(September 24, 1913.)

Newspapers.

By Lord Northcliffe.*

AT a special luncheon of the Canadian Club, held on the 24th Oct., 1913, Lord Northcliffe said:

Gentlemen,—Please let me first thank you for again so warmly receiving me in this room. I sometimes feel like somewhat of an intruder in these Canadian Clubs, because I think I can claim to have spoken to more Canadian Clubs than almost any Englishman, and more than most Canadians. But I am bound to say that to be commanded, as I have been by your Secretary, to speak for thirty minutes on the subject of "Newspapers," is one of the most difficult propositions that I have ever been up against.

I have been engaged in the business of newspapers since I was a boy. We had a very distinguished politician in England, the third Sir Robert Peel, who was a candidate for Parliament in a constituency where most of his votes were in the hands of men whose wives kept lodging houses in Brighton. He said in a speech one time: "I was born in a Brighton lodging house, I live in a Brighton lodging house, and I hope to die in a Brighton lodging house!" So I might say about the newspaper business: I like it as well as I like anything in this life; but I don't like to have to deal with it in thirty minutes! (Laughter.)

In this particular audience there are special reasons why it is very difficult for me to speak of it, because I speak in a city which is the most highly newspapered city in the Empire. There is no other city in the Empire with six excellent daily papers in a population of half a million. On our side of the water, as the head of the famous and progressive house of Cassell, Mr. Arthur Spurgeon, who is present here to-day, said to me, "I don't think we have any city with six daily newspapers, and we have cities of more than a million."

And I speak not only to an audience trained to watch six papers, but you have in this audience editors whose names

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are famous far beyond the bounds of this city, even beyond the Atlantic. So it behooves me to be very, very careful and very precise, and to confine myself exactly to what I know about newspapers. (Laughter.) And the more I see, the more I realize that there are many things I don't know about them. The only thing that can save me to-day is the fact that I am limited to thirty minutes. (Laughter.)

Many of you have come back from charming holidays, such as I have spent, among your Canadian lakes and rivers. It may not have occurred to you, when you were in the lonely haunts of the moose, the bear and the salmon, that you were in the birthplace of many of the newspapers of the world, because on the Canadian forests so many of the newspapers of the world base their supplies. Many of your vast forests have been recklessly destroyed, as you know; many are gone never to return. But, wiser than your neighbors, you have passed stringent laws to prevent further destruction of your treasure. But you have this consolation of knowing that these forests that have gone across the water in the form of paper have gone into the making of newspapers which have done something to make the grandeur and resources of your country known to the world, and have directed to you some of the people of the old countries.

Nothing is more remarkable in the streets of Toronto than the accents of the Scotch and the English that one hears, and of a good class, not as some gentlemen I remember seeing here two or three years ago—"bronchos," I think, they were called (laughter)—who very plainly and frankly said to me that they had come here to avoid work, and had no intention of doing any work at all! The class I meet now are a very different class, and I rejoice to think that, even at somewhat of a sacrifice, your forests have gone to make newspapers which have directed these people not only to Toronto, but to the whole Dominion.

The very fact that newspapers are the chief agents in the modern movements of people you could not have attracted but by the publication of the fact of your natural resources, that very fact, I think, is a stirring, striking proof of that new force in the world, which is hardly yet recognized, which is summed up in the word "publicity."

Publicity is a very difficult thing to define. It acts in all kinds of ways, with which people are hardly acquainted, and among other ways during the last twenty years it has caused newspapers to enmesh the whole world in one vast net of information getters.

I wonder, when you read your daily newspaper, or your six daily newspapers—for the excellent man at the news stand in the King Edward tells me that many people do buy the whole six—(laughter)—whether you realize that through these newspapers you are in direct touch practically with every part of the world? If, for example, a distinguished citizen of Toronto were ever lost in some lonely part of Siberia, in a very few hours one of your newspaper men could communicate the fact to his agent in London, and the news would be flashed from there to St. Petersburg, and to the newspapers of Siberia—for they have newspapers there. In my opinion this is one of the greatest forces the world has ever yet known. That strange net of news gathering renders it practically impossible for any evil person long to escape justice, because the newspaper has the world in its service, using every invention, the wireless, the telegraph, the telephone, and last but not least, the photograph.

