sense Sir George Newnes did indeed reach the utmost limit of the little span of life allotted to mortals.







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