An accused gentleman, recently, assumed the medical title of doctor, one Crippen. Five and twenty years ago Dr. Crippen would have been continuing his medical practice in some remote part of the world; but what happened? The same has happened over and over again. It was this: the photograph of the suspected man was found, and a specimen of his handwriting. That photograph was published far and wide, together with the facsimile of his handwriting. Somebody compared the writing with a signature in a hotel register in Belgium, and it was found that the man who wrote the signature was trying to get tickets for Canada. They proved the identity of the man not merely by the facsimile of his handwriting but by his photograph. They telegraphed the news of this to a certain ship sailing at Antwerp for Quebec. One of the officers on that ship bought the paper containing the picture, and compared it with the people going across the gangway. And so this great modern force served to prevent further intrigues of that celebrated man.

Very few realize that among all the newspapers of the world there is that unwritten agreement by which they help each other in an emergency to provide news of the people of their own city. I should not have the least trouble in finding any person from London who had disappeared in your own city. I would merely have to communicate with one of my friends—and I am glad to say that the editors of all your papers are my friends—and I should soon discover him among your half million people. This is an aspect of the newspaper to which I do not think sufficient importance is given. It is a

most important aspect, because it will and must inevitably act as a great deterrent of crime.

There are people—but I must say they are people who have never been back of a newspaper during any great national crisis, such as any war,—who imagine that newspapers flourish by wars, and stir up troubles. That is far from true. Practically every great war in recent times has crippled one newspaper, and hurt all of them. Newspapers have had some little to do with somewhat lessening the number of wars the world is having. We have had lately in Europe one of the most horrible wars, not only in our time, but of any time. It is difficult to conceive why out of all modern inventions these various armies should have resorted to barbarities; but it is true. That war never received the attention it should have on this continent. The time to stop a war is, as the Irishman said, before it starts. And if, as you people know who live in a country which has the finest forests in the world, you want to stop a forest fire, the best time to do so is before it has got a start. That war in Europe was made up by men who met in secret, as has been revealed by their secret documents published in the London "Times," and sprung upon the world before anyone knew what was happening. I believe publicity would have been the only means to stop that war. When the war broke out I do believe all the powers of Europe did their best to stop it, but though the Czar of Russia, and the Kaisers of Germany and Austria tried, they could not. I believe that the world is wearying of that war and is going to stop it.

On this side of the Atlantic you are far removed from war, and I hope you always will be. (Hear, hear, and applause.) Mr. Spurgeon and I have been lately quite close to a great war, I suppose as close as you are to the Province of Quebec, and we have sometimes been drawn into wars involuntarily whether we like it or not. But when I see these statements in English, and in other papers, that the newspapers encourage wars, I do not believe it. To describe the military preparations of other nations, is not to encourage war, but to stop it. Had we known the military preparations of the Balkan States, we could have prevented the war.

You here, on this continent, especially those on the other side of your lovely lake, are apparently always engaged in that form of war that we read of, described in the short generic term "graft." When I open your newspapers in this city I see mention of it. We have outgrown, I trust, in England, that sort of thing—in the Middle Ages there was a great deal of it; what was called "the favoritism of kings"—the alloca-

tion of lands and fees, sinecures—was one form of it. It seems to me such a thing is practically inevitable, in view of the vast treasures of your country, that self-seeking men should be trying to make money for themselves at the cost of the public weal. I sometimes think that your newspapers use that term too frequently. Perhaps you will allow a passing stranger to point out that the constant use of this word creates an extraordinarily bad impression when cabled abroad. Recently in England we had considerable discussion of the purchase of shares by two Liberal Ministers in an American company which had no connection with the English company, I refer to the Marconi scandal, as it was called, of which you have heard. Although a strong Conservative, I did not like the attacks upon those Liberal men. And just as our newspapers made too much of it, so Canadaian newspapers give the impression to a passing stranger that there is terrible corruption here, which is not true. (Applause.) This is one of the dangers of newspapers. I do not pretend that the newspaper is more perfect than any other human machine. But when those things go farther it creates an unfavorable impression.

There is a class of people in our part of the world that likes to represent our country as toppling to its doom. One would think from what they say that the chief occupation of the people of England is gathering hay in front of the stock exchange! (Laughter.) There is no danger in that kind of thing for home consumption, but when every Sunday they are pumped across the ocean, some people almost believe them. I think they are intelligent people, too. (Laughter.) But it is hardly possible that a country so imminently close to bankruptcy should be able to lend money to the whole world. (Laughter.) The two things don't go together. We have people who always like to represent our country as in a very poor state, and telling of the number of industries we have lost. That, I believe, has always been the English way: England has always been going to the dogs! (Laughter.) I have seen a pamphlet two hundred years old complaining of the same—its title was "The Annihilation of English Commerce." These articles, numbers of them, are put upon the cable, and people become almost sympathetic with England. I want to say, a more highly prosperous people do not exist on the face of the globe! (Hear, hear, and applause.) I say that with due consideration, for I have travelled nearly all over the world. Some people think that because we have lost two or three hundred thousand people every year, we are going down. But

from the loins of England have sprung how many nations? When I say "England," I very naturally include Scotland, and my own country of Ireland. There are this country, Australia, South Africa, and many many other parts of the world we do not usually consider as being in the run of modern civilization, that have been brought into cultivation by England. To me, it is no sign of lack of prosperity that we send out these people every year. We send out just the kind of people that you want—not always, but very often. We have even seen in London Canadians of whom Canadians are particularly proud, and you have over eight millions. But we send you just the people you want, people of muscle rather than people of mind—you have the minds here, and want people to do the labor. (Laughter.) We have sent you Scotchmen to control your newspapers and many of your businesses, and most of the offices. I was under the impression that the Province of Quebec got some of them. The fact is that we can send these people, and I hope always shall be able to send these people. (Applause.)

You will have here shortly, I understand, quite a distinguished member of the British Government. He and I don't at all agree in politics—I loathe his telephone! (Laughter.) I prefer to walk, it is quicker! (Laughter)—but if you could get him to discuss his views of England and of its future, it would be extremely interesting. He pointed out to me that despite this drain on our population we were still vigorous, and he asked me what was to prevent your having a population here of a hundred million people. I see no reason at all to prevent it. The city of Manchester contains more highly skilled workers than any other city of the world; Yorkshire and Lancashire have more skilled workers than any other similar parts anywhere else. They do not emigrate, because you have nothing here for them to do. The north of England has orders for three years. I quite agree with Mr. Samuel, the Postmaster-General, though I don't agree with him about Home Rule. (Laughter.) I think he will alter his tone before he gets back from this trip. We have not only natural wealth, but skilled fingers. We make these things well. (Applause.) English-made goods you may find in Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, New York. (Applause.) Why? Because these workers will not make bad goods! (Applause.) They say: "It will not be good for us to turn out inferior goods; we shall lose our trade!" It is most strictly the fact that the people most opposed to bad spinning in Lancashire are not the employers, but the workpeople. It is a very highly developed state of

civilization where the workers decline to make bad goods. (Applause.)

This has little to do with newspapers, except this: that I wish to raise my voice in protest against the morals and tone of the Sunday newspapers that pour into this country from somewhere.

You must not let me close without a word for the Toronto newspapers. I am not one of those people who fear competition. It is a good thing for the papers when each competitor has five others to watch. You can imagine, careful though he be by nature, how careful that makes him, even in so small a thing as the typographical appearance,—I don't think there are better printed papers in the world than in Toronto. I won't speak of the skilled editorial writers, because their names are well known on our side of the Atlantic, and they are constantly quoted there.

On behalf of the whole profession which Mr. Spurgeon and I represent to-day, I want to say that I believe the newspapers of the world have vastly improved since Charles Dickens told us of the Eatanswill Gazette, and Mr. Jefferson Brick's New York Journal. Charles Dickens was an accurate observer, and many of us remember what the papers were like in those days of sixty years ago. I do claim, however, that while newspapers are not perfect, yet they have advanced materially, at least in proportion to the advances in applied electricity, and quite as much as the advance in medical science —and I cannot speak of the subject of medical knowledge without comparing those days with the progress of the splendid Canadian hospitals with which your country abounds. (Applause.)